

Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee
Joint Strike Fighter Inquiry
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Chairman and Committee members,

I would respectfully wish to submit a submission in relation to the Senate JSF Inquiry.

My desire to make a submission is based on my readings of other submissions previously submitted. I note the reporting date was extended until June 2016 and numerous additional documents and papers have been added to the original submissions so I hope that mine will be considered fully as well.

I welcome the inquiry into Australia's future air combat requirements. I recognize this as an important component (albeit only one) of our overall defence capability.

I note with some mild amusement many submissions to this inquiry to date seem to advocate (*once the chaff is sorted from the wheat, to borrow a phrase from a fellow contributor*) little more than preference for this or that particular aircraft. I note with some pessimism that many commentators pay little to no attention to the inescapable reality that any particular aircraft is at the end of the day only one single part of a combat system, and not even the 'pointy end' with such nomenclature seemingly best given to the weapons these aircraft employ.

As a glaring example of this, I firmly consider any of these fighter aircraft to be near to useless under ANY scenario, without a competent pilot to fly and 'fight' the aircraft or a competent weapon with which to engage an enemy, yet disappointingly, I see little to contribute to such arguments from any submission made to date beyond 'system X is what we should choose "because" type claims.'

I furthermore see many 'dire threats' being presented which appear to undermine our country's strategic position and perhaps our very way of life from some commentators with the only supporting information for such claims being taken (*almost always in the end, when you boil down to it*) from the alleged shortcomings of one tactical fighter aircraft compared to the particular commentator's personal preference for another. To describe such activity as '*drawing a long bow*' would seem to me to be understating things... If you accept the proposition that a pilotless F-22A will not be any more capable of performing an air combat mission than a pilotless F-35A, then the lack of context of attempting to discuss aircraft A versus aircraft B, renders moot any relevance or insight to be gained from such activity.

Any fighter aircraft we purchase is going to be flown by pilots trained a certain way in a specific system. It will be armed with certain weapons and will be

supported and upgraded as the years go by, through varying logistical concepts. This fighter aircraft will be employed / deployed in certain ways, (that will not remain static as years go by and lessons are learned) with certain (yet evolving) tactics in varying tactical, operational and perhaps on occasion, strategic environments. It is my contention when this is taken into consideration, that any discussion that centers on a platform and not the construct within which it is likely to be operated, is a discussion unworthy of a Senate Inquiry into such matters.

My argument therefore does not favour any particular platform. I believe such discussions are best left to those whose job it is to actually fly and fight these aircraft, today AND when they are introduced to service. It is those men and women after all; who will have the most to lose should an unpleasant reality occur and they be called upon to operate these aircraft in combat scenarios.

It is an observable reality however that there is one very large '*non-sequitor*' in this debate and that is a potential acquisition of the F-22A Raptor aircraft to serve within the Royal Australian Air Force. I agree with many submissions that the F-22A appears to be a superb combat aircraft and had history had a slightly different course, I would have welcomed this aircraft into our nation's service, if the RAAF had believed it suitable. But the simple fact is that this aircraft is not in-service with the RAAF and because it is no longer in production, never will be.

The last F-22A was produced in 2011 and delivered to the United States Air Force in 2012. Production was then ceased, all factory tooling and production support equipment stored and the production facility located at the Lockheed Martin factory within Dobbins Air Reserve base, Marietta Georgia, adapted to other projects, specifically the F-35 Lightning II.

In addition and has been explained many times, the F-22A was not and is not authorized for sale to any nation bar the United States of America. Despite strong lobbying from a number of great American 'friends' the bar on export (*confirmed in legislation by the US Congress via the Obey Amendment to the US Department of Defense Appropriation Act of 1998*) has never been lifted, nor has the F-22A ever pass through the authorisations (including ITARS requirements) required for foreign military sales. None of the 'friendship based' diplomatic approaches to the USA was able to overturn this prohibition in the 14 years the aircraft was in development / production, despite many attempts.

In short we are legislatively prohibited from attempting to purchase the F-22A and we are physically prohibited from attempting to purchase the F-22A by the fact that it is not and is unlikely to ever again be in production. Taken together these facts show clear that the F-22A is effectively beyond our reach, regardless of how worthy a contender it may be, or what it may cost.

In short all we 'need' to occur according to its proponents is:

1. The US Congress to legislatively overturn the ban on export of the F-22A.

2. For the F-22A to clear all ITARS processes including State Department approvals and enter into the Foreign Military Sales program.
3. For Lockheed Martin to cease producing F-35 Lightning II's at Dobbins Air Reserve base, Marietta Georgia and disassemble it's production facility for the F-35.
4. Re-assemble its production facility for the F-22A and negotiate with all lower tier suppliers, to commence production of all sub-assembly items for the F-22A.
5. Price the F-22A at a price point it was previously unable to meet, in order to attract order to amortise the cost of all this activity across a reasonably sized fleet of aircraft.
6. For the Australian Government to consider without evaluation just how many F-22A's it can afford.

Accordingly, such a process appears at best 'fanciful' in my submission and at worst deliberately disingenuous and misleading. Any support for the acquisition of the F-22A as circumstances stand therefore, in my humble opinion is not a serious consideration of a solution that will acceptably meet our needs and I respectfully submit that these calls therefore should be treated by the inquiry, accordingly.

My final point is simply to note that in many of the calls for the F-22A to be acquired, there are NO other air combat solutions even contemplated. Yet in the current fighter market place there are offers from Western fighter manufacturers of advanced F-15 and F/A-18 Super Hornet derivatives, advanced Eurofighter Typhoon, Dassault Rafale and SAAB Gripen fighters that are pitched to nations in similar situations to ourselves, as well as future Block modifications to the Joint Strike Fighter that promise improved capability in many areas compared to current air combat fighter solutions.

I find it curious in the extreme that in many of the more strident submissions to this inquiry, NO consideration of any of these alternatives is readily apparent. Is this the basis on which we should seek to spend \$17 Billion dollars? A flawed premise that an unavailable aircraft is our only 'real' option? To me this is an un-professional and unrealistic proposition, one that deserves to be considered in the same light.

Yours faithfully

Mr Errol Coultis

