



Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments

STUDIES

Toward a Balanced Combat Air Force

April 11, 2014 | **Mark Gunzinger**

Resources: Forces & Capabilities

In what may prove to be a brief strategic pause following the end of major operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, Congress and DoD have the opportunity to accord priority to developing a next-generation, balanced Combat Air Force(CAF) comprised of aircraft with the range, survivability, and connectivity with other combat systems needed to operate effectively over extended ranges and in contested environments. Sufficient resources must be allocated to support these priorities, rather than continuing to allocate a “fair share” of the defense budget to each of the Military Departments.

This report suggests that it is time for DoD and the Congress to take a hard look at the mix of combat air forces that will be needed to sustain America’s asymmetric airpower advantage. In particular, it argues that they should give precedence in the current age of austerity to fielding new long-range ISR and strike aircraft that will bolster the U.S. military’s Asia-Pacific posture and enable it to project power rapidly when and where needed.