

WHITE PAPER ON DEFENCE 2013

SUBMISSION NO. 2 FROM THE

AUSTRALIAN ANTI-BASES CAMPAIGN COALITION

Much of the Defence White Paper 2013 thinking will inevitably be influenced by the new US military re-balance and the so called 'pivot' to Asia and the Indo-Pacific. However, it would be an error to approach this as if the US military presence in our region is something new.

Before President Obama's speech in the Australian Parliament signalling the pivot, the US had substantial force deployments and military facilities in our region which was also subject to intense surveillance by US satellites. The US already has over 300 military bases in Japan, South Korea, Philippines and Australia alone. It is building substantial bases on Jeju Island in the Republic of Korea and on Guam, as well reorganising its bases in Okinawa to consolidate its efforts to contain China. In Australia during the Howard era the US increased its military bases in Australia by five, including Shoalwater Bay in Central Queensland and Bradshaw on the WA/NT border.

Developments following the 'pivot' statement are dangerous and disturbing, particularly the stationing of US marines in Darwin. The rotation of marines will inevitably add tension in our region and constitutes a major threat to Australia's trading interests. Self-interest alone should compel Australia's corporations to lobby the Government to tone down its warmongering rhetoric and this mad rush to serve US interests rather than our own.

Stationing US troops in Darwin will distress Australian citizens. Evidence from around the world makes it clear that communities hosting US troops experience increases in violence, drug-taking and rates of STDs. Australia has had only two small contingents so far but as the deployment increases the thousands of soldiers will increase the chances of accidents and criminality. A delegation from the University of Okinawa in Canberra recently said the Okinawan people did not see the strategy of transferring their burden to Darwin as a solution.

Quite apart from the social impact of the marines, the overall militarisation of the northern part of Australia is not in our interests. The stationing of marines and the other concessions to the US for more joint exercises, including live firing operations, and extended ship and plane visits is a strategy to bring the US nearer to the 'choke point' for China energy imports through the Straits of Malacca.

It is also alarming that the Australian Government is considering the use of the Cocos Islands by drones – Australian and/or American -- is a further escalation of tension and a potential flashpoint for conflict in our region. The US drone program has already come in for fierce criticism from human rights organisations and activists for its disregard of proper procedures. The program incites intense hatred of the US in Pakistan and other countries where the US has killed and maimed civilians. The US has no right, nor does any other country have the right to be judge and jury and to resort to extra-judicial killings.

We call on the White Paper Committee to rule out the use of any Australian territory for US drones be they for surveillance or weaponised.

The current Australian attitude to the US alliance is a servile one which does not augur well for the independence of Australia and the protection of its interests.

The US bases in Australia are not here for the protection of Australia or for the interests of our country. They are here for the projection of US power into the region. The naval facilities at Garden Island near Freemantle WA were used to prosecute the war against Iraq, for example.

The Australian Anti-Bases Campaign sees the closure of these bases as a positive step towards world-wide disarmament and peace and security. Members and supporters of the Coalition recognise that these facilities:

1. were secretly established and continue to undermine the sovereignty and independence of Australia;
2. continue to ignore the legitimate rights and aspirations of the indigenous people of this country;
3. align Australia with one of the major participants in the arms race;
4. involve Australia in contributing to the arms race and the increasing probability of a nuclear war;
5. play a role in the US nuclear and non-nuclear military strategies and Stars Wars program;
6. involve Australia in undermining the sovereignty and independence of other nations by allowing these facilities to spy on them and to direct military offensives against other countries;
7. make Australia and its people a nuclear target and create a permanent threat to our nation's security;
8. provide verification data which is used to justify the breaking of arms control treaties and to promote the arms race.
9. Are an integral part of all aspects of the militarisation of Australia and the region.

Australia has a long history of involvement in global peace efforts. We helped draft the United Nations Charter, which makes it illegal to wage aggressive warfare, and were one of just eight countries to create the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In addition, we have been involved in numerous peace-keeping exercises around the globe.

In being allied with the one country that uses war and the threat of war as key instruments of policy, Australia is undermining its own place in the world. Australia has supported every war that the US has been involved in since WW2 either directly by sending troops or supporting the US in international forums. The US goes to war approximately every 14 months and while the Iraq and Afghanistan situations are to some extent winding down, the US is already attacking Syria and planning to do the same to Iran and DPRK. The legacy of recent wars in Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan is environmental destruction and human misery.

The White Paper Committee suggests Australia should “*have enhanced practical cooperation with the US pursuant to our 60 year old Alliance relationship*”. We reject this

notion and argue that we should be keeping the US at arm's length, friendly, respectful but not allied in practical military co-operation.

While some may suggest that Australia has an equal relationship with the US, the reality is that the US does not admit 'equality' in its relations with other states. It prefers client states or servility. The words of Clare Short, looking back ruefully on her part in the Blair Cabinet's role in the war on Iraq, could equally apply to every Australian Prime Minister since WW2 – *"We ended up humiliating ourselves [with] unconditional, poodle-like adoration' because the 'special relationship' meant 'we just abjectly go wherever America goes."* The US pivot to Asia and the Indo-Pacific is more of the same.

The White Paper Committee talks about 'our 60 year old Alliance relationship'. We should remember that when Menzies signed the ANZUS treaty he immediately had to increase Australia's military spending by 150 per cent. The skewing of military spending brought on by the US Australia alliance has continued to the present day. After 60 years it is about time overspending to satisfy US Government foreign policy objectives and support for massive US arms manufacturers was ended.

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