

The Chairman  
Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence & Trade Committee,

Dear Sir,

I submit that when the Defence Materiel Organisation evaluates the relative merits of competing platforms and equipments for the Royal Australian Navy, insufficient consideration is given to each contender's logistic support arrangements in times of a war involving the RAN, and in particular, a war to defend Australia. It would seem that in selecting the preferred tender, priority is appropriately given to products that:

- meet the approved operational requirements,
- satisfy budgetary provisions, and,
- maximise Australian industry participation.

In order to satisfy the requirement for local industry participation, the DMO encourages foreign bidders to offer assembly of their ship and aircraft platforms and/or equipments in Australia. This arrangement often involves the importation of some critical components from the parent country which means that in the event of a serious war which isolated Australia from that country, the supply of critical replacement parts for that equipment in service, could be very uncertain.

Even if an urgently needed spare part is available within Australia, getting it to a particular the ship at sea in a war zone in a timely manner is not always a simple matter. Much depends on the quality of the RAN's logistic support capability and/or that of any allied navy also involved in the war to defend Australia. This critical requirement exposes a serious problem with the procurement of fighting equipment for the RAN that originates from distant countries unlikely to ever have their own logistic support ships in a war at sea, in the vicinity of Australia.

Currently and for the foreseeable future, the only navy other than the RAN with the capacity to provide our warships with logistic support in a war zone in the Asia Pacific area, is the US Navy. This unique capability deserves to receive much more weight when the DMO assesses the relative merits of contending bids for the supply of platforms and equipments for the RAN. The likelihood of any country other than the US, willing and able to provide a similar service during a war in our region, is nil. This fact leads to a conclusion that platforms and equipments for the RAN should either be wholly made in Australia or that all replacement parts for non Australian made items be available through the US Navy's logistic supply chain.

Yours aye,

Ormsby R Cooper  
Commodore RAN (Rtd)