



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

CANBERRA

31 May 2004

F-111

EARLY RETIREMENT PLAN UNDER SCRUTINY

The Defence sub-committee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade will conduct a public hearing in Canberra as part of its review of the Defence Annual Report 2002-2003.

The hearing will be on Friday, 4 June 2004 starting at 8.45am. The venue is Committee Room 1R1, Parliament House, Canberra.

The committee will scrutinise the decision by Defence to retire the F-111 fleet in 2010.

On 7 November 2003, as part of the Defence Capability Review, Air Force 'advised that by 2010 – with full introduction of the AEW&C aircraft, the new air-to-air refuellers, completion of the F/A-18 Hornet upgrade programs including the bombs improvement program and the successful integration of a stand-off strike weapon on the F/A-18s and AP-3C — the F-111 could be withdrawn from service.'

On 15 December 2003 the committee examined Defence on the implications of retiring the F-111 early. The examination focused on the possible loss of capability, the adequacy of the proposed alternative platforms, cost implications, and the length of time Australia may be subject to a potential capability gap if the F-35 delivery date of 2012 is not achieved.

In addition, the committee sought details on the impact the decision would have on industry development in Queensland.

On 27 January 2004 the committee received a submission from Dr Carlo Kopp and Mr Peter Goon which criticised Air Force's decision and rationale for retiring the F-111. Dr Kopp and Mr Goon argue that the cost of maintaining the F-111 is inflated, and there would be a significant capability gap if the F-111 is retired before the F-35 is delivered. Dr Kopp and Mr Goon will appear as witnesses at the hearing.

In view of the significance of this matter, the committee determined that Defence should further explain, on the public record, the reasons for retiring the F-111 in 2010, and the measures taken to ensure that there is no loss of strike capability.

HEARING PROGRAM

Friday, 4 June 2004

Committee Room 1R1

8.45am	Department of Defence
9.45am	Dr Carlo Kopp and Mr Peter Goon

For comment, contact Mr Bruce Scott on (02) 6277 4949 or 0427 743 126. For information, phone the sub-committee secretary, Mr Stephen Boyd on (02) 6277 2368 or visit the committee's website at http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jfadt/defenceannualreport_2002_2003/darIndex.htm

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