

## Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN)

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*IPAN Vision: For an Independent and Peaceful Australia*



The Hon Linda Reynolds CSC  
Minister for Defence  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
26<sup>th</sup> March, 2020

### **RE: UN Call for Global Ceasfire**

Dear Minister

I am writing to you in my capacity as Chairperson of the Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN<sup>i</sup>).

In light of the COVID-19 virus, the UN Secretary General Aantonio Guterres has appealed for a global ceasefire. <https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/sgsm20018.doc.htm>

As you are aware, the UN came into existence following WW2, with the primary purpose of preventing further wars, and the UN is this year celebrating its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It is the only international body with the aim and capacity to deliver world peace.

Up until now, Australia's response has been antithetical to the UN leader's appeal. Australia's Defence Forces, continue to engage in activities that serve to escalate (rather than reduce) international tensions. These activities increase instability and, ultimately, tend to draw Australia and the world closer to open warfare.

Two recent matters support this contention.

Firstly, plans to participate in the Rim of the Pacific 2018 (RIMPAC) military exercises in June and July. Whilst there are indications this exercise may be cancelled as a result of pressure from the Hawaiians, your position on Australia's participation is not yet clear. The exercises centre on Hawaii and involve personnel from numerous countries allied with the USA. The USA is heavily infected with COVID-19. The possibility for further spreading of the disease to all the countries involved in the exercise cannot be under-estimated.

Military activity, by its very nature, involves close contact among forces personnel, providing ideal conditions for the spread of the disease. The recent outbreaks of COVID-19 on the *USS Theodore Roosevelt* makes this abundantly clear.

The people of Hawaii are dismayed at the prospect of being exposed to the virus and their Governor has already asked for RIMPAC to be cancelled.

IPAN commends you for your decision to cancel (or, at least, postpone) this year's deployment of US marines to Darwin. It would be consistent to also withdraw Australia from involvement in RIMPAC. With the pandemic still far from over, engaging in these exercises would be

irresponsible in the extreme. Instead, Australia should invoke the Secretary General's appeal and take no part in RIMPAC.

The second and related matter that causes IPAN concern is the news that Australia is to join the USA in naval exercises in the South China Sea. IPAN seeks to understand the basis for the assurances given that this involvement will 'help strengthen stability and security in the region'. It is IPAN's belief that confronting China in an aggressive manner can only serve to increase the likelihood of an actual confrontation. On the face of it, Australia appears to be following strong anti-China rhetoric originating in the USA. Again, this development flies in the face of the Secretary General's call for a ceasefire.

IPAN therefore calls on you to end Australia's involvement in RIMPAC and recall the HMAS Parramatta from the South China Sea.

Thank you for taking the time to consider the matters raised in this letter and IPAN looks forward to your response.

Yours faithfully



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<sup>i</sup> The Objectives of IPAN are:

- Promote an independent Australian foreign policy that promotes peaceful resolution of any international conflicts
- Oppose the establishment of any foreign military bases, and the deployment of any foreign troops and/or military hardware, in Australia and the Asia-Pacific;
- Provide information, analysis, coordination and other assistance for affiliates and other NGOs, unions, churches, and community groups, to campaign on Australia's peace and security options;
- Build links with peoples and organisations in the Asia-Pacific campaigning for peace and against military bases and troops in the region;
- Promote a vision of a peaceful, just and sustainable Australia; and
- Organise such events and activities as will promote these objectives.

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