



THE HON. JOEL FITZGIBBON MP Minister for Defence

Saturday, 2 May 2009

MODERNISATION FOR AUSTRALIA'S DISMOUNTED SOLDIERS

The Minister for Defence, the Hon. Joel Fitzgibbon MP, today announced the Government's commitment to ensure the Australian Army has an enhanced integrated system that will enable soldiers to operate within a more complex and lethal operational environment.

"This system will provide a significant enhancement to the capabilities of our dismounted soldier in lethality, survivability, mobility, sustainability, communications and networking," Mr Fitzgibbon said.

Enhancements to the Army's current Austeyr rifle are being developed at Australia's indigenous small arms plant at Lithgow. These are likely to include improved weapon ergonomics, compatibility with coalition ammunition and enhanced day and night surveillance capabilities.

Defence will also continue the ongoing development of personal body armour and the acquisition of ballistic eye protection as well as hearing protection to enhance the survivability of dismounted soldiers.

This is complemented by the planned acquisition of modern networked communications, a tactical battlefield management system and new friendly-force identification systems. In concert, these systems will provide dismounted soldiers enhanced communications and situational awareness, as well as the ability to rapidly react, adjust and respond to the complex operational environment.

Lightening the load on the dismounted soldier increases their mobility, resilience and sustainability on the battlefield. Australian soldiers will be able to operate more effectively in the battlefields of the future through enhanced sustainment methods, such as improved rations and power systems.

The 2009 Defence White Paper represents the most comprehensive statement on Defence ever produced. It affirms the Government's commitment to the defence of Australia, the protection of our sovereign interests and the security and stability of our region.

A Defence Force for the 21st Century

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