



Submission No 6

Inquiry into Australian Defence Force Regional Air Superiority

:

Name: Robert Livingstone

Address: 69 Lilly Street
Sherwood, QLD 4075

The Chairman
The Hon Bruce Scott, MP
Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

Sir,

As an ex-member of the ADF, retired aviation journalist and concerned Australian citizen with some understanding of the aviation industry and the military, I would like to suggest that the future directions of the ADO and the RAAF are poorly researched and evaluated.

Despite the costs involved in continuing the operational use of the F-111, this is the only aircraft in the world today which can provide Australia with its strike and reconnaissance needs, probably for the next 20 years.

The decision, almost entirely based on cost, to prematurely retire this aircraft is badly misguided. I also feel that the cost factor has been overstated considering the spares holdings, recent upgrades and AMARC availability of major airframe spares.

Purchase of the JSF/F-35 should be stopped despite the loss of a large "security deposit" already paid.

The F-35, even on current estimates, will leave Australia with almost no strike or fighter force for some years with the retirement of the F-111 and ageing of the F/A-18, and no doubt this time factor will blow out even further.

The F-35 has inherent design limitations which will make it less than desirable for Australian requirements not to mention the fact that what we receive will be a "degraded" version as well.

The best solution for Australia would be a mix of F/A-22A Raptor multirole fighters and FB-22A strike fighters, **supported by proportionate aerial refuelling capabilities.**

Unfortunately the FB-22A remains a paper aircraft, and even if available it may not be feasible to take delivery until 2020 or later. As a result, APA advocates a compromise solution, in which 55 F/A-22A Raptor aircraft would replace 71 F/A-18A Hornets, and the F-111 would be upgraded and retained until the FB-22A becomes available, or retained longer term if the FB-22A does not materialise.

The compromise model, termed the 'Evolved F-111' plan, is designed to be cheaper than the current plan for the JSF, yet delivers far more capability with far less risk and incurs lesser impact on the balance of payments and annual defence budgets.
Sincerely,

Robert W Livingstone
69 Lilly ST
Sherwood
QLD 4075
07 3278 5908