

# Australia's military relationships

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- Australia's sole military alliance is with the United States.
- The US alliance is creating an Australian Defence Force that is excessively structured to serve American military purposes.
- Australia also has various military arrangements with other countries. While these are not military alliances, they are more important in creating a secure Australia.

## The US alliance and ANZUS

Australia's one military alliance is with the USA, and came into force between the USA, Australia and New Zealand in 1952. (In 1986 ANZUS was suspended between the USA and New Zealand because of New Zealand's anti-nuclear stance, and since then has operated in two prongs, one between Australia and New Zealand, and the other between Australia and the USA).

ANZUS does not create a unified military command, as in the case with NATO in Europe, but instead provides that "each party recognises that an armed attack in the Pacific area on any of the Parties would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes." While the meaning of the phrase 'armed attack' is clear, Australians have never known exactly what is meant by the promise to 'act to meet the common danger' or even by the notion of the 'Pacific area.'

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ANZUS has been invoked only once. Following the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington, the Howard government promised to help the USA. In

theory, ANZUS means the USA will come to the defence of Australia, but leading defence observers over the years have interpreted the treaty as promising consultation rather than guaranteeing help for Australia in the highly unlikely event of attack by an external power.

The real significance of ANZUS in the last sixty-two years has been to integrate Australia into the global military and diplomatic strategies of the USA. Australia has had easy access to American thinking on international events, and to a large extent has made that thinking its own. Joining the Americans in fighting the so-called 'war on terror' has intensified this effect by giving Australia even more knowledge of American intelligence, placing Australians in US military commands, and fostering 'interoperability' between US and Australian military forces. Interoperability means creating common operating procedures, communications links, doctrine, standards, and compatible equipment. Australia and the USA agreed on principles of interoperability in 2004, and since then they have been progressively implemented.

## Extended nuclear deterrence

The USA is the world's leading nuclear power, and Australia officially subscribes to the Cold War doctrine of 'extended deterrence', which holds that allies of the USA shelter under its nuclear umbrella, and that adversaries are as deterred from attacking



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them as from attacking the USA itself. Extended deterrence, says the government, “provides a stable and reliable sense of assurance and has over the years removed the need for Australia to consider more significant and expensive defence options.”<sup>1</sup> But nuclear deterrence, whether extended or not, no longer makes sense, as even its original proponents such as Henry Kissinger and George Shultz, former US Secretaries of State, now concede.<sup>2</sup> The only real answer is a nuclear-free world.

In short, the American alliance is turning the Australian Defence Force into one that is excessively structured to serve American military purposes, and draws Australia unnecessarily into a nuclear defence policy.

### Other military and security arrangements

Australia has also entered into military arrangements with countries in South East Asia and the Pacific. These are not military alliances.

Australia has military agreements with Singapore and Malaysia under the [Five Power Defence Arrangements](#), which provide for annual military exercises. Thailand, the Philippines and Brunei are also Australia’s partners in military exchanges, exercises and training programs. And since 1987 Australia has been a signatory to the [Joint Declaration of Principles with Papua New Guinea](#). This provides that Australia must consult with the Papua New Guineans if their country comes under external attack.

### “Australia does not rely for its security on military capability alone”

Australia does not rely for its security on military capability alone, but on diplomacy, economic links, development assistance, exchanges of people and ideas, and cooperation with nearby countries in dealing with terrorism, environmental

threats, the drug trade, health problems and unregulated population flows. Australia has counter-terrorism agreements with fourteen countries – Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Cambodia, Thailand, Brunei, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, East Timor, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkey and Bangladesh – and the Australian Federal Police cooperate with their counterparts in these countries.

In 2007 Australia signed the [Japan-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation](#), the first such defence agreement reached by Japan with any country other than the USA since World War II. Officially, the declaration fosters cooperation between Japan and Australia on counter-terrorism, disaster relief and UN peacekeeping. Similarly, Australia has a security agreement with Indonesia called the Lombok Treaty, in effect since 2008.



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This provides for cooperation on a wide range of issues including maritime and aviation security, money laundering, financing of terrorism, corruption, illegal fishing, cyber-crimes, and the drug trade.

These agreements constitute a security web that is less noticed but more important than our military alliance in creating a secure Australia.

#### References

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