



Submission No 14

Inquiry into Australian Defence Force Regional Air Superiority

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Hon. Bruce Scott MP
Chairman
Joint Standing Committee
Foreign Affairs, Dept of Trade
Defence Sub-Committee

Dear Sir,

As an ex-RAAF pilot with operational service, with a previous aircraft-engineering background, and a subsequent very-diverse commercial pilot career, I try to keep abreast of military-aviation activity, particularly regarding the RAAF.

I was also a founder member of the Aviation Historical Society of Australia in 1959, and have been its President for 18 years. Among our monthly guest speakers, we have had many ex-RAAF people of all trades and musterings, including pilots and engineers—civilian scientists and engineers have also addressed us.

An on-going matter of interest and consideration is the future of the RAAF's defensive and strike capabilities, plus the commercialisation / privatisation of what was once a defence force.

From my extensive aviation reading and many discussions, I am concerned about the situation revolving around the apparent commitment to the JSF. It seems to me that it is not what Australia should be considering to replace Hornets and F-111s. It is not only not able to replace them, but its cost has, and is likely to continue to rise astronomically, as the production run continues to be cut by the US Congress

As a fighter, it will not do what the F-22 will, and it is more a ground-attack aircraft, with the need for too-much support in the way of tankers and dedicated fighter escort.

It will not, (repeated) replace F-111s and Hornets, and the retirement of the former, as proposed, was a misguided, premature decision, with considerably more life left in the fleet, particularly if the G-models are brought in out of the rain and properly looked after.

As is planned for the USAF's B-52's (of which I saw the prototype in Seattle at the beginning of 1952) the F-111's should be kept for the role in which there is no replacement. The USAF is planning to use the B-52 until at least 2040, and we should be following that attitude, although not of course ~~that~~ to that degree (perhaps).

There is also a great deal of our money tied up in the fleet, and my opinion is that under the current Boeing heavy maintenance arrangement, there is still plenty of valuable life left in it yet.

Yours sincerely,

Keith R Meggs, DFM, AM (US).