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Letters to the Editor

The B-2 Bomber Bombs Out

Your editorial July 17 "Projecting America," another paean of praise for the B-2 bomber, was filled with the same half-truths you seem to swallow whole regarding this airplane.

The B-2 is not now qualified for any "smart" weaponry. Sometime in 1997, a bomb with global-precision-system guidance may be available, if testing goes well and funding becomes available. At best, the Pentagon admits that there will be sufficient weapons of this type to generate only one sortie by the B-2 fleet until at least 1999. Additionally, as this weapon will be only global-precision-system aided, its usefulness against mobile targets is very limited. In other words, no smoking Iraqi tank columns will be produced by the B-2.

The deterrence effect of the B-2 against future Saddam Husseins is even more suppositional. Saddam was not deterred from attacking Kuwait when we had an arsenal that included hundreds of B-52s, B-1Bs, F-117As, and F-15Es. Future Saddams are not likely to be deterred by a bomber that can be used only at night and that is so costly (more than \$2.2 billion each) that the U.S. cannot afford to lose even one in combat.

You dismiss the GAO study as mere politics. However, every one of its conclusions has been presented earlier in other sources. Recent articles in Aviation Week & Space Technology, hardly an unsupportive source, have also indicated that the plane's radar signature is much larger than desired, that it can be tracked by air traffic controllers, that its terrain-following radar is seriously flawed, and that

there are no precision guided weapons available for it now or in the near future.

Nothing about the B-2 can ever be "cheap insurance." Northrop was supposed to deliver 20 bombers for no more than \$45 billion. To date, seven bombers have been delivered, none in the final Block 30 configuration whose potential abilities you describe as already existing, and those seven bombers have cost more than \$41 billion.

More critically, no scenario has yet been presented in your newspaper or any credible publication justifying the B-2. The Pentagon's Two Major Simultaneous Regional Conflicts scenario is absurd, based both on history and the simple fact that it is barely possible to lead America into one war now, let alone two. Moreover, even if the scenario was not so far-fetched, half of the U.S.'s current arsenal would be more than adequate to deal with both. We hardly need more.

JONATHAN PENN
Senior Attorney
Hewlett-Packard Co.

Los Altos, Calif.

Some Concrete Facts On Cement Dumping

Contrary to your July 3 editorial on "Cement," the recent increase in the antidumping duty on cement imports from Mexico has nothing to do with politics or domestic producers "singing the same sad song." Unlike the administration's market-opening efforts involving Japanese luxury cars, the Mexican cement dispute is a result of the implementation of GATT-sanctioned