



MEDIA RELEASE

SENATOR THE HON ROBERT HILL

Minister for Defence

Leader of the Government in the Senate

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AEGIS COMBAT SYSTEM FOR AIR WARFARE DESTROYERS

The Howard Government has selected the Aegis air warfare system as the core of the combat system for Australia's new air warfare destroyers, Defence Minister Robert Hill announced today.

"The Aegis system is the world's pre-eminent maritime air warfare system and forms the backbone of the United States Navy fleet," Senator Hill said.

"Also currently in-service with the Japanese and Spanish navies and soon to be introduced into the South Korean and Norwegian fleets, the Aegis is capable of detecting and defeating multiple hostile aircraft and missiles at ranges in excess of 150 kilometres.

"This combat system will be a quantum leap in the air warfare capabilities of the Royal Australian Navy. It will provide significantly increased protection from air attack for troops being transported and deployed, long-range area air warfare defence for a Navy task group and a coordinated air picture for the more effective deployment of fighter and surveillance aircraft."

The first of Australia's three new air warfare destroyers will be delivered in 2013. The new ships, including the Aegis combat system, will be constructed at a cost of \$4.5 billion – \$6 billion.

Defence recommended the Aegis as the best system for its air warfare combat needs based on cost, capability, risk and schedule following analysis by the Defence Science Technology Organisation and support from the US Navy.

Defence will now undertake a combat system integration and risk reduction study to:

- Refine detailed aspects of the version of the Aegis system to be acquired;
- Explore the use of Australian designed phased array fire control technology that has significant potential to enhance the air warfare destroyers' capabilities; and
- Examine options for integrating Australian components and sub-systems into the Aegis combat system.

The decision to conduct the study is consistent with the Government's implementation of the Kinnaird Review's recommendation that increased planning and analysis be undertaken during the early stages of defence projects. Defence will recommend the detail of the total combined combat system and the preferred design for the air warfare destroyers in mid-2005.

"This decision is a good example of the benefits Australia has derived from our close working relationship with the US," Senator Hill said.

"The RAN and US Navy have been working closely on the air warfare destroyer project since signing a Statement of Principles on Surface Warfare earlier this year. This cooperation means the RAN will continue to benefit from the US Navy's wealth of technical and operational experience and knowledge of the Aegis system."

The air warfare destroyers project will provide significant opportunities for Australian industry, including the construction of these ships in Australia and opportunities in sub-systems.

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