



THE HON. JOEL FITZGIBBON MP Minister for Defence

Saturday, 2 May 2009

A NEW ERA OF UNINHABITED AIRCRAFT OPERATIONS FOR AIR FORCE

The 2009 Defence White Paper, released today, delivers an Air Force for the 21st century that will be better equipped, fully networked and better prepared to meet Australia's air power requirements.

The Minister for Defence, the Hon. Joel Fitzgibbon MP, unveiled the Government's plan to acquire a fleet of seven high-altitude, long-endurance uninhabited aerial vehicles (UAV). These advanced UAVs will complement the eight new manned maritime patrol aircraft announced as part of the Government's 2009 Defence White Paper.

"Together these two new systems will replace the current AP-3C Orion maritime patrol aircraft and ultimately provide greater maritime surveillance coverage for the Australian Defence Force." Mr Fitzgibbon said.

These aircraft will have ocean spanning ranges and will be able to loiter for longer than current systems thereby significantly enhancing the surveillance capability of the maritime patrol and response system,

These will be Australia's first high altitude long endurance UAVs. This new capability will significantly enhance Australia's intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capacity by providing persistent coverage and will provide an ability to cue an appropriate response.

"Defence will actively monitor future development in UAV technology, to better inform our decision making process on which high-altitude, long-endurance UAV we will eventually acquire for the Australian Defence Force," Mr Fitzgibbon said.

The recent decision not to enter into a collaborative development arrangement with the United States regarding the Broad Area Maritime Surveillance (BAMS) program will broaden the capability options available to Australia, although the Global Hawk still remains one option that might meet the needs of this project.

The 2009 Defence White Paper represents the most comprehensive statement on Defence ever produced. It affirms the Government's

A Defence Force for the 21st Century

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commitment to the defence of Australia, the protection of our sovereign interests and the security and stability of our region.

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