

Appendix 4: Recommendations of the Final Report of the Air Combat Capability Study – October 1998

Recommendations

This study recommends that the Secretary of Defence:

- **note** that this study has confirmed the White Paper requirement for New Zealand to retain an air combat capability.
- **note** that an air combat capability has high utility in contributing to New Zealand's defence strategy of self-reliance in partnership, including low level security challenges to New Zealand sovereignty, our security relationship with Australia, and supporting regional and global security.
- **note** that the study has confirmed the three operational roles of Close Air Support, Air Interdiction and Maritime Strike, as the best match with New Zealand's security requirements.
- **agree** that the capability of the A-AK *Skyhawk* with the upgrades identified in the White Paper, while broadly satisfactory, has a number of operational and policy limitations which will increase as the *Skyhawk* approaches the end of its life.
- **agree** that other broad capability options such as Surface-to-Surface missiles, Long-range Artillery, Fighter-Bomber Aircraft, and Surface Combatants are not suitable for meeting New Zealand's air combat capability requirements, and should not be considered further.
- **agree** that New Zealand should not consider further an Attack Helicopter or Light Attack Aircraft as a replacement for the A-4K *Skyhawk*. We should also not consider the P-3K *Orion* as the sole maritime strike capability.
- **agree** that the operational performance and policy value of a current production fourth generation multi-role fighter aircraft such as an F-16C/D makes it the only capability option for meeting air combat capability requirements over the longer term.
- **note** that an initial production fourth generation multi-role aircraft, such as an F-16A/B, with suitable upgrades, offers opportunities for New Zealand's replacement of the A-4K.
- **note** that the indicative through-life cost of a current production fourth generation multi-role fighter used for the purposes of this study was that of a new F-16C/D at NZ\$1.8B.
- **note** that consideration should be given to acquisition strategies that introduce the capability at a lower cost, such as leasing or procuring suitable second-hand aircraft.