



Media Release

18 November 2016

Australia needs positive jobs not a new arms race

The Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN) is alarmed by the Australian Government's comments following statements by a front runner for US Secretary of State, Mayor Rudy Giuliani, that President-elect Trump will increase the military presence in the South China Sea. This, Giuliani reportedly says, would allow the US to fight a "two-ocean war".

Such developments would constitute a disastrous turn of events, according to IPAN spokesperson, Ms Kathryn Kelly.

"The 'freedom of navigation' ploy in the South China Sea is an attempt by the US to stop its decline as a global force, at the same time as China is becoming a leading economic force in the world. China has never hindered the navigation in the South China Sea and depends on commercial navigation remaining open in the region. In the event of hostilities between the two countries, blockading the South China Sea would be a military strategy more beneficial to the USA than to China," said Ms Kelly.

IPAN is concerned about Christopher Pyne's response that "the US expansion could offer a historic opportunity for Australia's defence industry. To give you an understanding of the scale of this increase, it includes 50,000 more army troops, 70 new naval warships, 100 air force planes and a dozen new marine battalions. This represents around half a trillion US dollar increase to the US defence budget over the next decade".

Mr Pyne also stated that "this result could bring with it remarkable opportunities for the Australian defence industry and, thanks to the foresight of the Turnbull government, Australia is well positioned to grasp those opportunities."

"Australian manufacturing should be directed to positive jobs and industries - some examples could include solar panels, wind turbines, autonomous electric vehicles - not taking part in a new arms race in our region", said Ms Kelly.

IPAN welcomes Shadow Foreign Minister, Penny Wong's comments that "We are at a change point, and face the possibility of a very different world and a very different US. Our collective task is to consider carefully and dispassionately Australia's foreign policy interests over coming months, and how best to effect these within the alliance framework."

IPAN believes that these considered remarks are in contrast to the Turnbull government's lack of concern for Australia's interests in the changing world.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull's comments about the US-Australia Alliance being central to Australia's security reflect the illusion that he would like us all to believe in. In fact, as the late Malcolm Fraser pointed out, our close alliance with the US creates more enemies for us – when we don't really have any of our own.

It is clear that the Turnbull government is blinded by the dollar signs in their eyes and is prepared to go along with the Trump US Alliance regardless of the dangers that Mr Trump's "opportunities" may present to Australia and the world.

"It is not in Australia's interests to be in the Middle East and it is not in our interests to be the US's proxy and junior sabre-rattler in the South China Sea," Ms Kelly said.

"Australia must clearly reject any of Trump's ideas that would increase tensions in the South China Sea. The risk of increased tensions confirms the need to re-assess the US presence in Australia. Australia should have no part in a US-induced war, but should, rather, be a voice for peace and diplomacy in the region," Ms Kelly stated.

"We should reflect on the US's military adventures over decades, which have made the global situation much worse, killed and maimed millions of people and destroyed irreplaceable natural and built heritage. Imagine how different the world might have been if those trillions had instead been spent on education, health, poverty and mitigating the impact of global warming!"

For media enquiries contact :

Nick Deane 0420 526 929

Kathryn Kelly 0417 269 984

IPAN Website: www.ipan.org.au

IPAN is a network of around 30 community organisations, with member organisations located in all states and territories.