

# PROJECT

# ICEBERG



Nuclear armed and nuclear powered warships visit Australia regularly. These warships and their weapons are as much a threat to the world as Cruise and SS 20 missiles in Europe. This is Project Iceberg's first publication designed to inform people about the importance of the issue of warships and to encourage opposition to their presence in the region.

## NUCLEAR WARSHIPS. WHY ARE THEY HERE?

When the first atomic bombs massacred the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, military forces dominated the entire Pacific. Since then the Asia / Pacific region has been the site of continual confrontation between the two major superpowers. Australia is part of that confrontation.

### US AND SOVIET FORCES

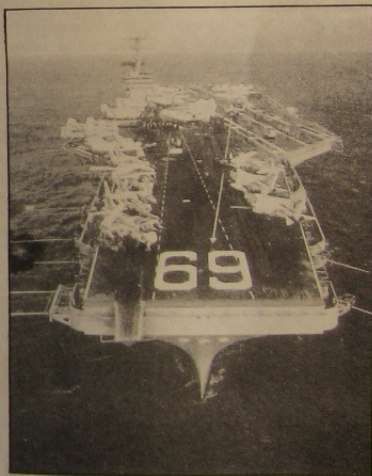
In comparing the position of the two major competitors in the arms race it is important to remember their differences. Historically Soviet forces in the East have been mostly land-based. American forces have been sea based, supported by hundreds of bases in foreign nations long distances from the US mainland, effectively making the Pacific an American lake.

Both the Americans and the Soviets deploy intercontinental nuclear weapons on board submarines in the Pacific Ocean. Both are increasing the number and sophistication of the submarines and the weapons; the USSR with the Typhoon, the US with the Trident. A conservative estimate of the number of these strategic nuclear weapons would be about 2000.

The build-up of the navy under Reagan has centred around aircraft carrier task forces "designed primarily for offensive force projection against Soviet land targets - among other things - to cripple the Soviet Navy in its home port" (Secretary of the Navy John Lehman). The US Pacific forces will soon receive the majority of the 1800 Cruise missiles now on order to be carried by B-52G bombers at Guam and the ships of the Seventh Fleet.

The Navy is the one branch of the nuclear forces where the US is not seriously matched by the USSR. Soviet Naval forces are concentrated on Vladivostok which leaves them at a great disadvantage because they must pass through narrow straits controlled by Japanese and US forces. Even with the increased use of facilities in Vietnam and the deployment of one large aircraft carrier "they cannot hope to mount a direct challenge to the US Navy" (Armed Forces Journal).

What is clear is that both the Americans and the Soviets aggressively confront each other in the region and are intent on escalating the confrontation.



### AUSTRALIA'S PLACE IN THE WAR

Since World War II Australia has voluntarily shackled itself to American military strategy. This has meant the stationing of US bases and military cooperation in US wars ( Vietnam, Middle East ). Also important but less well known are access for aircraft and naval vessels and participation in US military exercises.

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Perth is part of a network of ports used by the US with porting facilities in East Africa, Diego Garcia, the Philippines and Perth, the US has extended its dominance from the Pacific throughout the Indian Ocean. The Fraser Government even offered to provide a permanent base for the new missile launching Trident submarine.

The second contribution which Australia makes to a nuclear non-future is in the form of joint exercises with US naval forces. Australia takes part in large scale manoeuvres such as RIMPAC in which US, Australian, NZ and Japanese forces bomb and invade an island sacred to the Hawaiian people, Kao'ao lawe.

The third aspect of nuclear warships using Australian ports is not so directly linked to nuclear war. Most visits to Victoria fall into the "rest and recreation" or propaganda category. Rest and recreation visits of large numbers of men have had an enormous social impact on people in Australian cities. Feminists, particularly in Perth, have long pointed to the increase in rape and violent crime at the time of these visits. This is one part of the way in which military action brings its violence to bear on women.

The propaganda nature of these visits is clear when visits to Eastern States' ports coincide with anniversaries of "great military triumphs", like the battle of the Coral Sea. The "goodwill" nature of the visits is emphasised in an attempt get us used to the warships and to the presence of military hardware.

We can begin to show the nuclear nature of the ANZUS alliance, and the myth of peace through arms by raising the issue of warships. Bill Hayden now Minister for Foreign Affairs once said "If US ships didn't visit, American interest in our region would drop to zilch. The consequences are we would have to start thinking what our role was."

Let's start thinking and act.

## NUCLEAR ARMED? YOU BET!

The nuclear armed and powered ships that visit Australian ports are either American or British. The policy of the United States' Government is not to comment on the presence or absence of nuclear weapons on board its ships, but it is difficult to imagine that these ships do not carry nuclear arms. What sort of navy would maintain a fleet that was not ready for conflict at any time? It is only commonsense that nuclear weapons would be

constantly ready on all available ships since the situation in the Pacific is one of nuclear confrontation. Rear Admiral La Roque (retired) has said that;

*"My experience has been that any ship that is capable of carrying nuclear weapons carries nuclear weapons. They do not off-load them when they go into foreign ports."*

## STRATEGIC NUCLEAR WEAPONS

The Soviet Pacific fleet numbers 320 armed warships, with over 130 submarines, 38 of which carry ballistic missiles. These ships mainly operate out of bases in the USSR.

The American Pacific Naval forces are controlled by Pacific Command, Hawaii. This fleet now numbers 506 armed ships. Almost half of the US peacetime fleet is under control of Pacific Command. The force is made up of two fleets, the East Pacific and the West Pacific. Australia is in the province of the West Pacific, the Seventh Fleet.



The largest submarine in the US fleet, the Trident, also operates in the Pacific, but is not under the control of the Pacific Command. It is likely that the Typhoon, the Russian submarine that is even larger than the Trident, will also be deployed in the Pacific in 1984. The Typhoon carries up to 240 warheads (from 1 to 12 warheads on each of its 20 missiles). The Trident has 24 missiles, each with 17 independently targetable warheads (hence 408 warheads, each equivalent to five Hiroshimas).

## US WEAPONS

NAME AND TYPE	BUILDER	LAUNCH SYSTEM	DESCRIPTION
ASROC-Anti Sub	Honeywell	Surface/sub	Nuclear torpedo or depth charge
HARPOON-Air/Sea Launch Cruise Missile	McDonald Douglas	Air/surface/sub	Nuclear/Conventional
SIDEWINDER-Air to Air	Raytheon	Air	Usually Conventional
STANDARD-Surface to Surface/ Surface to Air/Air to Surface.	General Dynamic	Surface/air	Nuclear/Conventional
SUBROC-Anti-sub			
TALOS-Surface to air	Goodyear	Sub.	Nuclear missile.
Tartar/Terrier Surface to air	Bendix	Surface	Nuclear
TOMOHAWK-Air/Sea Launch Cruise Missile	General Dynamic	Surface	Nuclear/Conventional
	General Dynamic	Air/Surface/Sub	Nuclear/Conventional

Tactical weapons are currently being deployed throughout the world. These weapons are part of the strategy of 'limited nuclear war', or 'theatre war', theoretically capable of being used in a battlefield rather than globally. Their introduction has meant the end of the myth of 'deterrence' (when weapons were built for 'show' rather than for use) and leads to the real possibility of a first-strike attack.

## RADIATION FOR PORT PHILIP BAY?

There are no contingency plans to deal with an accident in an Australian port. No emergency services would be able to deal effectively with the dangers posed by high-level radiation in Port Philip Bay.

The Australian Atomic Energy Commission now monitors radiation levels during visits and is supposed to coordinate with emergency authorities in each State. But port officials in NSW, (which still refuses visits) have said that "the State Emergency Services could not be relied on to put into effect large scale evacuations and other measures" and "there would be doubts about adequate security around ships moored in a harbour as busy as Sydney's" (SMH 12/6/82). All the time these ships are in port the Energy Commission cannot check safety procedures on board our trusted allies vessels for reasons of military security. (AAEC report)

Even Sir Philip Baxter, the former head of the Australian Atomic Energy Commission, and a leading figure in the pro-nuclear lobby, has warned;

*"I personally would be unhappy about the idea of nuclear powered ships of any kind coming into ports, for example like Sydney... I think with the advent of nuclear ships it is going to be necessary to build nuclear ports where the ships can come in, be properly serviced and go out again, and not be right in the centre of a dense population of some millions."*

*in Evidence to the Ranger Inquiry, 21/10/75*

Such fears are well founded. There have been many accidents in commercial nuclear reactors. Since there are more military reactors than there are commercial reactors, it seems reasonable to assume that there have been many accidents that we have not heard about (for "security" reasons).

The major danger which nuclear weapons pose to the world is the very real possibility of their deliberate use. But we need to be aware of both deliberate and 'accidental' destruction. Nuclear related technology is highly sophisticated. This sophistication, far from making reactors and weapons 'safe', increases the probability that something will go wrong. "Friendly ships" and "friendly weapons" continue to be subject to technical and human error. Radiation does not distinguish between friends and enemies.

Below is a list of a few of the incidents that have occurred in both the East and the West.



## DATE AND VESSEL

May 27 1968 US Nuclear Powered Submarine (Scorpion)

## DESCRIPTION AND SOURCE

Lost at sea. Cause undetermined but possibly associated with a collision two months earlier.

(Navy Mag, July 1968)

1968 Soviet Ballistic Submarine G-Class

Submarine sank while cruising the Pacific (750 miles NW of Hawaii) after a series of explosions on board. The sub. carried nuclear-armed torpedoes.

(New York Times 19/3/76)

Nov. 4, 1970 US Destroyer Goldsborough  
(Visited Melbourne 1982)

Boiler explosion 8 miles NW of Taiwan2 killed, 4 injured. The destroyer was armed with nuclear ASROC and TARTAR missiles.

(San Francisco Chronicle 11/2/70)

Nov. 1975 US Guided Missile Cruiser BELKNAP

After a crash with the aircraft carrier JF KENNEDY during manoeuvres in the Mediterranean, the Belknap suffered extensive fires. Both the Belknap and the JF KENNEDY contain nuclear weapons.

(Newsweek 8/12/75)

1975, Guam, Apra Harbour.

A disabled submarine discharged highly radioactive cooling water into the harbour. Radiation levels at two nearby public beaches reached over 50 times the government limit.

"At least nine collisions of nuclear armed submarines over the past ten years, many with Soviet submarines"

(New York Times 20/1/76)

1966-1976 US and USSR Submarines.

July 19, 1983 US Nuclear Destroyer TEXAS

Brisbane "The warship ploughed stern first into the wharf three times. A hole big enough for a man to crawl through was punched into the stern"

(Herald 19/7/83)

## A HISTORY OF OPPOSITION

Ironically enough, nuclear powered warships were first banned from Australia by Liberal PM Billy MacMahon in the late 1960s. The reason for the ban was that port facilities, located near population centres, could not cope with a nuclear accident. The ban was maintained until 1976 when it was lifted by the Fraser government.

However this ban had no effect on nuclear-armed conventionally powered vessels bringing warheads into port because both the ALP and the Liberals made it clear that "nuclear armed ships have come to Australia for many years. Successive governments have accepted that naval ships these days are quite likely to be nuclear-armed." (E.G. Whitlam; Hansard 4/6/76)

Unions, anti-war groups, and environmentalists have been in the forefront of protest against nuclear warships as part of a nuclear-free campaign spanning the Pacific. Vanuatu, like the tiny Mediterranean nation of Malta, has declared itself nuclear-free. Belau, an island trust territory occupied by the US during World War II has voted three times for a Nuclear-Free constitution which the US continues to reject. Protesters in New Zealand, whites and Maoris, have time and time again greeted warships with flotillas and demonstrations until the US has all but given up trying to bring their unwanted 'goodwill'.

### *Nuclear powered warships were first banned from Australia by Liberal PM Billy MacMahon*

In June 1982 Victoria's new Labor government declared the State nuclear-free and refused to accept the visits of nuclear-armed or nuclear powered warships. Fraser responded by inviting the USS Goldsborough to Melbourne and passing legislation giving power to the Federal government over the transit of warships. The act set out a compulsory \$1000 fine or 6 months gaol for any offences under the Act in a clear attempt to stifle protest. The ALP voted against this Act at the time but have yet to repeal it.

The Victorian Government's action forced the Federal ALP to take a stand on the issue. Hayden initially made noises which were vaguely sympathetic but fell in line with Fraser after being rapped over the knuckles at the ANZUS meeting of that year.

Since that time the ALP in government has accepted and even welcomed nuclear warships. Following protests in Perth and Fremantle, the W.A. State ALP moved to refuse warships, the Federal Government did not accept this. When Waterside unions brought Brisbane's port to a standstill over the visit of the USS Texas, Hayden welcomed the vessel at an on-board reception. At the Forum of Pacific Nations the Federal Government argued for a nuclear-free South-West Pacific which would allow nuclear armed and powered vessels to continue using this area. This ridiculous position came under harsh criticism from more independent Pacific nations.

JULY 1984

THANKS TO PHD VICTORIA FOR ASSISTANCE

## A NUCLEAR-FREE AND INDEPENDENT PACIFIC

The visits of warships to Australian ports are just one local aspect of the increasing militarisation of the Pacific. Both the USSR and the US have been stepping up their activities in the area. America, used to having a free rein in the Pacific, has lately seen the Soviets using their one-time base at Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam and regard this as expansionism. The Russians at the same time see the superiority of the US Navy in the Pacific and accuse the US of expansionism claiming merely to be trying to maintain a presence against overwhelming odds.

The people of the Pacific have suffered from the presence of nuclear weapons for many years. Weapons tests began on the Marshall Islands in 1946, and have since taken place in Australia, elsewhere in Micronesia, and in French Polynesia, as well as on mainland China. Over 210 nuclear bombs have been exploded in the South Pacific, and the French still test at Murorora despite protest by regional nations.

The build-up of weapons and warships are linked. People who live in the region are not able to determine how their own countries should be run. It

is obviously of great importance to the superpowers that they be able to maintain their bases throughout the Pacific, so they will be actively opposing any moves towards independence or non-alignment by indigenous people.

Opposition to warships is part of the movement for a nuclear-free and independent Pacific and points out Australia's role in the escalation of the arms race. Actions overseas and in Australia have been successful in drawing public attention to the nuclear ships issue but much more can be done in the future.

A group called 'Project Iceberg' has been set up to publicise the impact of warships both locally and internationally, and to organise direct protest against the visits of nuclear armed and powered warships to Australian ports.

This leaflet is the first of a series that we will produce concentrating on warships.

The name "Iceberg" comes from a group that was established in 1983 in Perth to oppose the visits of warships, it refers to the fact that warships are just the "tip of the iceberg".

Project Iceberg meets regularly in Melbourne and can provide speakers for groups, or further information. Support is also welcomed.

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