

Making Australia a base for the U.S. military-

The Force Posture Agreement

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US marines in action on war training exercise in Qld

The Force Posture Agreement between the Governments of the U.S. and Australia facilitates:

- The stationing in Darwin, for six months each year, of up to 2,500 US Marines; they are trained and equipped for immediate deployment and who, while in Australia, train for war in exercises with the Australian Defence Forces
- Access to Australia's airfields and airport facilities for US fighter planes and bombers
- "Unimpeded access for United States Forces and contractors to and use of "agreed areas and facilities" for training, transit, support, and related activities; refuelling of aircraft; bunkering of vessels; temporary maintenance of vehicles, vessels and aircraft; temporary accommodation of personnel; communications' pre-positioning of equipment, supplies and materials; deploying forces and materials; and such other activities as the Parties may agree."

The Agreement states (Article VII) :

"United States Forces and its contractors shall have unimpeded access to Agreed Facilities and Areas for all matters relating to the pre-positioning and storage of defence equipment and supplies including delivery, management, inspection, use , maintenance and removal of such pre-positioned material.

As mutually determined by the Parties, aircraft, vehicles and vessels operated by or for United States Forces shall have access to aerial ports and sea ports of Australia and other

locations, for the delivery to, storage and maintenance in, and removal from, the territory of Australia of United States Forces' pre-positioned material."

In short, the Agreement enables the United States not only to station its troops in Darwin but to store on Australian soil, US war supplies including spare parts, fuel, weapons, ammunition and bombs and opens Australia's seaports to their navy and airports and runways for the use of their air-force.

This Agreement makes Australia a base in the Indo-Pacific-South East Asia for the U.S. military and from which they can launch hostile acts against our neighbours. Currently they have in their sights on the islands claimed by China in the South China sea and some commentators have said they have their sights set on blocking the straits of Malacca in order to put pressure on China by blocking its major shipping route.

The US strategy could be summed up as being a policy to contain China in order to maintain U.S. hegemony on the Indo-Pacific-South East Asia area.

The Agreement lasts for 25 years with the possibility of extension. It may be terminated by either party giving one year's notice.

It is the most recent addition to U.S. military bases in Australia with functions complementary to them

Whilst the Force Posture Agreement comprises the most all-embracing and comprehensive US military utilisation of Australia as a base for its operations, the process started back in the 1960's with the US establishing the North-West Cape submarine communications base then Pine Gap. The latter utilises spy satellites to provide vital intelligence for US war operations as well as targeting information for their notorious US drone assassination program.

Cost to the Australian Taxpayer

The initial cost of implementing the Force Posture Agreement according to the Defence Minister Marise Payne is **\$2-3 billion** with the costs shared between the US and Australia.

The proportion borne by the Australian taxpayer has been kept secret for "national security reasons" said Minister Payne in reply to a letter from the Marrickville Peace Group and in reply to questions raised in parliament by Sharon Claydon, Newcastle MP on behalf of the Hunter Peace Group. Cost wise, there are additionally annual maintenance costs to maintain the activities carried out under this Agreement; these costs are also secret for the same vague "national security" reasons.

Commencement of the Force Posture Agreement

The Force Posture Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the United States of America was signed in Sydney on 12th August, 2014 by Julie Bishop (Minister for Foreign Affairs) and David Johnston (Minister for Defence) on behalf of the Australian Government, and by John F Kerry (Secretary of State) and Chuck Hagel (Secretary of Defence) for the Government of the United States.

However the concept was put to a joint sitting of the Australian Parliament by the President Obama on 16th November, 2011 as part of the US “Pivot to Asia” of its military forces, a strategy designed to “contain” China and maintain U.S. hegemony in the Asia/Pacific area.

President Obama’s concept was enthusiastically received by all politicians of both major parties.

Out in the community however, misgivings were being expressed, especially with the annual deployment of US Marines deployed to Darwin in March/April each year.

Dr Anthony Ashbolt, Senior Lecturer, History and Politics, University of Wollongong wrote in The Conversation, 11/11/2011:

You might think a Labor Government would have learnt lessons from Vietnam, lessons about being involved in war crimes and human rights abuses as well as lessons about the folly of imperial wars.

The American Century is well and truly over and it is time to forge new associations and to think not in terms of military alliances but rather in terms of alliances built upon peaceful relations. Our subservience to the United States does us no good in the eyes of growing powers like China, India and Brazil. Sending a hostile signal to China, as an expanded US military presence in Australia would do, is particularly foolhardy.

It is time to say farewell to the American empire and to forge a new and independent identity.

Dr Kelvin McQueen, Faculty of The Professions, School of Education, University of New England, wrote in The Conversation, 11/11/2011:

There are disturbing reports that the Gillard government is giving the US Marines a base in Darwin. Not since the Vietnam War will Australia have seen such an invasion of US military personnel into its territory. But it’s 35 years since that war ended, so what is the threat to both the US and Australia that necessitates a Marine base in our northern capital?

The Darwin base will be used to guard/intervene in the naval oil and gas routes around South East Asia, not least those radiating from Australia, and provide a springboard into/fallback position from South Asia. That is, it is for forward projection, not Australia’s defence. This will hardly create a good look with our neighbours as we try to convince them that our regional engagement is genuine and not simply a stalking horse for US ambitions.

Dr David Palmer, Senior Lecturer in American Studies, Flinders University wrote in The Conversation, 11/11/2011:

I was amazed at this announcement, now so open. However, the role of the US military on Australian land has a long history going back to World War II. What is so disturbing about this latest development is that there is no need for these troops on our soil now.

Does anyone in their right mind expect China to “attack” much less “invade” Australia? No. This military occupation by the US - which in reality is what is happening - is a rear guard positioning for potential conflict on the mainland.....

The alternative is for Australia to declare its independence - both in economic and military terms. It can maintain good relations with the U.S. but end this growing military incursion. It can maintain good relations and trade with China, but make our natural resources (land, minerals) off limits. This is what sovereignty is about. The old colonialism was British. The new colonialism is American. It is time we stopped being a colony of foreign powers - and finally become independent.

Sydney Morning Herald

Stuart Rollo and Tess Lea authored an article in the **Sydney Morning Herald** , 24th April, 2016, headed:

“ As US Marines arrive in Darwin, Australia must consider its strategic position”

They said: “Earlier this month, the 2016 contingent of US Marine Rotational Force-Darwin began arriving in Australia..... What will go unremarked, by either media or politicians, are the strategic implications of this deployment, its role in broader American military planning and its potential to bind Australian foreign policy and geographical assets to future American wars.

The deployment of 1250 Marines, which is forecast to grow to 2500 in 2017, and larger still if American strategic planners have their way, is a key component of the US military's "pivot to Asia". The “pivot” (in fact) aims to contain a rising China and ensure ongoing American regional dominance.

The Australian public is itself hugely supportive of the US-alliance. According to the 2015 Lowy Institute Poll, 80 per cent rated it as either 'very' or 'fairly' important for Australian security. At the same time, a full 58 per cent of respondents believe that the US-alliance makes it more likely that Australia will be drawn into a war in Asia that would not be in our own interest.

The (US Marines) unit constitutes a fully equipped Marine Air Ground Task Force, designed for rapid force projection in times of conflict, and capable of taking and holding strategic territory in anticipation of more substantial forces surging through.

Darwin was chosen as its location for a number of reasons: its close proximity to the straits of Malacca, the world's busiest shipping corridor through which 80 per cent of China's crude oil imports pass, the fact that it is outside of most missile threat ranges emanating from China, has low-traffic skies for aerial training, and sits astride a huge, sparsely populated, interior region of land that every year opens to live-fire simulations. The importance of Darwin for US regional strategy in the event of conflict calls into question Australia's own freedom of action should such conflict break out.

The question arises: how much freedom will Australia have to make independent foreign and security policy decisions when it is so deeply enmeshed within the broader American security architecture, designed to pursue American national interests? Establishing a more independent foreign policy, and disentangling Australian and American national interests, was a cause that former prime minister Malcolm Fraser passionately advocated during the last years of his life. Many others agree with him.

It is time to have the public debate on the merits of the US marine presence in Darwin that was never held before its surprise announcement by prime minister Julia Gillard and US President Obama in 2011. It may be that when all factors are considered the Australian public weighs its decision in favour of the American base.

But until an informed discourse is established, we run the very real risk of blindly walking into future conflicts, neither of our making nor in our interests, with very little room to navigate an independent response.”

Other Community Responses:

Following Obama’s Pivot to Asia announcement in Federal Parliament in November, 2011:

There was immediate response by the community to the public announcement with a gathering in early 2012 of organisations (8 at that time) with the aim of establishing a national network to build a mass movement/campaign for an independent foreign policy and opposition to US marines & bases in Australia. The network's name and objectives were finalised mid-2012 and IPAN (independent and Peaceful Australia Network) was officially launched nationally on 9 September 2012 on the International Day for Peace. In Melbourne a public forum was held in July, 2012 announcing the establishment of IPAN; a succession of public and union meetings followed as IPAN sought to raise community awareness of the Force Posture Agreement and its implications.

A National Community Response in 2014- Canberra IPAN Conference

A further community response to the Force Posture Agreement and stationing of US troops in Darwin was the holding of a conference in Canberra at Easter, 2014 comprised of peace, faith, trade unions and anti-war organisations from around Australia. This conference of the Independent and Peaceful Australia Network, IPAN, stated its mission as follows:

***“To advocate for an independent and peaceful Australia, free of foreign military bases, and free of interventions by other foreign Governments, corporations, or vested interests, that at present seek to exert undue influence, in shaping Australia's foreign and defence policies, in a manner that diminishes Australia's sovereignty; and
b. Recognise that a truly peaceful and independent Australia cannot be achieved without resolving the past cruel and unjust takeover of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lands, and, in its activities, to work to address these injustices, which began under British Law, and have continued under Australian Governments, since Federation.”***

It should be noted that this mission statement does not simply address US interference in Australia but states clearly its opposition to interference by **any** foreign government and that includes China and Russia.

To mark the 50th Anniversary of the establishment of the US spy base at Pine Gap, IPAN organised a national conference and protests in Alice Springs in September, 2016.

Force Posture -2018

1587 U.S. Marines arrived in Darwin in March/April, this year together with eight MV-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft and an artillery battery of six M777 Howitzers.



US marines arrive in Darwin, April, 2018

U.S. Marines are now imbedded on board Australia's naval ship HMAS Adelaide which has been fitted out with amphibious landing gear to land the US Marines on shores which they are directed to capture and secure as that is the role for which they are trained. War exercises planned for 2018 include the HMAS Adelaide with US Marines on board. One might well ask who controls and directs the US Marines on board Australian naval ships and indeed who directs the Australian ships with the US marines on board. A further question would be: "which territories are the US Marines practising to invade, capture and secure?"

Finally we should be asking: "Is it to our benefit or indeed to our detriment, to be associated with and indeed integrated into, such potential US war scenarios?"

IPAN is running a public campaign to urge Government to terminate the Force Posture Agreement and send the U.S. Marines home

This campaign is being launched on Tuesday, 17th July, 6.30pm at the NSW Teachers' Federation Auditorium, 33 Reservoir St, Surrey Hills, Sydney and is headed:

Keeping Australia out of U.S. Wars.

Speakers include:

An independent foreign policy, peace for Korea & Australia's role- [Richard Broinowski](#), former Australian Ambassador to Vietnam, South Korea and Mexico and immediate past President of the Australian Institute of International Affairs in New South Wales.

The urgent need for an independent foreign policy- [Lee Rhiannon](#), NSW Senator and long time peace and justice campaigner

“Give’em the boot!”- Nick Deane, on IPAN’s Campaign to terminate the Force Posture Agreement with the U.S.A. and send the Marines back home.

Followed by Q & A Session with Panel

\$10 entrance (\$5 concession). Book at <https://www.trybooking.com/392122>

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