

Feds commit \$500M for new fighter jets

OTTAWA (CP) — Despite the misgivings of some allies, the federal government is spending an additional \$500 million for the final development of the Joint Strike Fighter, a stealth jet meant to replace Canada's aging CF-18s.

A memorandum of understanding was signed with little fanfare this week between the Pentagon and the Canadian Defence Department, even as an

Australian parliamentary report questioned the international program.

Deputy Defence Minister Ward Elcock signed on behalf of Canada, committing the federal government to continue funding research and production of the advanced warplane.

The agreement spells out Ottawa's intention to purchase as many as 80 of the single-seat, single-engine F-35 aircraft when the CF-18s,

recently given life extensions, are retired in 2017.

"We are convinced the (new) aircraft is going to be a technological marvel," said Michael Slack, the Defence Department's director of the Joint Strike Fighter program.

"It's going to be an incredibly good airplane that will meet a whole range of operational requirements. It will be technologically superior to probably everything else that's out there."

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