

DCP Special:
Minister,
chiefs: 5,6
Tanks, P7
Page 5



No four-
engine
gliders:
Tenix acts
Page 4

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A LIMPING DCP

Bully for tanks; but keep your fingers crossed

CANBERRA – The late-week unveiling of the Defence Capability Plan – on a Friday lunchtime – showed the government has taken a two-way bet on the ideological differences between commitment to the region and distant adventures, while tipping its cap to the former.

The Army is to get probably 100 tanks. But let's hope no one suggests we should commit an armoured brigade half way across the world.

Just in case, the Navy is to replace eventually the mixed-bag of transports such as *HMAS Tobruk*, *Manoora* and *Kanimbla* with bigger transports. But the latter will be in service until 2015. Hopefully they will be built in Australia.

And (fingers crossed!) the RAAF is to phase out the F-111s after 2010, as long as the F/A-18 upgrades and new weapons systems provide an adequate capability.

"The review reaffirmed that the defence of Australia and regional requirements should be the primary drivers of force structure," Defence Minister Robert Hill said.

"The review identified an increased requirement to strengthen

DCP, to Page 2



RAAF picture

The Super Seasprite landed onboard the Anzac-class frigate HMAS Warramunga at Garden Island in Sydney to commence ship board trials which include landing, lash-down and stowage procedures onboard the ANZAC class war ships. The Super Seasprite is from 805 'Check mates' Squadron, based at HMAS Albatross.

Strapped USAF to buy 80 tankers

WASHINGTON – The Bush administration has compromised on a plan for the US Air Force to lease 100 Boeing 767 refuelling tankers. The Pentagon will buy 80 of the planes and lease only 20.

This clears the main obstacle in the way of Boeing's offer of the same KC-767-300 tankers to the RAAF for Air 5402.

The compromise will cut the cost of the US\$21 billion Air Force plan by at least \$3 billion and may save as much \$5 billion over 15 years, depending on when the planes are bought in.

The agreement also ends two years of political wrangling over the proposal, which Vietnamflier hero Senator John McCain and

other opponents called a sweetheart deal for Boeing during a downturn in the aviation industry.

"Four-fifths of a victory," hailed McCain, an Arizona Republican who sits on the Senate Armed Services Committee.

McCain said the Senate "will not tolerate backroom deal and policy-making done in the dead of night – particularly at considerable expense to taxpayers".

The Air Force initially objected to the scaled-down plan, saying it would require large payments upfront and could force the military to cut back on other programs.

Tankers, Page 3

DCP, from P1

the effectiveness and sustainability of the Army, to provide air defence protection to deploying forces, to enhance the lift requirement for deployments and to position the Australian Defence Force to exploit emerging Network Centric Warfare advantages.

“In undertaking the review, the Government has drawn heavily on the advice of the Chief of the Defence Force and the Service Chiefs. The Government has also been mindful to strike the balance between maintaining preparedness and longer term capability.”

On the Navy, Hill said the government has accepted advice from the Chief of Navy to strengthen its defensive air warfare capability. The anti-ship missile defence projects will be complemented by:

- SM2 missiles to four of the Navy’s guided missile frigates (FFGs).

- acquisition of three air warfare destroyers.

“The FFGs will be improved in Australia and the Government’s strong preference is to build the air warfare destroyers in Australia, which will provide significant work for Australia’s shipbuilding industry,” Hill said. “The core of the combat system for the air warfare destroyers will be US designed – probably a variant of the Aegis air warfare system.”

To provide offsets, the two oldest FFGs will be laid off from 2006 when the last of the new ANZAC frigates is delivered. Navy will also lay up two minehunter coastal vessels, which could be brought back into service should the need arise.

“The Government proposes to enhance Navy’s amphibious capability by replacing *HMAS Tobruk* with a larger amphibious vessel in 2010 and successively replacing the two LPAs *HMAS Manoora* and *Kanimbla* with a second larger am-

phibious ship and a sea lift ship.

“The fleet oiler *HMAS Westralia* will be replaced through the acquisition of an other operating but environmentally sustainable oiler, which will be refitted in Australia.

“In such circumstances, the Air Force has 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.

“By that time the Air Force will have a strong and effective land and maritime strike capability. This will enable withdrawing the F111 a few years earlier than envisaged in the White Paper.”

Hill also confirmed eventual replacement of the AP-3 Orions with a mix of Global Hawks and some other aircraft, in the next decade.

CANBERRA – *The Australia Defence Association welcomed the Defence Capability Review. Executive director Neil James described the statement as several common sense decisions”.*

“The decisions to harden the army using a combined arms approach, modernise and substantially increase our amphibious and sealift capabilities, proceed with three air warfare destroyers and keep the F111 strategic bomber force until at least 2010, are particularly welcome and in some cases well over due.

“All these decisions are sound, common sense steps to retain or improve strategic and operational balance and versatility in the ADF

“The general decision that the ADF must be capable of deploying, lodging and sustaining Australian forces offshore are a well over due acknowledgement of reality... a considered and logical rejection of the narrow thinking that prevailed through out the 1980s and 1990s.

And two cheers from the ADA

“The Association also notes with considerable relief the government’s clear assurance that their decisions in this review drew on the advice of the Chief of Defence Force and the Service Chiefs.

“This has often not been the case over the last two to three decades when the considered and dispassionate professional advice of the CDF and Service Chiefs was often disregarded, and ADF capability development decisions were driven in stead by narrow ideological and bureaucratic agendas.

“Several subjects not mentioned are perhaps highlighted by their omission.

“[Most of] the decisions are really concerned with managing capability development out to 2010. Some indication of the government’s thinking for the not too distant future would have been welcome.

“The topic of over all defence

funding is not mentioned, specifically any increases in defence funding to close the \$A107 billion gap between the funds promised in defence white papers since 1987 and the funding delivered.

“The announcement dwells on hardware and platforms, with virtually no mention of people and sustainability, the other two aspects of capability. The size of the ADF will have to increase if the operational tempo and range of overseas deployments needs to continue.

“The submarine force was not mentioned. The ADA assumes this means no change.

“There was no mention of the increasingly urgent and necessary steps that need to be taken to rationalise and empower ADF command structures, free them from bureaucratic interference and reform the bloated and relatively unresponsive civilian bureaucracy in the Department of Defence.”

Comment

SYDNEY – The glaring omission is any reconsideration of the way the ADF is to go about heavy-lift.

In particular, there have been studies about using Australian high-speed vessels to transport and support forces of up to augmented battalion strength and deploy them with helicopters and landing vessels. But the Navy prefers to go down the traditional, and vulnerable path of conventional ships.

We have the US Army and the US Marines beating a path to Australian shipbuilders for our high-speed ships. Even after Jervis Bay, leased into service, made possible the Timor operation.

Both the US Army and Marines are operating both helicopters and landing craft from their Incat and Austal vessels.

By the time decisions are being made on last-generation support ships, the US Navy's Littoral Combat Ships will be taking shape with Australian input. Which we seem intent on ignoring.

There are also plans to buy in Boeing 747s to convert locally tanker-transports.

While the world is buying this kit, the ADF will be locked into the conventional, inflexible strait-jacket of the last century. – John Stackhouse

USAF to get tankers, from Page 1

But after lobbying from the White House and influential legislators, the Pentagon backed down.

Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz said the Air Force will lease 20 planes immediately and buy 11 to 13 aircraft a year. The first tanker – which Boeing has already built and flown to Wichita for modifications – could be delivered in late 2005. The final planes are expected by 2014.

To pay for the planes, the Defense Department would increase its acquisition budget by a total of \$10 billion over six years, Wolfowitz said. It was not clear what other military programs, if any, would have to be cut to help meet those increased expenses.

The tanker deal will be included in a bill authorising 2004 defense programs. House-Senate negotiators worked out an agreement on the bill Thursday, and the House is expected to approve it Friday. The Senate will probably consider the bill early this week and Hill experts predict the compromise will go through.



MELBOURNE – Air safety will be boosted and the world aviation industry is set to save millions of dollars with the development by Tenix and CSIRO of an airborne volcanic gas and ash detector.

Undetected volcanic ash in flight paths has cost airlines more than \$250 million as engines ingested silicate particles in the ash.

Volcanic ash also scours windcreens, damage instruments. In some instances, ash has caused complete loss of power on jets.

The CSIRO-developed Ground-based Infra-Red Detection (G-bIRD) system is designed for installation in areas where hazard

No one wants four-engine gliders

ous volcanic gas and ash may be present, including routes across the North and South Pacific.

Tenix trialled the device in Hawaii and Guam earlier this year and more recently at the base of Mt Etna in Sicily.

Tenix is working with commercial and government partners to make G-bIRD available at cities and airports near volcanoes, to provide early warning and data about the nature and location of ash and sulphur dioxide clouds.

Tenix Group MD Paul Salteri says that an average of at least one

volcano erupted somewhere around the world each week, hazardous airline traffic.

The technology was developed in Australia in the 1990s by CSIRO Atmospheric Research scientists headed by Dr Fred Prata. Tenix joined the multi-million-dollar development 12 months ago and is responsible for commercialisation.

The technology may also be used for environmental monitoring of sulphur dioxide and sulphuric acid (acid rain) clouds to warn asthma and other respiratory sufferers.

Not enough Indians in AF

NEW DELHI – The Indian Air Force has been struggling to sign up new recruits because of concern about its frequent aircraft crashes. The air force is short of a few hundred officers though officially it says there are no problems.

The IAF commissioned a survey to find out why too few promising young people want a service career.

“There was a presumption that bright youngsters are not attracted to the IAF because of the lower pay (as compared with the corporate sector). But we were wrong,” air force chief S. Krishnaswamy said.

Accidents involving IAF fighters – mainly the MiG-21s – have put youth off joining up.

At last 273 MiGs, nicknamed named “flying coffins,” were lost in crashes between 1991 and 2003, killing more than 100 pilots.

Kiwis also go shopping

WELLINGTON – The New Zealand Ministry of Defence’s shopping list highlights an alerting and cueing system for the Mistral very low level air defence system (VLLADS) already in-service.

The budget provision is NZ\$12 million. Systems research was conducted in April 2003. Evaluation is expected to be concluded by December.

NZ has selected Javelin as its medium range anti-armour weapon, at a cost of NZ\$22 million.

A direct fire support weapon seeks to procure 40mm automatic grenade launchers complete with tactical fire control units, plus supporting systems, at a cost of NZ\$15 million. The RFP was conducted in April and evaluation of proposals is expected in March, with completion by March 2006.

G-A flies Predator B

SAN DIEGO – General Atomics Aeronautical Systems says the first pre-production version of the Predator B has flown.

Predator B provides quick-transit, long-endurance flights in support of intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance and weapons delivery missions.

Predator B incorporates a wider fuselage to house additional fuel, enabling it to fly for over 30 hours while carrying over 3,000 lbs of external and 800 lbs of internal payloads for a total gross take-off weight of 10,000 lbs.

Predator B, capable of operations above 50,000 ft, uses a Honeywell turbo-prop engine, larger sensor package and increased wingspan over that of the MQ-1 Predator. General Atomics has also invested in the development of sister aircraft.



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CANBERRA – In his media conference, Defence Minister Robert Hill emphasised full Service support by being accompanied by the Chief of the Defence Force, General Peter Cosgrove (as well as the Secretary, who remained silent) and Service Chiefs. He put the focus strongly on equipment.

Hill talked up the tanks for the Army, the air warfare destroyers for the Navy and made some optimistic as surptions about where the RAAF's Hornets will be seven years from now, when he spoke of withdrawing the RAAF's F-111 bombers. Sotto voce, the RAAF rather qualified this optimism.

For the Army's tanks, Hill spoke of the "the important role that tanks have played in the protection of forces on the ground".

He drew attention also to moves that "to accelerate networking of Army communications processes, identification of vehicles and the like", which the Canberra media failed to follow up. However, they will play an important part in the ADF's move to network centric warfare, a Defence spokeswoman

Yes, Minister – and three bags full

said, and avoiding the likelihood of blue-on-blue casualties.

Some of the media also attempted to see the decision to buy SM2s for four FFGs and new air warfare destroyers, probably with Aegis systems, as a national missile defence. Hill was quick to hose that down, saying the threat was "long-range missiles launched from the air" and the purpose to protect convoys that include the troop-carrying supply ships that are also on the shopping list.

Chief of Navy, Vice-Admiral Chris Ritchie, let the minister doing the talking but he was quick to deny that support ships in the 60,000 ton category were intended. "More like 20," he muttered.

The plans to replace the jinxed oiler HMAS Westralia are much more modest. "We're going to buy one [tanker] on the market but one that nevertheless meets the new environmental standards and we will then refit that in Australia," he said. "While that will replace the Westralia, it was less than what

was originally intended and there'll be some savings."

"Environmental standards" hopefully means double-hulled – a big consideration when operational areas include the Barrier and other coral reefs.

Hill is maintaining his optimism that all will go smoothly for the RAAF: "We are on the path towards the Joint Strike Fighter which will be our principal combat aircraft in due course," he said. "We are out [to] tender at the moment for new tanker aircraft and our AEW&C aircraft are being produced."

What Hill did not say, however, is that the future of the JSF is still clouded; that trying to use the F/A-18s for long-distance strike, will mean that five 767-type tankers are painfully inadequate; and failing to pick up the two extra options on the Wedgetail fleet will, if a threat develops, leave our northwest as sets painfully vulnerable.

To next page

Virgin hires in Aust and NZ

BRISBANE – Virgin Blue has appointed John Bartlett, former GM Airlines for the Civil Aviation Authority in New Zealand, as its new head of safety systems. He replaces Bruce Byron, who is to become CEO of the Australian Civil Aviation Safety Authority.

Before joining the CAA, Bartlett worked for 15 years with Ansett New Zealand, including a spell as Flight Operations Manager.

The appointment comes as Virgin subsidiary, Pacific Blue, prepares to begin direct services from Christchurch, first to Brisbane at the end of February and then to Melbourne, on March 4.

Pacific Blue says it will use "bright red, brand new Boeing

737-800s" with 180 "leather" seats pitched to 32in or more and concession fares for the launch period.

Tony Marks, CEO of Origin Pacific Airways and formerly with Air New Zealand, will head Pacific Blue. Tony Parrish becomes flight operations manager, Bob Mahon flight standards manager, Peter Morgan engineering manager and John Hughes manager, finance and administration.



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From previous page

Laying up two minehunters, in the present situation is probably permissible, providing they can be brought into service quickly. But given more than one mine threat around our coast, a wiser course would be to operate them at low tempo as reserve units.

In his comments, General Cosgrove buried some thing of a barb. After a couple of platitudes, he said: "We – the Department and the ADF – have got a lot of work to do now to just fill in those gaps that Government has sent us away to continue to work with and we'll do that without delay. . . . I just want to stress that we're very happy indeed with the outcome."

The Chief of Army, Lieutenant General Peter Leahy, emphasised "the combined arms approach – infantry, armour, artillery, engineers and Army aviation in concert with other elements and the Air Force, provide a solid force that can pro-

tect and support each other".

"We see that Army will be required to engage in close combat and our appreciation is that the best way to do that is with a balanced combined armed force," he added. "The tank provides balance within that force."

When questioned on costs, Hill skated on fairly thin ice, giving procurement a heft nudge to the right, in time terms:

"We developed this project on a budget-neutral basis. . . . Because only seven years of the 10 years remain, we've taken it out an extra three years. So the new DCP when it's released will be for a 10-year block, starting from this year.

"And with the savings that we're able to make and with some movement of projects we can achieve these outcomes within that budget."

The Chief of Air Force, Air Marshal Angus Houston was asked: "What are your own thoughts about this prospect of a gap oper-

ing up before the arrival of the JSF."

His reply: "There will be no gap. Essentially the F-111 will not be withdrawn until such time as we've fully upgraded the F/A-18. We [will] have the much more capable tankers. We [will] have the AEW&C. We've upgraded our weapons.

"The F/A-18 will be capable of dropping not only laser guided precision munitions but also satellite guided precision munitions and will also be capable of delivering a follow-on, stand-off weapon, which will also be fitted to the AP3C."

Later Houston modified that optimistic stance – discreetly. He replied to a later question: "What will dictate the retirement of the F-111 will be the achievement of a suitable capability to replace the F-111. Now we think that will be somewhere from 2010 onwards." Fingers crossed, Air Marshal? – John Stackhouse

CANBERRA – Saab Systems Australia has joined the local Tenix and France's Sagem team to meet the JP129 requirement to provide tactical, brigade-level, UAV systems, to be in service with the Australian Army by 2007.

They are offering Sagem's Sperwer tactical UAV (TUAV).

Saab Systems, the principal owner of Aerosonde, has joined to offer a dual-platform system.

Sagem, with a presence in 20 countries, is the leading European UAV supplier.

Tenix Defence will act as the principal Australian subcontractor and provide a range of services during the acquisition and through life support phases of the project.

Sperwer has been sold to five European armies, Canada and NATO.

The Sperwer system aims at tactical surveillance, reconnaissance and targeting and offers 200 km range, six hours endurance, auto-

matic catapult launch and parachute landing on unprepared ground.

Comprehensive mission planning and monitoring, effective electro-optical day and night sensors and a range of other sensors are offered.

Sperwer can be fully integrated into the ADF's C4I systems and information architecture.

Saab Systems has extensive experience in systems integration and land warfare through the battle field



A contender for the US Marines is Bell's tilt-rotor, seen here in a fullscale prototype

command support system (BCSS) used by the Australian Army.

Aerosonde is the developer of Australia's Aerosonde UAV, which has been successfully deployed on military operations. The Aerosonde UAV complements the Sperwer with its 30-hour endurance and low observability.

Bell image

Tanks compared: 1 US Abrams

CANBERRA – Australia is considering three main battle tank (MBT) types to replace the Leopard 1s, now sadly obsolete.

- **The M1 Abrams** is named after the late General Creighton Abrams. More than 8,800 M1 and M1A1 tanks were produced for the US Army and Marine Corps, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

Three versions are in service – the original M1 model, dating from the 1980s, and two newer M1A1 and M1A2. The M1A1 series, produced from 1985 through 1993, replaced the M1's 105mm main gun with a 120mm gun and other enhancements, including improved suspension, a new turret, increased armour and NBC protection.

The US Army is upgrading about 1000 M1 tanks to the M1A2

configuration. The Army is also modifying the M1A2 to enhance its digital command and control capabilities and to add the second generation (FLIR) sights.

Weight: 60-68 tonnes, depending on configuration. Main armament is either a 105mm or Rhein-Metall 120mm smooth-bore gun.

Power-plant: 1500hp Lycoming



US Marine Abram tank in Shoal Bay exercise

Textron gas turbine engine coupled to an Allison hydrokinetic transmission with four forward and two reverse gears. The tactical cruising range is approximately 275 miles.

US DoD



Swedish Army

Kampfpanzer Leopard 2

The successor to the Leopard 1. A variety of upgrade programs and options are available. These include the Atlas digital command and information system. A new smooth bore gun, the 120 millimetre L55 Gun, has been developed by Rheinmetall GmbH of Ratingen, Germany. Leopard 2 is operating in at least seven countries

It has a crew of four, a combat weight of 55.15 tonnes. The engine is a 1500-hp diesel with a cruising range of 550km. Maximum road speed is 72 km/h; off road, 45 km/h. The maximum aimed range is 3,500m.



Vickers Ltd

Challenger 2 MBT

Hull and automotive parts are based on Challenger 1. The turret of Challenger 2 is a totally new design. Armour is Chobham. Main armament is a Royal Ordnance 120 mm rifled tank gun, designated the L30. It also incorporates a 7.62 mm chain gun. The Challenger 2's fire control system is an improved version of that in the M1A1 Abrams tank. Crew of 4, combat weight of 62.5 t. Max road speed 56 km/h and range of 250 km cross country and 450 km on road. Rolls-Royce Perkins Conдор CV12 1200bhp.

FORT WORTH – Flight International says international “partners” in the JSF project have been “struggling” to achieve promised industrial goals from their participation in the huge F-35 program. The UK magazine says Lockheed Martin may sign up additional sources for existing contracts to compete for production work.

“This ‘second-sourcing’ strategy is to improve workshare prospects for national partners still seeking to recoup a combined \$4.5 billion investment during the F-35’s 10-year development phase,” Flight says.

The concept is based on predictions that future orders for F-35s will exceed the production capacity of the existing contractor base, says Lockheed Martin F-35 programme manager Tom Burbage.

Manufacturing capacity is now being optimised for the US/UK order for almost 2,600 aircraft, but double that figure is expected in

Promises, promises on JSF program

worldwide sales. Several partner nations – including Australia, Canada, Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway and Turkey – are expected to place orders, and more could follow.

Michael Consentino, Lockheed Martin international programmes director, says the company favours non-US suppliers in some areas.

Tanker axe threat to JSF

NEW YORK – Lockheed Martin fears its Joint Strike Fighter program may face cuts as new defence programs threaten rising federal budget deficits.

Bloomberg says analysts cut their Lockheed ratings in September on concerns that the United States could reduce spending for

large defence programs, although Lockheed says it is not aware of any threat to JSF funding.

The Air Force’s acquisition chief Marvin Sambur says said a plan to purchase 80 Boeing 767 tankers and lease 20 others would add \$8.4 billion to the service’s long-range budget.

“I don’t think there’s an immunity to this program or any other program relative to over all considerations in the budget,” said Lockheed Martin’s president.

“The services, the Air Force, the Marine Corps, support the program, the international participants support the program.”

The federal budget shortfall was a record \$374 billion last year and the White House’s Office of Management and Budget projects it will reach \$475 billion in the latest fiscal year.

Wedgetail powers up

ST LOUIS – Boeing has installed and tested the power system on the first 737 AEW&C Wedgetail platform ahead of schedule.

This is a major step in the modification effort leading to the first airworthiness flight of the aircraft scheduled for first quarter 2004.

Crews tested the aircraft’s electrical power generating system (EPGS), using GPUs.

Air Vice Marshal Norman Gray, head of Australia’s Airborne Surveillance and Control Division, is pleased with the progress the Wedgetail project has achieved.

The first Wedgetail will be used for the airworthiness flight test program, while the second aircraft, also undergoing modifications in Seattle, will be used to test the airborne mission system beginning in 2004.

Over the next several months, test

equipment will be installed along with the radar system equipment.

AIM-9X passes its test program

ELMENDORF AFB – The US Navy says the AIM-9X Sidewinder missile, has reached initial operational capability (IOC). The 11th Air Force, Elmendorf AFB, Alaska is its first operational unit.

The AIM-9X IOC is met when a unit is trained and equipped with adequate missiles for each of its primary aircraft assigned and all appropriate support equipment, spares and publications have been successfully delivered.

The USN says AIM-9X “changes the rules of air combat forever”.

The latest Sidewinder incorporates a fifth-generation, staring focal plane array (FPA) seeker for robust guidance performance, infrared

countermeasure (IRCM) resistance and jet vane control for extremely agile turning performance.

AIM-9X scored an unprecedented 18 successes in 19 guided missile firings during development.

Air India to split big order

NEW DELHI – Air India plans to buy a mix of 28 aircraft from Airbus and Boeing in a deal estimated to be worth US\$2.21 billion.

Air India will buy 10 Airbus A340s for its long-range requirements and 18 Boeing 737-800s for the short-haul routes.

The aircraft will be powered by CFM International.

The plan needs the approval of the Indian government before Air India can place the orders.

The A340s seat more than 250 and the 737s carry 160.