



SENATOR JOHN FAULKNER Minister for Defence

Wednesday, 25 November 2009

051/2009

F-35 JOINT STRIKE FIGHTER—AUSTRALIA'S NEXT GENERATION AIR POWER

The Minister for Defence, Senator John Faulkner, today announced that the Australian Government had approved acquisition of the first batch of F-35 Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) aircraft as foreshadowed in the 2009 Defence White Paper.

There has been considerable public interest in the potential acquisition of the F-35 JSF. The Government examined the JSF's capabilities very carefully in the context of the Air Combat Capability Review and 2009 Defence White Paper deliberations, and remains confident that the JSF's combination of stealth, advanced sensors, networking and data fusion capabilities, when integrated into the networked Australian Defence Force (ADF), will ensure Australia maintains its strategic capability advantage out to 2030.

The Government has approved acquisition of the first 14 Conventional Take-Off and Landing (CTOL) Joint Strike Fighters and infrastructure and support required for initial training and testing, at an estimated cost of \$3.2 billion.

"Approval of this first batch of JSF aircraft is evidence of the Rudd Government's strong commitment to defence and our commitment to implementing the Defence White Paper," Senator Faulkner said.

Approval of the next batch of aircraft and all necessary support and enabling capabilities, sufficient to establish three operational squadrons and a training squadron of CTOL JSF, will be considered in 2012. This will fulfil our White Paper commitment to acquire three operational squadrons comprising not fewer than 72 aircraft.

"By 2012, Defence will have much firmer cost estimates for the remaining aircraft and necessary support and enabling capabilities as part of the planned first multi-year buy that is expected to comprise over 1000 aircraft for the US, Australia and other partners. This will allow for much more effective planning of the final JSF acquisition in the context of the overall Defence Capability Plan," Senator Faulkner said.

Acquisition of an additional operational squadron – bringing the total number of JSF aircraft to around 100 – will be considered at a later date in conjunction with a decision on the withdrawal of the F/A-18F Super Hornet.

Australia's first JSF aircraft will be delivered in the United States in 2014 to commence initial training and test activities. Australia's first operational squadron will be based at Royal Australian Air Force Base Williamtown, and is

planned to be ready for operations in 2018. All three operational squadrons are planned to be in service in 2021.

The decision follows many years of unprecedented evaluation and planning by all nine countries involved in the JSF's development.

"Defence has done more analysis on this platform than any other platform in the acquisition history of the ADF," Senator Faulkner said.

Chief of the Air Force, Air Marshal Mark Binskin said: "The JSF acquisition will allow Australia to maintain its regional air combat superiority. It will also enable Australia to effectively contribute to regional security and enhances opportunities for interoperability and commonality to support future coalition operations."

To date, 25 Australian companies have won approximately US\$200 million in the development and early production phase of the JSF. As Australia and other countries commit to JSF acquisition, significantly increased opportunities for Australian industry will open up, as agreed in the Industry Participation Plan with Lockheed Martin and its JSF industry partners.

Minister for Defence Personnel, Materiel and Science, Greg Combet said: "Government and Industry will need to continue to work together as JSF Team Australia to maximise benefits for Australian industry in the JSF Program in the face of stiff international competition. Consideration of acquisition of the next batch of aircraft in 2012 will provide Government the opportunity to review Lockheed Martin's progress on implementing the Industry Participation Plan.

"It is important that where Australian companies offer value for money, Lockheed Martin and its JSF industry partners give fair consideration to Australian industry," Minister Combet said.

The Government's acquisition decision will also allow Lockheed Martin and its JSF industry partners to establish formal relationships with Australian industry to meet Australia's defence self reliance requirements in supporting the JSF.

"Our commitment to the JSF will allow Australian industry to become integrated into the global JSF support system, ensuring our aircraft are supported in the most cost effective way. Commitment to the JSF also opens up opportunities for Australian industry to contribute to regional and global support of the JSF," Minister Combet said.

The Program Manager, Air Vice-Marshal John Harvey said: "This acquisition decision cements our commitment to the JSF Program and our commitment to the US and other international partners to make the JSF Program a great success."

Media contacts:

Colin Campbell (John Faulkner): 02 6277 7800 or 0407 787 181
Defence Media Liaison: 02 6127 1999 or 0408 498 664