

Australia's Submarine Capability - An Insurance Policy for Uncertain Times

2030 is not a 'Business As Usual' Situation

By 2030, our region will be dominated by the growing political, economic and strategic power of China and India, constraining our choices. There will be an increasingly fierce global competition for resources: energy, minerals and water. This will be made more important by the reduction in political, economic and strategic reach of the USA.

Australia is an island - the maritime environment will be more important to our economic well being. Significant growth in regional navies will make it more demanding for our Navy to operate freely in the region. Of particular note are the growing numbers of modern, European and Russian designed submarines. China and India are also developing nuclear powered and armed submarines.

Submarines Offer Australia a Unique Option

Submarines are the ultimate stealth platform, able to operate without diplomatic fuss in areas where sea and air control is not assured and to gain access areas denied to others. Large submarines such as Collins are able to operate at long range and remain on task for weeks. They can carry a flexible payload of sensors, weapons and specialist personnel. They create great uncertainty and are extremely difficult to counter without great expense.

Unique in Many Ways

More than just a good insurance policy; submarines are unique in many ways, able to:

- Simultaneously observe activities underwater, on the surface, in the air and over the electromagnetic spectrum in areas denied to other eyes.
- Deliver a potent anti-submarine capability.
- Covertly position precision land strike missiles, retire if not required, or launch and withdraw without provoking a further engagement.
- Provide support of surface naval operations by neutralising threats in future operating areas and protecting ships during operations.
- Covertly transport, launch and recover Special Forces.
- Lay sophisticated, precision mines to deny access to selected facilities, areas or ports.

In summary, a capable Australian submarine force creates huge uncertainty and is able to inflict unacceptable consequences on an aggressor. Submarines are ...

Australia's Strategic Sting
Submarines are the only capability in Australia's defence forces able to deliver this impact in the environment ahead.

The Low-Risk Way to Acquire the Capability - Team Australia

Our geography requires long and challenging covert transits from Australia; a large submarine is required to achieve the range, provide time on task, carry a flexible mix of payloads and provide the habitability for long missions, often in tropical waters.

The low risk path is to build on Australia's 21 years experience with Collins (7 of them as the design authority), existing US weapons, combat, communications, command & control systems and to acquire US-sourced precision land strike missiles.

Team Australia is an ongoing R&D programme led by DSTO, with industry and European and U.S. submarine design support critical to achieve and maintain a capability edge. For cost effective through life support, the submarines should be designed and constructed in Australia.

What Are the Critical Next Steps?

Government direction on the top level capability required of Australia's submarine force for a capable, long range/long endurance/flexible payload submarine force as part of the Defence White Paper process to acquire:

Australia's Strategic Sting

Time is short – we must launch Team Australia and set up the relationships to gain access to the necessary submarine Intellectual Property.

What would Team Australia look like?

See illustration overleaf

Team Australia - The Low Risk Path to achieve an Underwater Capability Edge

Australia's Strategic Sting

