



Submission No 39

Inquiry into Australian Defence Force Regional Air Superiority

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The JSF and F-22 in the Context of Air Superiority in Australia's Region

In order to seriously evaluate the arguments and evidence before The Sub Committee on Air Superiority it seems to me that the primary point requiring clarification is, what precisely is meant by "Regional Air Superiority"?

Air superiority is accepted as a prerequisite for the successful conduct of most military operations. It is in that sense that we regard it as so important. But how much air superiority is enough? Where do we need it, and for how long?

Do we need the ability to destroy an enemy's airforce? If so we all know that the best way to do that is to take it out on the ground, but that may not always be politically acceptable, and really, all we need air superiority for is to enable our own particular operations in particular localities at particular times to be free of enemy air action. Tactically these operations/tasks may be defensive or offensive or both. They may be of a semi permanent nature, like national air defence, or they may be for limited short term purposes. So the kind of air superiority we need to be able to achieve is total dominance of the airspace involved for multiple but perhaps individual particular operations. Countering potential enemy threats which use airspace may not be limited in future to destroying his aircraft or missiles. Effective enemy action requiring airspace may be able to be effectively prevented by denying him such as surveillance, communications, and control. The term local "airspace dominance" seems much preferable to the more general "regional air superiority. It includes local denial of any military function utilising airspace.

If this is so, then it seems that the USAF have coming into service what will be easily the most effective "system" in the future world for denial of airspace to an enemy equipped with the future best and latest from Russia. The F-22 fighter involved also will give this system easily the best attributes for penetration of and attacks on enemy air defences. And more, its airspace denial capability means that the combat effective life of existing cheaper and less sophisticated assets such as the F-111 and the F-18 could be less expensively extended, and these aircraft used for much longer in their traditional roles.

No-one should argue, no matter what the cost, that risking coming second in achieving airspace dominance in our region is an option we can afford! For that reason alone, there should be no contest in deciding that we must have the F-22 and system for the RAAF and not the seemingly preferred JSF.

Another reason for choosing the F-22 system is that it is already highly credible. The military aviation world already has great respect for the reputation achieved by the RAAF through both its F-111 and F/A-18 force. There is nothing coming available to touch the respect developing in the professional aviation world for the F-22. Australia must enable the RAAF to stay in front, and perhaps equally important, we must help them to continue to be seen in local /regional eyes as being in front. Only the F-22 at present will offer such a guarantee. The JSF is too much a compromise. There are still too many unknowns. We should note that the USAF has defined its need for the F-22 to

enable effective use of the JSF and others! There must be something in that when your purpose is airspace dominance.

Finally the Defence Dept heirachy and some some retired JSF protagonists , while acknowledging the fighters superior performance, seem to be arguing that the F-22 is too much a single role aircraft. We are talking about providing the RAAF with the best tools for airspace dominance here. That is the F-22's specific role. It's demonstrably the best in the world at it and likely to remain so for a considerable time. Purchase of the JSF instead would be a big mistake!

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