

## **Nothing 'stealthy' about the F-22**

DR CARLO Kopp's "Nelson tries stealth to win jet fighter debate" (Opinion, 20/2) is misleading in a number of areas.

Defence analysis shows that the F-22 is not the right aircraft for Australia's air combat needs. The F-22 is without doubt a highly capable fighter aircraft, but we need a truly multi-role aircraft able to conduct the full range of air-to-ground as well as air-to-air combat missions.

Defence never has made a formal request to acquire the F-22. Nor have we ever asked US officials to start a process to lift the Congressional ban on selling the F-22. It is hardly unusual that the US should decide that some of its military technology is not for export, and hence the F-22 remains prohibited from export by US Congressional legislation.

The recent letter from the US Deputy Secretary of Defence regarding the non-availability of the F-22 was in response to a letter from the Minister for Defence, Dr Nelson, advising of Australia's intended participation in the next phase of the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) Program — already an example of successful alliance co-operation. The Government has not yet made a final decision to acquire the JSF and will continue to assess its options ahead of a decision in 2008.

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