Submission to Defence White Paper Review

1. ADF Identity & Professional Image

Issue

The ADF has undergone a number of significant uniform changes in recent years, including:

- adoption of DPNU by the RAN (based on the Army DPCU pattern with Navy colours),
- adoption of US-style Multicam for certain combat units in MEAO,
- introduction of the new AMCU for Army, based on Multicam but with Australian colours; and
- planned introduction of the GPU by the RAAF, based on Multicam with Air Force colours.

This means that when fully rolled out, Army and RAAF working uniforms will be aligned in terms of pattern (based on Multicam), while Navy DPNU’s will be the odd one out, still being based on the now old Aussie DP pattern.

In order to enhance a joint identity and maintain a consistent, professional image, including during high-profile public operations (e.g. disaster relief, humanitarian missions etc), it would be desirable if all three services adopted exactly the same underlying pattern (Multicam), with the only difference being colour palette (i.e. Army = green/khaki based, RAAF = blue based, RAN = grey based).

Recommendations

- RAN now needs to change to come into line with the Army and RAAF working uniforms.
- To maintain consistency and “uniformity” and to reduce costs, review and updates of all uniforms should be conducted on an ADF-wide rather than separate service basis.

New Army and RAAF working uniforms are based on Multicam while RAN DPNU's are still based on DP – creating lack of uniformity and consistency and affecting professional image – esp. during joint operations with a public profile
2. Navy Air Power

Issue

Navy does need air power. Media reports the Government is considering adapting the LHDs to be able to take STVOL versions of the F-35 JSF (the F-35B).

The LHD’s are heavily constrained in terms of hangar space and storage of fuel, spares and ammunition for aircraft, and the costs of retrofiting the LHDs will be non-trivial, not to mention manning- and tooling-up for F-35Bs which differ from the RAAF’s F-35As.

The UK has decided to not proceed with purchasing F-35Bs as planners have grave doubts about the capabilities of the jump jets. For a target 300 nautical miles away from the aircraft carrier, the jump jet can spend only 20 minutes over its target before turning back.

A more space and cost-effective option would be to consider participating in the US Navy X47-B Unmanned Air Combat System (UACS) program.

The X47-B has 2 weapon bays, providing for up to 4,500 lb (2,000 kg) of ordnance, including JDAMS, and will be able to undertake reconnaissance, surveillance, intelligence, targeting, maritime patrol, combat patrol, strike and ground attack and air-combat missions. It is able to accommodate a next-generation Active Electronically Scanned Array radar (AESA). It can provide the full range of air power support required by Navy that the F-35 would provide.

Advantages include:

- Much smaller and lighter than F-35 and much larger number could be carried on an LHD.
- Much less expensive than F-35 (both capital and operating costs).
- Need much less deck for takeoff and landing (better suited to LHDs).
- Need to train ship- or land based remote operators only, not full-blown pilots (further reducing costs).
- No risks to pilots during operations and no pilot fatigue and in-air sustainment issues (ship- or ground-based operators can be changed out in shifts).
- No need to search for and recover pilots if UCAS downed.
- Able to stay on patrol / over target for much longer periods than F-35.

The X-47B can reach an altitude of more than 40,000 feet and has a range of more than 2,100 nautical miles, can be refueled in flight, which would give it even greater range. The X-47B is still developmental and Australia should participate development of operational successors for use on the LHDs.
Recommendation

- Australia consider participating in the US Navy X47-B UCAS program, especially development of its operational successors, as a far more cost effective and capable alternative to flying F-35Bs from the new LHDs.

The USN’s developmental X47-B Unmanned Air Combat Systems (UACS)

Defence of Australia and ability to sustain high-intensity warfare

Issue

While a major part of the ADF’s stated mission is the defence of Australia and her interests, in recent years the ADF has focused on highly specialized capabilities such as use of Special Forces in Iraq and Afghanistan and anti-piracy activities by the RAN in the western Indian Ocean.

While a large-scale attack or even invasion of Australia by a regional power may be assessed as being highly unlikely in the near to medium term, the ability to respond to and defeat such an attack must remain a core capability of the ADF. However, this capability is limited simply by numbers – the small size of the population, the defence budget and the defence force of Australia compared to regional powers.

Once possible way to balance this could be to host major NATO training facilities in Australia (e.g., for tank warfare, attack helicopter training etc), given Australia’s vast open spaces. Participating countries would base training fleets of tanks, helicopters etc here, for their use in joint training, under the proviso that in the event of an attack on Australia, such fleets are handed over to the ADF, and are operated by Australians who have been trained in their use during the regular joint training exercises.

This could substantially increase the combat hardware available to Australia in the event of an emergency, with costs contributed to by those countries who participate in the training centres.

Recommendation

Australia to host major NATO training facilities in Australia (e.g., for tank warfare, attack helicopter training etc), whereby participating countries base training fleets here, under the proviso that in the event of an attack on Australia, such fleets are handed over to the ADF for its use.