

## Radio program – Australia can't rely on the U.S for defence.

(Music)

**ANDREW 1:** Good morning listeners. My name's Andrew and with me is Bevan Ramsden. We're from IPAN, the Independent and Peaceful Australia Network. In today's CICD Alternative News we consider how the actions of the U.S Trump administration have dramatically changed Australia's strategic circumstances, with our long-standing reliance on the U.S for defence being called into question as never before. This provides both a challenge and an opportunity. More than ever, we need an alternative defence policy based on self-reliant territorial defence and a focus on the pursuit of peace in our region as an independent and responsible country.

**BEVAN 1:** Quite right Andrew. The Trump administration has demonstrated that raw self-interest drives the U.S, with alliances being sacrificed at short notice and supposedly 'joined at the hip' alliance partners subjected to punitive tariffs. Australia now faces the unpalatable truth that we cannot rely on the U.S to rescue us in time of danger. The U.S alliance is unreliable and even dangerous, if indeed it was ever anything else.

**ANDREW 2:** A careful reading of the ANZUS Treaty shows that it doesn't guarantee automatic U.S support in the event of us coming under military threat, and in that respect isn't worth the paper it's written on. However, a succession of craven and subservient Australian governments have embraced as an article of faith the notion that the U.S will always protect us in time of need and have adopted defence policies based on that belief.

**BEVAN 2:** The stark reality is that this belief is baseless, and recognition of this has thrust to the fore the need for an alternative self-defence policy to meet our security needs. There is growing recognition in the broader community of these changed strategic circumstances, yet the two major parties persist in clinging to the illusory protection of the U.S military alliance. Australia's security would arguably be enhanced by us ditching the U.S alliance and joining the group of non-aligned nations, especially those in our immediate region.

**ANDREW 3:** The realisation that the United States cannot be relied on has dawned on the former Australian PM Malcolm Turnbull who is now organising a conference to re-examine the U.S alliance.

**BEVAN 3:** Another parliamentarian, independent Senator Jacquie Lambie, responded to Trump's tariff on Australian steel and aluminium by calling for the closure of Pine Gap as a retaliatory measure. Pine Gap is a vital component of U.S war fighting capability.

**ANDREW 4:** Former Australian PM Malcolm Fraser, in his 2014 book "Dangerous Allies", made a statement which is certainly relevant to our current situation, and I quote: "I discount direct threats to Australia as a result of strategic independence. It is strategic **dependence** that provides the greatest problem to our future in the region. Indeed the current interpretation of ANZUS by Australian leaders is paradoxical- it might be the biggest

threat to our own security despite it being presented as the guarantor of our security. Strategic independence would provide us with the motivation to look to the future, to ask ourselves what must we do to secure a future that best serves the needs and priorities, along with those of our region. First, we would need to drive an Australian agenda to really build and develop Australia, with a passion and zeal similar to that which was shown by our leaders in the early days after World War II.”

**BEVAN 4:** If Australia recognizes the dangers and the unreliability of the US alliance, there is a need to consider an alternative defence strategy.

**ANDREW 5:** That’s right, and The Greens are the only parliamentary party to propose an alternative defence policy based on self-reliant territorial defence. Senator David Shoebridge, Greens Spokesperson for Defence, said at the launch of their alternative defence policy: “For decades, the major parties have based Australia’s defence policy on dependence and integration with the U.S military. This was a mistake. Our defence policy shouldn’t be based on Donald Trump coming to our rescue.”

**BEVAN 5:** Senator Shoebridge continued by saying that: “Australia cannot continue to waste money on multi-billion dollar U.S weapons platforms, designed not to defend Australia but supplement Donald Trump’s military. To seriously decouple the ADF from the U.S and to proudly take an independent foreign policy, we need to develop sufficient sovereign capabilities.”

**ANDREW 6:** Senator Shoebridge continued: “Unlike AUKUS though, these capabilities should be to defend Australia, not threaten our neighbours. Australia needs to have a defence force that is about that, defending ourselves, not threatening our neighbours”. “If Australia wants an independent foreign policy and to detach ourselves from Donald Trump, we need to have a clear alternative. The major parties aren’t interested in that, the Greens are.”

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**BEVAN 6:** The Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN), has for some years been developing an alternative self defence policy for an independent Australia, with its policy being finalised and adopted on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2025.

**ANDREW 7:** Whilst there are similarities between the policies of IPAN and The Greens, IPAN asserts that an alternative self defence policy can only be implemented when Australia has broken from the U.S alliance and is thus free to pursue an independent foreign policy. The key features of IPAN’s policy include recall of all overseas ADF personnel, reconfiguration of the ADF for defence of Australia’s territory, approach waters and airspace and the ADF to be deployed overseas only as part of U.N-sanctioned peace keeping operations where appropriate.

**BEVAN 7:** IPAN believes that international disputes should be resolved by diplomacy wherever possible, on the basis of equality, mutual benefit and mutual respect. Our diplomatic service should be given increased and appropriate resources, making military defence as a last resort only.

**ANDREW 8:** The IPAN concept would embrace a policy based on the principle of “non-nuclear, armed neutrality”, meaning that Australia would have no involvement in any wars between other countries and would not allow Australian territory to be used in such wars. This necessarily means removing from our soil foreign military bases such as Pine Gap and the North West Cape Submarine Communications Station, sending the U.S marines in Darwin home and cancelling AUKUS and the Force Posture Agreement.

**BEVAN 8:** This type of neutrality would not be isolationist. On the contrary it would involve active participation in international affairs opposing oppression and injustice, hosting meetings between belligerents, acting as a mediator in disputes between countries and peace building in our region and wider.

**ANDREW 9:** “Armed neutrality” means having the military capacity to effectively defend Australia against hostile incursions into our sovereign territory. Australia is ideally placed geographically to implement such a policy. Sam Roggeveen, of the Lowy Institute, has propounded a similar defence philosophy in his 2023 book “The Echidna Strategy”.

**BEVAN 9:** “Non-aligned” means not having military alliances or agreements with other nations. Australia could find more security by joining the non-aligned movement.

**ANDREW 10:** “Non-nuclear” would include signing and ratifying the Treaty for Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

**BEVAN 10:** The Greens have stated the need for a sovereign Australian defence industry to provide the equipment necessary for a self-defence force. IPAN agrees with this but stresses that this industry must be *publicly-owned* and hence under government control. Privately owned defence industry corporations, the Military Industrial Complex, have profited hugely from the public purse and have no place in IPAN’s vision.

**ANDREW 11:** Unlike The Greens, IPAN has not advocated the purchase of particular military equipment. IPAN feels that military experts will advise, once Australia has embraced independence, whether a coastline protected by missile batteries is appropriate and whether underwater drones can supplement or even replace conventional crewed submarines. IPAN is opposed to nuclear-powered submarines, which clearly are only suitable for use in distant wars, are prohibitively costly, pose long-term health risks and produce hazardous nuclear waste needing long-term storage. IPAN believes that it is vital that a sovereign *publicly-owned* industry forms the backbone of defence procurement and maintenance to enable a self-defence force to be truly independent.

**BEVAN 11:** Opponents of an independent self-defence force argue that it would be very costly and require a significant increase in military spending. However, a realistic assessment shows that the opposite is true. In fact, far less would need to be spent on a truly independent self defence, enabling increased public funding of health care, education, affordable housing, dealing with climate change and the many other areas of pressing need.

For example, for many years Switzerland has practiced neutrality, safeguarded by an independent self-defence force. According to the Stockholm Institute, their spending on

defence in 2020 was 0.7% of GDP. In contrast, Australia's defence spending in 2019-2020 was 2.1% of GDP. Three times as much as percentage of GDP.

**ANDREW 12:** Because of Australia's current dependence on the U.S alliance, our military purchases have been determined by the need for integration and inter-changeability with the U.S military, a force which is configured not for the defence of the U.S or Australia but for waging wars of aggression abroad. Such a military is significantly different to that required for self defence of an island continent and requires expensive and complex equipment, aircraft and naval vessels. Experts tell us and events show that today, technological developments in areas such as drones and hypersonic missiles favour the defender and are cheaper than equipping a military force for aggression abroad.

**BEVAN 12:** The times have changed. There is growing recognition that we need to stand on our own feet as a country and look after ourselves. This is a step towards a truly independent and peaceful Australia and is to be warmly welcomed.

**ANDREW 13:** That's all we have time for time for today, though we will certainly return to this important topic. As ever, we welcome listeners comments and suggestions, which can be emailed to [peacecentre@cicd.org.au](mailto:peacecentre@cicd.org.au), that is [peacecentre@cicd.org.au](mailto:peacecentre@cicd.org.au). Good morning and thanks for listening.

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