

SWR set to guard Torres Strait

WILLIAMTOWN AFB – Australia's first surface wave radar will monitor the approaches to Torres Strait. This gap in the air and sea-control network will be plugged by the bipolar SWR on the Torres Strait islands, monitoring mainly the approaches to the west of the strategic choke point.

The SWR is under development by Daronmont Technologies of Adelaide. It was authorised in the federal budget as a joint Defence-Customs installation.

Intelligence from the radar, which may have a range of up to 300km into Gulf of Carpentaria and as far as the western Arafura Sea, will go through to the joint surveillance centre near Adelaide, which also tasks JORN and delivers its intelligence.

Apart from being a critical air and naval focus, because sea traffic from Europe and Asia rounding the north of Australia must pass through the narrow strait, it is also a potential danger point in border defences against drugs and illegal immigrants.

Illegal fishing has also taken place in the area, which is a significant food source for the Papuan and Torres Strait population.

Torres Strait and Cape York are at the eastern edge of JORN's coverage of the northern segment of Australian air and sea approaches.

The new SWR will also keep an eye on the approaches to Weipa and also the strategic Scherger air base near Cape York.

The surveillance and control assets have been developed to extend Australian sovereignty over northern Australian airspace became apparent with a briefing last week at Williamtown Air Base, where the Surveillance and Control Group is building up under the command of Air Commodore David Pietsch.

Williamtown will be home to the future Airborne Early Warning and Command Squadron when the Wedgetail B-737s come into service.

The group also commands the ADF's air traffic and microwave radar assets, which are also being replaced and brought up to a higher standard.