
The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

Inquiry into Australian Defence Force Regional Air Superiority

Defence Sub-Committee

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

August 2007
Canberra

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ISBN 978 0 642 78890 0 (printed version)

ISBN 978 0 642 78891 7 (HTML version)

Cover photo captions:

'A No. 1 Squadron F-111 aircraft participating in Exercise Red Flag during February 2006.' (U.S. Air Force)

'A No. 1 Squadron F-111 aircraft against a Tindal Sunset during Exercise Arnhem Thunder 2007.' (Official No: 20070812raaf8164229_013)

'Hornet fighters from RAAF Base Tindal link up in mid-air to receive fuel from a Boeing 707 tanker/transport aircraft, flying in close formation at more than 700 km per hour.' (Official No: 20070814ran8100087_083)

'An F/A-18 aircraft taxis for take-off from RAAF Base Tindal during Exercise Arnhem Thunder 2007.' (Official No: 20070809raaf8164229_2_012)



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Foreword

The issue of Australia's regional air superiority has been the subject of considerable discussion and commentary from 2000. The strategic guidance outlined in the *Defence 2000 – Our Future Defence Force* and the acquisition and phasing out of equipment proposed in the *Defence Capability Plan 2004–2014* has provided the basis for much of the debate amongst key stakeholders.

The Defence Sub-Committee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade first examined the issue of Australia's air combat capability in its *Review of the Defence Annual Report 2002-03*. Further to this inquiry, in June 2005, the Senate resolved that the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade 'inquire and report into the ability of the Australian Defence Force to maintain air superiority in our region to 2020, given current planning; as well as any measures required to ensure air superiority in our region to 2020.' To support the Committee in its deliberations, two public hearings were held and over 40 submissions were entered into evidence.

In terms of report structure, Chapter 2 outlines the strategic considerations, both global and regional, which underpin Australia's future regional air superiority. Concepts such as a balanced force structure, asymmetric threats, and an assessment of regional military capabilities are discussed. The chapter concludes that Australia must continue to monitor developments in the region when considering new and improved air combat capabilities.

Chapter 3 of the report considers the Australian Defence Force's (ADF) current capability planning, beginning with an overview of the *Defence 2000 – Our Future Defence Force* and subsequent Defence updates in 2003 and 2005. An outline of the Hornet Upgrade Program follows and its role in the transition to the new air combat aircraft is discussed. In concluding, the Committee notes the introduction of a new capability is underpinned by strategic policy and the constraints of providing a well balanced ADF.

The withdrawal from service of the F-111 is examined in Chapter 4 along with a consideration of the aircraft's technical and maintenance issues. Also discussed are

the merits of enhancing the F-111 and extending its in-service life past 2010. The chapter concludes that industry could support the F-111 until 2020 but there are risks, including the ability to sustain critical skills amongst the current workforce. The Committee notes the increasing severity of the risk profile in extending the F-111 beyond 2010.

Chapter 5 summarises the ADF's future capability planning with particular attention being given to the acquisition of the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) as well as any potential capability gap which may arise from a delay in its purchase.

The report concludes in Chapter 6 with a comparative analysis of the JSF and the FA-22 Raptor covering issues such as capability, availability and cost. Irrespective of whether the FA-22 Raptor is available for export sale to Australia, the Committee notes the purchase of the JSF is considered by Defence to provide the most effective and efficient air combat capability.

Hon B C Scott MP
Chair
Defence Sub-Committee



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		Mr K W Wilkie, MP
Secretary	Dr Margot Kerley	

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Terms of reference

On 14 June 2005, the Senate referred to the Committee an inquiry into:

- the ability of the Australian Defence Force to maintain air superiority in our region to 2020, given current planning; and
- any measures required to ensure air superiority in our region to 2020.



List of abbreviations

AAR	Air-to-air refuelling
ADF	Australian Defence Force
ADO	Australian Defence Organisation
AEW&C	Airborne Early Warning and Control Aircraft
ASPI	Australian Strategic Policy Institute
AUPC	Average Unit Procurement Cost
BVR	Beyond visual range
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CMDS	Counter Measure Dispensing Systems
CTOL	Conventional Take-Off and Landing
DCP	Defence Capability Plan
DMO	Defence Materiel Organisation
EWSP	Electronic Warfare Self-Protection
HUG	Hornet Upgrade
ISR	Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance
JASSM	Joint Air-to-Surface Stand-Off Missile

JDAM	Joint Direct Attack Munition
JSF	Joint Strike Fighter
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MP	Member of Parliament
MRTT	Multi-Role Tanker Transport aircraft
NACC	New Aerospace Combat Capability
NCW	Network-centric warfare
OEM	Original equipment manufacturer
PSFD	Production Sustainment and Follow-on Development
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
R&D	Research and development
Retd	Retired
SDD	System Development and Demonstration
SOP	Sole Operator Program
US	United States