Defence Viewpoints has before carried the argument that the Joint Strike Fighter was expensive, is getting more expensive, and eventually the world will wake up to realise that the planes are costing a multiple of the carriers under them. At which point all the options dismissed by the fly-fly boys might come back into play.

Our Director of Research has recently written a piece on his blog Defense Industrial Base on this topic.
He opines that firing the programme head - a US Marine Corps Major General - cannot bode well for the VSTOL variant - especially in an environment where;

a) the US budget deficit is at a record,
b) the F-35 is the largest spending program in the US defence procurement budget - and thereby politically the most visible,
c) the US Air Force would willingly trade F-35 spend for other programmes,
d) only the USMC really has a core requirement for VSTOL (although the chairman of the Defense Appropriations Committee is an ex leatherneck)
e) the engine supplier has been reduced to one for the programme, and based on history (F-15, F-16 etc.) costs will now escalate. (This is of course a will-they won't-they saga. Testing continues and cost rise claims are resisted)

UK PLC, who would in effect halved their commitment by re-roling one of the new CVF platforms to be an amphibious assault ship with a large deck, must inevitably therefore face an increasingly higher cost per unit. Which in a no-holds-barred Defence Review after the General Election is not a good place to be in.

Matters are moved on with the news that the U S marines 2 star programme head is to be replaced by a 3 star US Navy Admiral Which cannot but add to the pressure on the F-35B, the USMC/UK favourite (click link for video). And that the manufacturers are claiming the F-35A ground attack version for the U S Air Force could have an air superiority role Which indeed it might, although this sounds a bit more like a slug-fest with the F-22 backers.