

AUSMIN talks deepen Australian integration into US war plans

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Annual AUSMIN talks between US and Australian foreign and defence ministers, held yesterday in Sydney, underscored the deepening Australian integration into US war preparations in Asia and across the globe.

On every issue, from the US-led confrontation with Russia over Ukraine, to the renewed American air war in Iraq and the US “pivot” or “rebalance” against China in Asia, there was not a sliver of difference between the US and Australian ministers.

US Secretary of State John Kerry used the opportunity to intensify the pressure on Moscow by signalling that Russian President Vladimir Putin could be excluded from the G20 summit to be held in Brisbane in November. The joint communique released yesterday condemned Russia for “the continued destabilisation of eastern Ukraine” and connected Moscow to the crash of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17.

In comments to the media, Kerry again accused pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine of shooting down MH17 with a Russian-supplied BUK missile. He claimed that the US officials watched real time satellite imagery of the flight. “We saw the take-off. We saw the trajectory, we saw the hit. We saw this aeroplane disappear from radar screens. So there is no real mystery about where it came from and where these weapons have come from,” he declared.

Kerry’s statements beg the obvious question: why has the US not released the images? In fact, the available evidence points to the opposite conclusion: that the Ukrainian military was responsible for downing the passenger jet.

Kerry’s choice of the AUSMIN talks to ramp up the propaganda war against Russia over MH17 points to the central role of the Australian government, acting on behalf of Washington, in denouncing Moscow and

pushing through a UN Security Council resolution to insert Australian and Dutch investigators at the crash site.

The unity was just as apparent on the renewed US air war in Iraq. At a media conference with Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop, Kerry declared that the US had no better friend than Australia and thanked Canberra for “stepping up again” in Iraq. The Australian government has already promised military transport planes for the so-called humanitarian mission to protect minority Yazidis trapped by Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) militia, and has not ruled out a further military commitment to Washington’s open-ended war.

Kerry and Bishop seized on the gruesome photo of the son of an Australian “foreign fighter” in Syria holding up a severed head to justify a joint push at the UN for tougher international measures to crack down on movements to and from such war zones. The Australian government is exploiting the image to justify anti-democratic measures in its latest anti-terror legislation.

The central focus of the AUSMIN talks, however, was on the signing of a 25-year Force Posture Agreement struck during Prime Minister Tony Abbott’s visit to Washington in June. The document establishes “a robust policy and legal framework and financial principles” for the agreement reached in 2011 with the previous Labor government to station US Marines in the northern city of Darwin and open Australian naval and air bases to American forces.

US Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel enthused that the Force Posture Agreement would enable the US and Australia to “work more closely together ... and cooperate more closely in new ways.”

The Pentagon has already stationed 1,150 Marines in

Darwin for six months at a time, and plans to increase the number to 2,500. This force, backed by air support, would form a Marine Air/Ground Task Force (MAGTF)—a fully-fledged combat unit for deployment in South East Asia and the broader Indo-Pacific region.

A recent war game run by the US-based Center for Independent and Strategic Studies (CSIS) simulated a military confrontation with China in the South China Sea. The former top American defence and intelligence officials involved in the simulation mobilised the US Marines force in Darwin, underlining the purpose in the real world.

The AUSMIN talks gave the green light for a stepped-up US Air Force presence in northern Australia through the use of the Tindal air base and the Delamere air weapons range south of Darwin. Also discussed was “additional naval cooperation,” the “significant, wide-ranging port visits planned for 2015” and the development of “practical options to enhance naval training and exercises in Australia and the region.”

Despite Australian and US denials, the US military build-up in Australia and throughout the region is part of war preparations against China. Speaking on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) program, “The Drum” yesterday, former Australian diplomat Bruce Haigh pointed out that the Pentagon particularly wanted B-52 bombers near Darwin armed “with bunker-buster bombs to bust submarine pens in southern China.”

The AUSMIN meeting established a “bilateral working group to examine options for potential Australian contributions to ballistic missile defence in the region.” The US anti-ballistic missile systems, already jointly established with Japan on the pretext of countering North Korean missiles, are not defensive. The missile interceptors are an integral part of the Pentagon’s plans for an offensive nuclear war against China. They are aimed at neutralising a Chinese counter-attack to a US first strike.

Behind the backs of the Australian population, the Australian government, with the backing of the opposition Labor Party and the Greens, has put the country on the front line of a US war with China. Details of the Force Posture Agreement and Australian military commitments to the US remain shrouded in secret. The joint communique outlines in broad terms a wide-ranging military cooperation, including special

forces collaboration, strategic planning, space surveillance, defence science and technology and cyber warfare.

The communique noted the growing trilateral collaboration with Japan and “welcomed” Tokyo’s decision to “reinterpret” its constitution to allow “collective self-defence”—that is, Japanese involvement in US-led wars of aggression. At the same time, it repeated what has become a constant refrain in Washington, Canberra and Tokyo, blaming China for heightened tensions in the South China and East China Seas that have been stoked up by the US “pivot.”

In an ABC interview on Monday, Defence Secretary Hagel underscored the Obama administration’s determination to continue the military build-up in Asia. “We have over 360,000 American military and civilians stationed in the Asia Pacific. We have over 200 naval ships. I could go on... 1,200 Marines in Darwin, never been done before. We are committed... We’ve been a Pacific power for a long time and we continue to be one.”

The Australian political establishment has given its unconditional support to the predatory machinations and military operations of the US in Asia and globally, regarding them as the only means for securing the economic and security interests of Australian imperialism in a world wracked by rapidly intensifying geo-political tensions.



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