

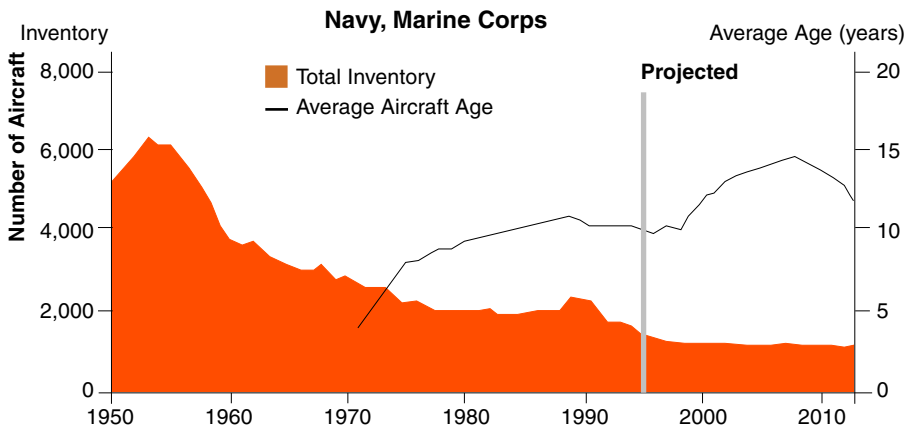
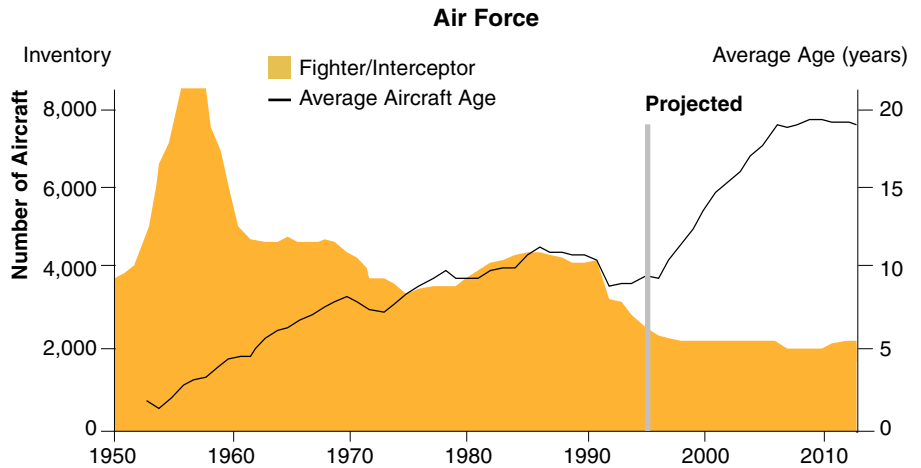
The Chart Page

By Tamar A. Mehuron, Associate Editor

Older, Smaller Fleets

Well into the next century, the Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps will confront the twin challenges of aging and dramatically reduced numbers of fighter/attack aircraft.

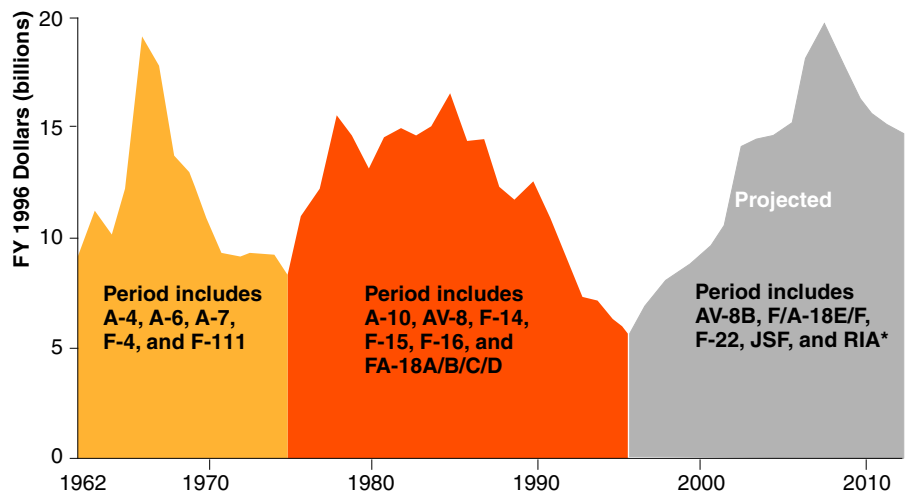
Figure 1 shows that the average age of USAF fighter/attack aircraft, after declining for six years, began to rise in 1992, even as cuts in the inventory began to accelerate. USAF projects that the average age will climb steeply for a decade, peaking in 2006 at almost twenty years.



The average age of Navy and Marine Corps fighters rose slowly in the 1970s and 1980s, leveled off around 1990, and has begun to increase again in 1996. DoD expects the trend to continue for a decade, as seen in Figure 2.

The projected aging of the fleets underscores the need for sustained modernization, as occurred in previous cycles. Figure 3 tracks plans for major increases in funding for fighter programs, such as the F-22 stealth fighter, Joint Strike Fighter, F/A-18E/F strike fighter, and other aircraft.

Source: "Annual Report to the President and the Congress." William J. Perry, Secretary of Defense. March 1996.



*Replacement Interdiction Aircraft