

No Australian troops to Iraq! Oppose the US war drive!

James Cogan—SEP candidate for Summer Hill
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The Socialist Equality Party condemns the Liberal-National Coalition government's decision this week to deploy 300 more Australian troops to Iraq as part of the latest US-led military intervention in the Middle East.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott's announcement on Tuesday will increase the Australian military force in the region to nearly 1,000—one of the largest contingents of any country apart from the US. The additional forces, along with 143 New Zealand troops, will join six F-18 fighter-bombers, over 400 air force personnel and 170 commandos.

The dispatch of more troops exposes the real reasons for the hysteria over Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and terrorism whipped up by the entire media and political establishment since last September, particularly during the Sydney siege in December. The “war on terror” is the pretext for Australia's ever growing embroilment in US wars and operations around the world, as well as sweeping attacks on democratic rights at home.

Standing before eight Australian flags, Abbott justified the Iraq deployment by declaring that ISIS “has been reaching out to us for months” and had inspired “two terrorist incidents and another potential terrorist incident that was only hours away from taking place.”

The latest troop deployment makes clear why Abbott went to such lengths last December to elevate the actions of a lone, deranged hostage-taker in central Sydney, Man Haron Monis, into a full-blown national terrorist crisis. Thousands of police were flooded into central Sydney and mobilised in other suburbs and cities amid a climate of fear and uncertainty generated by the media. No attempt was made to negotiate with Monis, a self-proclaimed Shiite cleric with no links to ISIS, ensuring that the siege ended tragically with the

deaths of two hostages.

The other “incidents” referred to by Abbott, including massive “anti-terror” raids in Sydney in September, were just as manufactured and contrived.

The opposition Labor Party immediately gave its full support to the new deployment in Iraq. Labor leader Bill Shorten declared on Tuesday: “Australia's mission in Iraq is not about pursuing territory or power but helping the displaced and protecting the vulnerable.”

This is as much a lie as the claims that the 2003 invasion of Iraq was to end the threat of non-existent “weapons of mass destruction.” American and Australian forces are back fighting in Iraq for exactly the same motives as 2003: to ensure US domination over the region and its massive energy resources.

ISIS is a creation of US wars and interventions in the Middle East. The US and allies such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states funded, trained and armed ISIS and other reactionary Islamist militias in a regime-change operation against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Washington only turned on ISIS after its fighters crossed into Iraq, threatening the US-backed regime in Baghdad. Now the US has extended military operations into Syria for the first time, aimed not only against ISIS, but also Assad.

The widespread anti-war sentiment among workers and youth finds no expression in ruling circles. The Greens and “independent” Andrew Wilkie put on a perfunctory show of opposition in parliament, proposing to debate and vote on the deployment, before moving onto other business. The media barely reported or commented on the boost to troop numbers. An editorial in the *Age* sounded a note of caution about an “endless venture,” but insisted: “We must act swiftly and firmly and in conjunction with other nations to eradicate ISIL [ISIS] and its mad adherents.”

The working class must take the sharpest warning from the escalating Australian military involvement in Iraq. Behind the backs of the population, the government, supported by the opposition, is deepening its commitment to US imperialism's wars, military operations and provocative intrigues in every part of the world.

The Abbott government, Labor and the Greens all fully supported the US-led regime-change intervention into Ukraine, including last year's fascist-led coup in Kiev, and denounced Moscow over unsubstantiated allegations that it was involved in the shooting down of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17.

At the centre of Washington's strategy is its "pivot" to Asia, aimed at subordinating China, its massive cheap labour force and markets, to the untrammelled domination of American finance and corporations. In Europe, the US is seeking to cripple Russia, economically and politically, and thus remove it as an obstacle to its preparations for conflict with China. The US government's utterly reckless actions are generating tensions with two nuclear-armed countries that could escalate into an all-out conflagration involving nuclear weapons.

Since President Barack Obama announced the "pivot" in the Australian parliament in November 2011, governments, both Labor and Coalition, have given the green light for the American military to transform the continent into a key base of operations for its war preparations against China. US Marines, bombers and warships move in and out of Australian bases at an ever-increasing tempo. The Australian armed forces have been thoroughly integrated with their US counterparts.

US preparations for nuclear war against China or Russia centrally involve the Pine Gap satellite base in the Northern Territory. It provides targeting information for American missiles, as well as for the murderous drone strikes in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen and Iraq. The US National Security Agency (NSA) uses other Australian bases as part of the global spy network that was exposed by the courageous whistleblower Edward Snowden.

In the New South Wales state election campaign, the Socialist Equality Party is raising with workers and youth the urgent necessity of building an international anti-war movement to put an end to the source of

war—the profit system itself. The worsening breakdown of global capitalism since 2008 is fuelling geo-political conflicts and rivalries over resources, markets and profits. The fundamental contradictions of capitalism, between an integrated world economy and its division into rival national-states, in which the private ownership of production is rooted, have already led to two world wars during the 20th century. Only the working class can prevent a third global catastrophe.

The SEP calls for the repudiation of the US-Australia alliance, as well as military deals and agreements with all other powers. We call for the closure of all US bases in Australia. Australian troops, as well as police and military personnel, must be immediately withdrawn from the Middle East, Afghanistan and Asia-Pacific countries and the entire intelligence and military apparatus disbanded.

Workers, students and youth who agree with these policies should actively support our election campaign and apply to join the SEP.

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