

HIB Number 000836

Date/Time  
Transmitted: 27/05/20 11 15:14

Subject: RELEASE OF AUSTRALIAN STRATEGIC POLICY INSTITUTE REPORT:  
"STAYING THE COURSE: AUSTRALIA AND MARITIME SECURITY IN  
THE SOUTH PACIFIC."

Comment:  
Action Area FASIP

LIMITED DISTRIBUTION - NOT TO BE FORWARDED

## **HOT ISSUE BRIEF**

**ISSUE: RELEASE OF AUSTRALIAN STRATEGIC POLICY INSTITUTE REPORT: "STAYING THE COURSE: AUSTRALIA AND MARITIME SECURITY IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC."**

**SENSITIVITY:** The release of this Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) report could possibly attract some media interest, particularly given increased media attention on Pacific security issues due to Fiji/Tonga tensions and expanding Chinese aid to the Pacific.

### **KEY ISSUES:**

- On 31 May 2011, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) will launch a report entitled "Staying the course: Australia and maritime security in the South Pacific."
- The report disagrees with Government direction that Australian Customs and Border Protection Service (ACBPS) take the lead on the follow-on program to the Pacific Patrol Boat Program, instead recommending that Defence take the lead.
- Amongst other issues, the report also encourages Australia to coordinate Pacific maritime security assistance with other major players including Japan

and China, and highlights a potential capability gap in the shift to the follow-on program.

- While the paper encourages Defence to take the lead in the follow-on program, it is not otherwise critical of Defence's contribution to maritime security in the Pacific.

|                         |                            |                     |                      |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Contact Officer:</b> | <b>Jacqueline Borsboom</b> | <b>W: 6265 3738</b> | <b>M:</b> [REDACTED] |
| <b>Authorised by:</b>   | <b>Lachlan Colquhoun</b>   | <b>W: 6266 1219</b> | <b>M:</b> [REDACTED] |

**Date issued: 27 May 2011**

#### **BACKGROUND: ASPI REPORT ON THE FOLLOW-ON PROGRAM TO THE PACIFIC PATROL BOAT PROGRAM**

On 31 May 2011, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) will release the report "Staying the course: Australia and maritime security in the South Pacific," written by Sam Bateman and Anthony Bergin. The report focuses on Defence's role in the Pacific through the Pacific Patrol Boat Program (PPBP), and the likely shape of the follow-on program when the PPBP ceases in 2027.

The report's findings may have been influenced by one of the author's personal experience with the PPBP, as Dr Bergin was involved at several earlier stages of the Program. While the paper acknowledges the trend by the United States and others towards a civil law enforcement approach to maritime surveillance in the Pacific, it recommends that Defence, rather than Australian Customs and Border Protection Service (ACBPS), take the lead role in the follow-on program. The paper argues Defence is a "policy leader" on strategic issues, and that by giving the lead to ACBPS, Australia is "downgrading" the importance we place on security in the Pacific.

Both Defence and ACBPS highlighted the civilian nature of maritime law enforcement in informal feedback provided to ASPI. ACBPS's Ministerial brief on the ASPI paper, provided to Defence for consultation, notes that almost all maritime security threats in the Pacific are criminal rather than defence in nature, and that ACBPS is best placed to lead the development of the follow-on program.

The paper highlights a potential capability gap as responsibility for maritime surveillance shifts from the PPBP to the follow-on program. While we are awaiting further advice from ACBPS on the nature of the follow-on program, we understand both programs will run in parallel between 2018 and 2027 and, as such, Defence does not anticipate a capability gap at this stage.

One of ASPI's proposals in the paper is for Australia to coordinate more closely with China and Japan on Pacific maritime security. Australia has growing defence relationships with China and Japan and we regularly exchange views with both countries on strategic issues in the Asia-Pacific region.

## **CONTINGENCY MINISTERIAL TALKING POINTS**

- I welcome the release of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) report into Australia's role in maritime security in the Pacific.
- I am very pleased with the performance of the Pacific Patrol Boat Program.
- Given the predominantly civilian nature of maritime law enforcement, the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service is the right agency to take the lead in developing a follow-on program to the Pacific Patrol Boat Program.

- I look forward to examining options for the follow-on program as they are developed by the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service.
- Defence will stay committed to the Pacific Patrol Boat Program to the end of its life, with the boats beginning to be retired from 2018 to 2027.
- As stated in the 2009 White Paper, Defence regards the Pacific as an important strategic priority and we will continue to engage in the Pacific long after the end of the Patrol Boat Program.
- Australia continues to work closely with security partners in the Pacific such as the United States, New Zealand and France.
- Furthermore, Australia has a growing Defence relationship with our other security partners Japan and China, with our countries regularly exchanging views on strategic issues in the Asia-Pacific region.

|                  |                     |                 |               |
|------------------|---------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Contact Officer: | Jacqueline Borsboom | W: 02 6265 3738 | M: [REDACTED] |
| Authorised by:   | Lachlan Colquhoun   | W: 02 6266 1219 | M: [REDACTED] |
| PA Clearance by: | COL Jeff Squire     | W: 02 6127 1952 | M: [REDACTED] |