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F-35 and Burlington, VT: What's the total cost?

Background

It is well-known that the F-35 bears two dubious distinctions. It is the most expensive weapons program in U.S. history, and its technological setbacks coupled with noted cost overruns make it one of the most controversial and least effective Pentagon programs on record at a projected \$1.5 trillion total cost over its lifetime.¹

The F-35's estimated average hourly costs

The F-35 is funded out of the federal fund, which means it's funded in large part by U.S. federal income tax dollars. The following calculates the estimated average hourly cost from the program's inception in 2001 and continuing for 55 years through the expected lifetime of the weapon:²

- U.S. taxpayers will pay approximately \$3,113,325 every hour of every day³
- Vermont taxpayers will pay an estimated \$5,251 hourly
- Burlington taxpayers will pay an estimated \$353 hourly

What's the average annual cost equal for Burlington?

On average, *Burlington taxpayers will pay an estimated average of \$3,092,280 per year* for the F-35. That is equal to:⁴

- 3 years of Fire Department emergency medical services at \$1 million OR
- 3 years of DPW snow removal at \$1 million OR
- 2 years of library operations at \$1.5 million OR

What's the estimated total cost equal for Burlington?

Burlington federal income taxpayers will contribute approximately \$170.2 million toward the projected total \$1.5 trillion cost of the F-35. For the same amount of money, they could have:

- 55 Police officers for 24 years AND
- 55 Veterans receiving healthcare at the VA for 24 years AND
- 55 Elementary school teachers for 24 years AND

With about \$3.12 million left over

Notes:

1. About the F-35: <http://breakingdefense.com/2012/03/30/f-35-total-costs-soar-to-1-5-trillion-lockheed-defends-program/>, <http://www.propublica.org/special/the-most-expensive-fighter-jet-ever-built-by-the-numbers>
2. Lifetime of the weapon: <http://gao.gov/assets/600/591608.pdf>
3. Calculated over 55 years per GAO assessment (above)
4. Burlington city budget material for comparisons: <http://www.burlingtonvt.gov/CT/Budgets/2014-Budget/1-Summary-Reports/>, <http://www.burlingtonvt.gov/CT/Budgets/2014-Budget/16-Library/>, on page 9, note the increased tax rates to raise an additional \$839,000