

TUSK advanced as 'hedge' for any Afghanistan slide

A small expenditure upgrade to the Australian Army's M1A1 'Abrams' tank fleet will finally make the controversial 9 July 2004 acquisition capable of being deployed to an area of combat operations, albeit with Afghanistan prospectively the new capability's first port of call should the combined US-led 'surge' to neutralise the Taliban – and August presidential elections – fail to settle the medium-term political landscape. If the latter unfortunately does become the case, any Australian despatch of 'Abrams' tanks would be the first time such assets were used in combat by the ADF since the 'Centurion' in Vietnam in 1968.

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Prime Minister Rudd's 29 April announcement that the Australian Defence Force (ADF) would deploy an extra 450 troops to Afghanistan to help in stabilisation and security operations in support of the 20 August presidential elections, came with a firm fixed proviso – that such troops would be withdrawn when a new 3,300-strong

4th Afghan National Army (ANA) Brigade in Oruzgan was raised and properly trained.

Assuming a successful August presidential election result, the 2009/10 Federal Budget contained a series of new measures designed to transit the ADF's preoccupation of recent years with combat operations to keep the Taliban at bay whilst reconstruction teams re-establish a civil governance infrastructure, into one

where economic and aid-based agencies more substantively assumed the mantle of nation building to stabilise Afghanistan outside of the hands of groups hostile to the west.

Just in case the optimism expressed by Prime Minister Rudd fails to come to pass, several combat oriented military capability enhancement projects have been quietly advanced in the background in Australia, including an urban warfare upgrade to the 59 M1A1 'Abrams' main battle tanks (MBT) acquired under project Land 907. This program, mid-2009, will finally mark their final preparation for any operational deployment overseas.

The decision to advance a tank urban survivability kit (TUSK) upgrade of the 'Abrams' MBTs first emerged in the May 2008 Federal

Budget, after a project Land 907 scope change had been approved by the Ministers for Defence & Finance that March. The acquisition is being progressed via a US Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program add-on to Land 907, and capped at \$10m due to it being resourced from project management "savings".

Having felt the brunt of the progressive escalation of enemy utilisation of anti-armour weapons in Iraq, the US Army had – well before Australia's Land 907 procurement – commenced a TUSK development program for its 'Abrams' M1A1 and M1A2 tanks, as part of wider capability requirements for its units operating against threats within the complex urban terrain.

The subsequent retrofit package began arriving in Iraq in October 2007 (after two years of development), with TUSK upgrades planned to be delivered into theatre well into 2009. The 1st Armoured

operating bases and smaller outposts.

The Obama administration has also provided a major boost in civilian personnel and development assistance, including tripling US aid to Pakistan to US\$7.5b over the next five years.

Obama indicated the joint civil-military strategy set out explicit criteria for victory, saying, "I want the American people to understand that we have a clear and focused goal: to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al-Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan and to prevent their return to either country in the future".

In enunciating such a strategy, the President also said the US would respect Pakistan's sovereignty, and US troops would not cross the Afghan border to pursue militant safe havens inside Pakistan. "We need to work with them and through them to deal with Al-Qaeda. But we have to hold them much more accountable," he added. It was left to US special envoy to the region, Richard Holbrooke, however to spell out that the US exit strategy (and that of the wider coalition), critically hinged on the Afghans eventually being able to deal with their own security problems. The most challenging aspect of the new

strategy remains how Coalition forces will defeat insurgents hiding in Pakistan, a problem former President Bush sought to fix by drowning the Pakistan government in money. Obama has also decided to continue this policy, but has similarly approached allies for contributions of combat forces, trainers and mentors, strategic lift and equipment.

In these respects, the Secretary of Defence and the Chief of the Defence Force signed 29 April a Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) with the Director General of AusAID, Bruce Davis, to provide a framework for closer coop-

eration between the Department and the aid agency. The initiative was developed in recognition of "shared strategic interests" and the imperative for closer whole-of-government cooperation in dealing with Australia's diverse security challenges.

The SPA articulates: guiding principles; strategic goals; relative organisational strengths of Defence & AusAID; and coordination arrangements required for closer, effective cooperation on future activities. In 2008/09, AusAID provided an estimated \$62m in development assistance to Afghanistan. The government had earlier confirmed (29 March), special governance and



ALL BEHIND THE OPERATIONAL PLAN FOR AFGHANISTAN: Australia's expanded forces will finally be fighting under a comprehensive campaign plan (OPLAN 1212) that is integrated with Regional Command South planning activities, and which looks to synergise civil-military efforts to blunt insurgent influences. A 20 May meeting in Canberra with Pakistan's Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff, Tariq Majid – to discuss military operations being conducted against militants in the North West Frontier region of Pakistan – was followed by an announcement Australia would significantly increase the level of access to be afforded to Pakistan military personnel attending Defence Cooperation Program training courses in Australia. As a first step, six Pakistani officers have been invited to attend the counter-insurgency module at the Australian Defence College in late-2009.

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Regiment (Darwin, NT), the School of Armour (Puckapunyal) and the Army Logistics Training Centre (Bandiana, Victoria) operate the 'Abrams' MBT capability which Defence considers will be supportable through to at least 2020.

The 2009 Defence White Paper made no mention of an MBT replacement, envisaging instead that a new solution – in the form of 1,100 “deployable protected vehicles” ... offering “greatly improved firepower, protection and mobility” – will have emerged courtesy of the mooted project Land 400.

A series of TUSK upgrade kits sufficient to meet training and operational requirements is now in the process of being acquired to enhance protection of the 'Abrams' tanks and 'Hercules' M88A2 Armoured Recovery Vehicles, albeit with a schedule for completion of all Australian TUSK

installations that is “reliant on US Army requirements being filled prior to Australia's order being met.” Recent communication with the US indicated the Remote Thermal Sight was not to be available for acquisition before April 2009.

Although the acronym TUSK implies some form of consolidated 'kit', the term is more a misnomer. The subject capability enhancement actually consists of a number of bolt-on/bolt-off sub-systems designed to be fitted with minimal permanent modifications. Defence has acquired different numbers of sub-systems to which delivery of the first elements is now approaching (ie: mid-2009).

New Australian capabilities being acquired include a remote thermal sight to enable the M1A1 crew commander to employ his 12.7mm machine gun from under armour, and a loader's armour gun shield to protect the turret crew during operation of the externally

mounted loader's machine gun (and likewise for the M88A2, for both the commander and operator).

The kit also comprises 'Abrams' Reactive Armour Tile (ARAT) sets to provide additional protection against rocket-propelled grenades and other similar close-range threat systems. An infantry/tank telephone (located at the rear of the hull to allow infantry to communicate with crew when the tank's hatches are closed) – which has seen US Marine Corps' M1A1 use since 2003 – was included in the original Land 907 specification for the 59 M1A1s first delivered to Australia.

Responding to criticisms of the deployability of the 'Abrams' due to weight gains as new capabilities are added, Defence argues that, in comparison to the total weight of the M1A1, “the weight of the various bolt-on TUSK components is insignificant, and will have a negli-

gible effect on the performance of the tank.” Additional TUSK-related items the ADF may acquire in future – which the US Army has already started fielding – include a rear-view camera for the driver, a Common (crew) Remotely Operated Weapon System (CROWS), and a bulldozer blade capability.

As a part of the procurement process, the Defence Materiel Organisation (DMO) is understood to be analysing US adopted kit installation procedures, instructions, safety releases and current training methods to develop parallel options that sufficiently meet ADF requirements. Currently, the US employs a mixture of civilian field service representatives, crewmen and military tradespeople to assemble, fit and dismantle TUSK components on their vehicles.

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development assistance for Afghanistan would include: increasing the number of AusAID officers deployed in-country; the despatch of an additional 10-person Australian Federal Police training and advisory team to train Afghan National Police, and a small team of civilian monitors to oversee technical aspects of election polling in Oruzgan.

To help coordinate and drive this new level of effort, former Defence Secretary, Ric Smith, has taken up the role of Australia's Special Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Foreign Affairs Minister, Stephen Smith, at the UN-sponsored International Conference on Afghanistan in The Hague 1 April confirmed Australia would provide \$21m to support the Afghan Government to deliver national programs in health, education, rural development and micro-finance.

Funding will be via the World Bank's Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, which currently has on its books increasing school enrolments, 26,000 rural infrastruc-

ture projects, fixing 9,000km of roads, and building 70 schools in Oruzgan.

Since 2001, Australia has committed \$600m for aid, capacity building & reconstruction in Afghanistan. A further instalment was made 3 March when Minister Smith confirmed Australia would provide \$5m to help mine clearance efforts in Afghanistan, including survivor assistance. The announcement was in addition to the \$12.5m provided by Australia since 2007 to support mine action in Afghanistan. Greater mine clearance efforts are viewed as helping to release land to local communities for agriculture, pasture, housing and reconstruction projects.

Budget papers released 12 May allocated \$1,381.1 billion in 2009/10 for Operation 'Slipper' activities in Afghanistan, and indicated that through to 2012/13 (from 1999-2000), \$3,591.1b was expected to be spent. This comes on top of the \$2,413.4b already spent on Operation 'Catalyst' in Iraq, other than a small \$2.3m allocation in 2009/10 to cover residual expenses. Australia's

security detachment in Baghdad will remain, however, with \$74m (\$59.9m in 2009/10) allocated to support this under a new activity, Operation 'Kruger'.

Of the \$1.4b proposed to be spent in Afghanistan this coming financial year, a substantial portion will cover whole-of-Government initiatives, including: additional training assistance to the Afghanistan National Army by way of additional ADF OMLTs; and increased support during the Afghan elections. The presidential election (17 million Afghans have now registered to vote, with women making up 38% of voters), is scheduled for 20 August.

Providing security for the election will be a very high priority for Lieutenant General Stanley McChrystal (who replaced General David McKiernan 11 May) and the Afghan government. The ADF's OMLT is said to have played an important supporting role to the ANA in overseeing the voter registration process, and thus will continue to provide security in major district centres in the lead up to, and conduct of the Afghan elections. Brigadier

Damian Cantwell was appointed 5 May to assume the role of Commander International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Election Task Force in Afghanistan, and tasked with coordinating security support to Afghan Presidential & Provincial Council elections. In this task, he will also liaise with the International Electoral Commission, United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, the Afghan Government, and non-government organisations contributing to the election rollout.

LtGen McChrystal now commands all US forces in Afghanistan after operation 'Enduring Freedom' and ISAF operations were joined (at his level). With the additional 21,000 US troops, Regional Command South Headquarters will become a larger and more capable headquarters, with civil-military (CIMIC) personnel on hand to develop the softer part of the campaign. It will nevertheless remain a two-star headquarters.

At present, the Dutch Major General, Mart de Kruif, runs Regional Command South. At the start of November, a Brit- >>> page 19

Long-term support regime in sight of resolution

With a 2009/10 approved project expenditure of \$579m (74% had been expended as at 30 June 2009), the Australian Army's quest to replace the 'Leopard I' tank via project Land 907 spanned the acquisition and through-life support for 59 M1A1 AIM 'Abrams' main battle tanks, seven 'Hercules' M88A2 Armoured Recovery Vehicles, seven simulators of two types, tank transporters and fuel trucks. An FMS agreement relating to the acquisition was signed in June 2004.

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Support arrangements included the procurement of spare parts, ammunition, facilities and additional equipment and the conduct of initial training. All the subject M1A1s and M88A2s were delivered by 4 March 2007, and introduced into service just over four months later. Suppliers of the complete training package (ie: gunnery and driving simulator systems) were Sydac

and Lockheed Martin, the eight fuel trucks were supplied by Mack Trucks Australia, the 14 Heavy Tank Transporters were supplied by MAN Military Vehicles Systems Australia, with 7,500 types of spare parts delivered in line with the project's scope.

A 17 July 2007 Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) report into the Land 907 acquisition, found little to critically comment upon – given substantive United States government FMS facilitation

of the acquisition – except for a series of DMO contracting irregularities relating to the tanks' automated combat identification system. Subsequent to their introduction-into-service, the ANAO found the M1A1s were still without the off-platform SATCOM capability required to make Force XXI Battle Command Brigade and Below (FBCB2) system effective. This was subsequently rectified by Defence arranging a 12-month L-Band satellite service lease.

Conversion training for 'Abrams' operators and maintainers was completed in November 2007, with a significant portion of the ammunition, facilities and spare parts similarly delivered. Defence identified the risk of a delay in establishing an Australian-based through-life support (TLS) contract early in the project, and moved to

mitigate this risk by establishing Cooperative Logistics Support Arrangements directly with the US government (ie: via FMS).

The arrangements were intended to supply field service representatives to provide effective interim through-life support until the Australian-based support contract was in place. Subsequently, Defence released in November 2008 a tender for Australian-based 'Abrams', 'Hercules' RV and Australian Light Armoured Vehicles (ASLAV) support, which closed 30 April 2009. Project Land 907 is also delivering the 'Abrams' and 'Hercules' Multispectral Camouflage System (The camouflage has had to be re-designed, in part, due to the addition of the Reactive Armour Tiles) from Saab Barracuda, gas masks, tank suits and additional rotatable items.

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NO PLANS TO REPLACE THE 'ABRAMS': Celebrating the last hurrah of the 'Leopard I' tanks in Darwin 7 July 2007, former Howard Government Minister for Defence, Dr Brendan Nelson, confirmed the Army's new M1A1 'Abrams' main battle tank capability had been declared operational. A replacement MBT capability was never canvassed in the 2000 Defence White Paper, and received no specific mention in DWP'09. Up until the emergence of project Land 907, the Government had been progressing several upgrades of the 'Leopard I' tanks (far R) by way of contracts with Thales Australia, which were subsequently cancelled. The Leopards ended their lives having never been sent in to battle in 30 years of ADF service.

Table C: – 2009 DEFENCE WHITE PAPER – Joint Force Capability Enhancements

Project Number/Phase	Capability Description	Year of	Number of Units	New or Base Platform/Weapon	Legacy Policy Decision or Platform/Weapon
		First DCP Listing			
JP 90/1	ADF Identification Friend or Foe	2004	n/a	Replacement capability	Mode 4 Mk XII IFF System
JP 129/2&3	Tactical UAVs - Enhancements/ Upgrades	2001	8	New OTS design upon reissued RFT	'ScanEagle' & I-View 250A
JP 141/3	Enhanced Counter-WMD Capability	2001	TBD	Supplementary equipment	Post-9/11 Incident Response Regiment reconstitution
JP 2008/5	Enhanced UHF satellite communications	2009	1	IS-22 satellite	LEASAT 5, SKYNET 5B
JP 2025/5+	Jindalee Over The Horizon Radar System	2004	3	n/a	JORN radar sites/Edinburgh centre
JP 2030/9+	Joint Command Support System	2001	n/a	Continual enhancements	Joint Command Support Environment (JCSE) sub-set
JP 2048/3	Heavy Landing Craft Replacement	2001	6	New design	'Balikpapan'-class LCH
JP 2048/4A&B	Landing ships Helicopter & Dock (LHD)	2001	2	Modified 'Juan Carlos I'	HMAS 'Tobruk' (2,200t) & 'Manoora' (5,000t)
JP 2048/4C	Strategic Sea Lift Ship	2004	1	Proven design - 10-15,000t	HMAS 'Kanimbla'
JP 2064/4	Enhanced Geospatial Capabilities	2001	n/a	Supplementary equipment	Project 'Parare' (JP 42)
JP 2080/5	Defence ICT Reform	2009	n/a	New architecture/systems	Joint Projects 2068 & 2077
JP 2085/3+	Explosive Ordnance Warstock	2004	TBD	New/upgrades designs	SMARt 155; Excalibur
JP 2097/1B+	Enhancement of SF Capabilities	2004	TBD	Various advanced equipment/training	Project 'Redfin', Supacat 'Nary', Land Rover 6x6
JP 2098/2	Joint Combined Training Capability	2004	1	Enhance existing JCTC	Derived from 2004 AUSMIN talks
JP 3011	Non Lethal Weapons	2009	TBD	New designs/systems	n/a
JP XXXX	Remote Sensing Satellite	2009	1	New design	n/a

NOTE: The above tabulation is an ADF capability enhancement guide prepared by ADBR researchers. The Department of Defence has not released an official 2009 Defence Capability Plan. References to 2007* indicate new DCP capabilities emerging from the 2006 Defence Capability Update (DCU), and considered for approval prior to the 2007 Federal election.

DEFENCE ACRONYM INDEX: See Table 'B' attachment or as download from [www.adbr.com.au/Services/2009 White Paper](http://www.adbr.com.au/Services/2009%20White%20Paper)

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