



Aviation Week

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CORRESPONDENCE

NO NEED FOR NEW BOMBER

So, the U.S. Air Force is looking for a new bomber in the 2018 timeframe. This new aircraft is envisioned as a stealthy, subsonic, manned penetrator with a large payload and global reach. Almost certainly it will be a flying-wing design. Don't we already have such an aircraft?

The B-2A is arguably the most lethal bomber in history. Still possibly the stealthiest aircraft on Earth, it can strike anywhere from its home base in Missouri with only two in-flight refuelings. The B-2A is also arguably the least successful industrial program in history. After spending \$24 billion on development, we spent \$18 billion on production to build 21 aircraft.

Though 20 years old, the B-2A encompasses all of the requirements USAF has outlined for its new bomber. What new capabilities will be introduced? Will they be worth the enormous price of development? I say build a slightly updated B-2B and spend the savings on F-22s that USAF keeps requesting. Why wait?

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