

## **FUTURE LONG RANGE SUBMARINE FORCE VITAL TO SECURITY OF AUSTRALIA'S TRADE**

**The security of Australia's maritime trade, including billions of dollars of Liquefied Natural Gas exports, depends on a viable and effective long range submarine force.**

Submarine Institute of Australia Executive Director Steve Davies said with Australia expected to become the world's leading producer of LNG by 2020, with an estimated 60 million tonnes exported per annum, the safety and security of our maritime trade routes is fundamental to the nation's prosperity.

A potent and stealthy submarine force provides the level of deterrence we will increasingly need to maintain safe and secure trade routes.

Submarines have the ability to operate independently in sea areas where other defence platforms are ineffective, giving them a unique surveillance and strike capability in areas that an adversary considers to be his own.

Our national prosperity depends on our ability to trade by sea. Each year, more than \$130 billion of Australia's bulk food, minerals and petroleum exports to East Asia rely on an assumption of the safety of our shipping corridors. This assumption is built largely on the deterrent value of our submarine force.

LNG trade, now worth \$13.7b, is expected to climb to more than \$60b by 2020, making it the nation's second most valuable export commodity behind iron ore. By 2020 as many as 10 LNG vessels will leave northern Australian gas facilities for East Asia each week, or as many as 500 cargoes each year.

All this trade passes along sea lanes that traverse the Indo-Pacific region, making the maritime security of the region a critical interest for Australia. Australian submarines must be capable of sustained deployed covert operations across the region. Submarine operations in forward areas maximises their strengths and hence the deterrent effect of the submarine capability.

Experience has shown us that a force of six submarines is below the critical mass needed to maintain the submarine workforce, sustain the submarine industry and thus provide a credible deterrent. A minimum of 12 submarines is needed to keep two submarines continuously on station at long range and one at shorter range, with half of the force deployed at any one time to sustain such a rotation.

This is considered to be the minimum force size needed to provide a credible strategic deterrence. It will take many decades to build to a force of this size, so the investment will be spread over decades.

Maintaining such a deterrent capability however is a vital hedging strategy as Australia moves into the more uncertain security environment ahead of us. A strong and credible submarine force demonstrates our ability to influence events throughout our region.

Sovereign control of our submarine force is also vitally important – we can't afford our primary deterrent capability to be held hostage to someone else's commercial or government interests.

The industry developed to design, build and sustain submarines through their life is therefore also a strategic asset vital to Australia's national interests.

For this reason we must build the submarines in Australia as well as upgrade and maintain them here through their life, and own the Intellectual Property of their design. The skills acquired during the Collins build are being put to good use now in improving their availability and managing their service life extension.

Australia's future submarine force has to be driven by our strategic need for influence and deterrence in the sea areas that are vital to our interests. As long as our economy depends on sea trade with Asia we will need a strong submarine force capable of operating well north of the equator, and we can build this force with an affordable level of investment spread over many decades.

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### **About the Submarine Institute of Australia**

The Submarine Institute of Australia is the nation's premier organisation for the promotion of submarine matters and is dedicated to strengthening relationships between government and industry, and with submariners past and present.

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