



Submission No 26

Inquiry into Australian Defence Force Regional Air Superiority

Name: J R Peake

Address: Suite 20
287 Military Rd
Cremorne, NSW 2090

Supplementary Submission

To the JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS and DEFENCE

J.R. PEAKE
Private Citizen
Suite 20
287 Military Rd
05 May 2006
Cremorne NSW 2090

On reading the Submissions made ,the transcript of Witness' interviews and subsequent events I would like to make the following supplementary observations, pertinent to the TOR.

- 1.Members of the Committee sought information from witnesses so as to be sure whether they had no vested interest , or to be able to see where they were coming from.

(Senator Ferguson of Prof Babbage and Dr Stephens "...without vested interest, put forward a position")

Prof. Babbage told the committee his Kokoda Foundation was sponsored including the "government".

However, according to the Kokoda Foundation Web site his Foundation is specifically sponsored by the Department of Defence (and to the tune of \$1 million). How can Kokoda claim to be independent if their principal sponsor is Defence?

- 2.Many submissions and witnesses gave their strategic views. In the modern world conflicts often occur without a build up in tension that gives sufficient warning for preparation, and subsequently time to purchase new hardware /training. The lead time for military hardware purchases is mostly extremely long. Thus our defence plan must not create a 'Gap ' situation, as the Defence force proposal appears to do. Scrapping the highly lethal F-111 and using 30 or so modified F/A-18 while awaiting the JSF seems a most obvious error. There is a likely 5 year high risk strategy. Look for example how quickly Timor developed, and could have turned very nasty.

There seems to be a prevailing attitude among Defence and its consultants that should a major conflict arise, the U.S.A. will help us out and quickly. There may well be a situation where the USA simply does not immediately have the appropriate units available and we are on our own for a while. Or, our conflicts might clash with their other strategic friendships. The TOR states a time frame to 2020...who knows what political influences or changes might arise that may harm our relationship with USA in that future period.

We must keep clearly at the fore front of our minds what happened in the 1930s and our then belief and reliance on Britain...and then what resulted at Singapore.

Further, in a major conflict we may well have full responsibility for a particular area(Theatre Of Operations) we must therefore seek to have the possible equipment to do that job and not rely on or hope to be provided with equipment from the USA.

- 3.The argument that the Government sets the parameters and Defence only makes its recommendations to meet those parameters is of considerable concern.

Defence surely, by definition, has an obligation to us all to raise any questions they might have and make sure the Government fully understands the implications of any shortfall or inadequacies of the parameters. Defence should not just knowingly recommend the wrong hardware because of inadequate parameters defined by government, as implied by Mr Pezzullo.

This sounds very much like an excuse if in the future the Joint Strike Fighter recommendation proves to be wrong ... don't blame us, blame the Government ... they only wanted equality not superiority!

- 4.In considering a forward position of 20+ years is it wise to accept that Australia and Singapore will be the only nations to be educated enough to be able to fully use the NCW as suggested by Dr Stephens: "only Australia and Singapore can realistically aspire to construct NCW capabilities".

Or, is this dangerously arrogant.

5.The " Gap" Strategy:

Defence do not advise the precise cost of the modified F/A-18 including new centre barrels.

However, Submission 20 does identify this and with a detailed analyses. That cost being a whopping \$5.14 billion . As Defence did not refute this in their evidence we can assume it is correct. Similarly with the technical challenges to be faced.

(Defence instead attempts to belittle the authors of submission 20. Mr Puzullo's comments did nothing to engender respect for Defence, and indeed smacked of 'shooting the messenger')

It worries me greatly that this enormous expenditure will enable the F/A-18 to perform for only another 5 years service. Also, the proposal is to really only upgrade approx 30 units. Defence will scrap the remainder as well as the F-111(to give them "head space" according to A.M. Shepherd.) How will 30 odd aircraft do even a remotely capable job for a 5 year period? Originally the "Gap" plan, after announcing the premature retirement of the F-111s, was to be provided by the whole fleet of modified F/A-18s plus the APC-3 Orions...Now the Orions are quietly dropped and we find its not the full fleet of F/A-18s...only 30 or so.

Defence are challenged on this plan..... Cost , volume, feasibility and timing. They should already be in a position to spell out confidently the real situation, refute line by line the detailed technical problems and weakness raised.

As they do not, it leaves one with the belief that we cannot be confident in their 'Gap' strategy at all. As in any case the F/A-18 has considerable capability limitations.

To drop our only true deep strike aircraft, the F-111, during this period, after all its current and planned and potential enhancements ,not to mention its lethality and usefulness well into the future, defies common sense.....regardless of "headspace".

6.6. The advantage of Situational Awareness:

Defence need to realize that effective communication of a Benefit comprises 3 parts:

Key benefit
What makes it possible
How is it achieved

If the recipient of the Benefit Statement cannot understand or is sceptical ,one or more of these ingredients are missing. So it would seem with the poor explanations from Defence. Are they expecting the taxpayer to just accept what they say without question?

How does a JSF deal with a Sukhoi on his tail after expending its 2 bombs and is egressing from a deep strike mission, while it is situationally aware, but can't outrun, can't out manoeuvre , has shorter range radar and range and is not stealthy from behind? If the answer is he'll have support from his mates the question leads on to how many can we have in the air on this mission with only 5 or less tankers and with responsibility for defence of the Wedgetail AEW&CS and the other tankers?

I'm reminded of the Battle of Britain when the Brits had the advantage of radar (situational awareness in primitive form) but it didn't help the poor Boulton-Paul Defiant fighter, which was decimated by the Bf-109s.

The TOR covers The next 20 years. Are we to believe other potential adversarial nations wont have ,or be able to operate NCW during this period? Or have successful jamming? Or, shoot very long range missiles at our AEW&Cs?

7.Performance and roles:

In a recent interview with Lt General David Deptula, Commander Kenny Warfighting Headquarters and Vice Commander, U S Pacific Air Forces, he was asked about the roles of the F-22 and the JSF.

'the F/A-22A is a truly multi mission transformational combat aircraft...it is not just a F/A-22A. It's an

F/A/B/E/RC//E-22A”

When questioned, “is there any basis by F-22 critics that the JSF is a suitable substitute for the F-22 in the air combat and deep strike role?” he replied: “The JSF is not a substitute for the F/A-22A. In fact, the JSF will rely on the F/A-22 for air dominance. The JSF is designed primarily for air to ground operations to replace the F-16 and A-10.”

As this is totally in contrast to what our defence Chiefs are trying to convey....A.M. Shepherd claimed at the Hearing that “ F-22 is a single role platform” and “the JSF is truly multi role ”..... both these air force generals can't be right.

8. And are Defence really being too clever in leaving the Committee with the impression that the F-22 is obsolete, when the Americans think otherwise.

9. Cost:

From the outset of this argument Committee members have tried to get to grips with comparative costs of the JSF and the F-22.

It's been a vexing question for them.

Defence keep saying F-22 is 'very expensive' yet their Dr Gumley said “ no negotiations or discussions have ever been held on price....we have not had a discussion yet.” Credibility is again on the line.

They also keep perpetuating the myth that the JSF is about \$45 million apiece.

In fact, the US GAO report #06- 356 released in March , indicates very clearly the JSF will cost in excess of USD\$100. It is very probable that it will end up dearer than the F-22....!!

10. Which model:

Given what we now know of the JSF costs, plus the timing issues, Defence need to re address how a considerably lesser number of aircraft can do the job envisaged...i.e. say 45 instead of 100.

They need then to compare in an unbiased way the alternative strategy of buying a similar number of F-22 plus the Evolved F-111 and drop the highly expensive, for limited duration only, update of the ageing F/A-18. The time lines are so very important here. Any recommendation would need to be verified and tested using independent sources, before being adopted by government.

11. The Committees' 14 Specific Questions of Defence (and their answers):

These need to be incorporated into the submissions for public viewing.

Finally, when the biggest single defence purchase is announced, the decision ought be applauded, and by and large endorsed by the Analysts. Not, as in this case, questioned as to its logic, facts, veracity and integrity and culminating in a costly Parliamentary Inquiry.