

US spy bases in Australia central to war plans against China

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An article published on January 23 in the Fairfax-owned *Australian Financial Review*, the country's preeminent business newspaper, calls attention to the complete incorporation of the Australian military and intelligence apparatus into the global operations of the US armed forces.

The article was written by Richard Tanter of the Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainability, in collaboration with Max Suich, the former editorial executive of Fairfax media. It focuses on the critical international role of four joint US-Australian spy bases, which, in all but name, are operated as American facilities, jointly funded by both governments.

Tanter makes clear that the bases are at the very centre of Washington's preparations for a war with China, including US plans for a nuclear first-strike.

The article underscores the far-reaching implications of Australia's total alignment—begun under the previous Greens-backed Labor government and continued under the current Coalition government of Prime Minister Tony Abbott—with the Obama administration's "pivot to Asia." The "pivot," which was formally announced by Obama on the floor of the Australian parliament in November 2011, involves a comprehensive drive on all fronts—diplomatic, economic and military—against China.

Behind the backs of the population, Australia has been placed on the frontline of US strategic planning for war with China. Such is the country's integration into these preparations, that in the event of war between the US and China, Australia would also be at war. As Tanter writes, Beijing and Washington "now spend considerable time thinking about the war with each other. From a Chinese perspective, Australia is not so much hosting US military bases, but is a virtual American base in its own right."

In particular, the bases would provide targeting information for a devastating US pre-emptive strike—that could include nuclear weapons—on China's nuclear missile arsenal and satellite communications systems, as well as for America's anti-missile systems designed to neutralise any of China's remaining weapons.

The most strategically significant of the bases is the Joint Defence Facility Pine Gap, first established near Alice Springs in central Australia in 1970. It is currently staffed by up to 800 personnel, the majority of them American. It is one of just three global "control and command" stations for data sent by US satellites which maintain a geosynchronous orbit over the earth's equator. The other two are at Buckley Air Force Base in Colorado, and Menwith Hill in Yorkshire, Britain.

The *Financial Review* article confirms what had already been reported, that Pine Gap provides "telephone intercepts and location intelligence" for the Obama administration's criminal program of drone assassinations in the Middle East, including in Yemen and Pakistan, which have killed thousands of civilians. The Australian political establishment is deeply implicated in these war crimes.

According to Tanter, over the last 15 years, the facility has been upgraded with new antennas for processing data from US thermal imaging satellites, which are able to "instantaneously detect the heat blooms of missiles."

The data from Pine Gap underpins the US-Japanese ballistic missile defence system in the western Pacific Ocean. "With that data," Tanter writes, "the American and Japanese Aegis-class destroyers and their powerful radars, plus their land equivalents, have a reasonable chance of guiding their own missiles onto the incoming enemy missiles ..." Pine Gap will "also provide the

information as to which enemy missile silos are now empty, and which should be targets in a US second strike.”

In addition to Pine Gap, Washington is systematically building up its network of bases across the country. The North West Cape facility in Western Australia has recently become a joint US-Australian facility after having previously been handed back to Australian control. It now forms a central component of Washington’s planning for outer-space warfare, or what Tanter terms “full spectrum dominance in space.”

The base is being upgraded with “the latest advanced US high-tech space telescope” and “space radar from an island on the Cape Canaveral launch range.” It sends its data, “on both space junk and Chinese and Russian military satellites alike, to the US Joint Space Operations Center.” In the event of war, North West Cape would provide targeting information for the shooting down of Chinese satellites. This would prevent Beijing from firing on US ships operating along China’s coast in the South China Sea.

Two bases in Geraldton, Western Australia, and Shoal Bay, near Darwin, monitor satellite data from across the Indian Ocean and the Pacific. Geraldton has been almost doubled in size following a series of agreements between the Obama administration and the previous Labor governments in 2008 and 2010. The deals allowed for the construction of antennas and other equipment for three new US military satellite communications systems.

The first system, known as Wideband Global SATCOM, provides for rapid transfers of huge amounts of data, which is critical for global US military communications, as well as the operations of surveillance and attack drones. The second system services a globally secure internal military Smartphone network. The article states that, without the third of the three new systems, known as DISA, “Pentagon plans for introducing armed and surveillance drones into south-east Asian and Indian Ocean operations will be difficult, if not impossible.”

The bases are just one component of the integration of the Australian Defence Forces (ADF) into a virtual arm of the US military. Pentagon strategic doctrines for war with China depend upon Australian forces blockading Chinese shipping lanes in south-east Asia. Agreements signed in 2011 allow for the stationing of

2,500 US marines in Darwin, and the opening up of Australian naval and air bases to US forces.

As the *Financial Review* article states: “Under a pervasive doctrine of interoperability, substantial numbers of ADF personnel—from major-generals down—are embedded in US high-technology units from Qatar to Hawaii to Colorado, building careers based on strategic doctrines which assume Australian and US national interests always coincide.”

Tanter’s article in the *Financial Review* is the latest to raise concerns about the degree of Australian integration into US war plans. While most of the Australian political establishment have lined up completely with the US “pivot,” some political figures and strategic analysts have urged caution. Former conservative prime minister Malcolm Fraser, for instance, has argued for ending the US alliance.

This layer is fearful that the Australian alignment with the US will damage economic relations with China, Australia’s largest trading partner, as well as precipitate a war with incalculable consequences. Moreover, they are deeply concerned that mass struggles could erupt, as workers and youth become aware of the implications of US war plans against China.

The entire ruling elite is determined to keep the working class in the dark over US military preparations and Australia’s involvement. That is why Tanter’s essay has only been published in the pages of Fairfax’s elite financial publication, and is not the subject of comment in the wider print and electronic media.

The Socialist Equality Party and the *World Socialist Web Site* have consistently sought to expose this conspiracy of silence and, in doing so, to build an international anti-war movement of the working class to abolish capitalism and its outmoded nation-state system that is the source of war.

The author also recommends:

Resolution 1: Australian imperialism and the Obama administration’s “pivot to Asia”

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