

Australian workers and youth denounce preparations for war against China

Our reporters
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Last week, the US deployed a navy destroyer, the USS Lassen, into the 12-nautical mile zone around reefs in the South China Sea claimed as territorial waters by China. The provocative move threatened an outright military clash, and has heightened tensions throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

The US incursion, planned by a military cabal in Washington, was the latest incident in an ongoing campaign to exploit longstanding tensions in the South China Sea in order to ramp up pressure on China, and provide the pretext for ever more dangerous confrontations.

The provocation is part of the US “pivot to Asia”—an all-sided diplomatic, military and economic campaign against the Chinese regime. Under the policy, outlined by US President Barack Obama from the floor of the Australian parliament in 2011, the US has established a string of new military installations as part of aggressive military deals struck with governments throughout the region.

Australia is on the front lines of the US plans for war against China, with a new US marine base at Darwin, in northern Australia, and a host of other arrangements designed to integrate the Australian military into the US war machine. The Turnbull government immediately expressed its support for the US provocation in the South China Sea, while various pro-US media commentators advocated that Australia conduct its own incursions into Chinese-claimed waters.

Members of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) spoke with workers and young people about the implications of war with China, the false pretexts used to justify US and Australian aggression in the region and the emergence of flashpoints for a global conflagration in every part of the world.

James, an 18-year-old worker from Sydney’s east, said: “The sending of the American ship can’t be seen as a random act. In the newspapers they say the US is putting

warships inside 12 nautical miles of an area claimed by China because they’re just defending freedom of navigation. That’s not the case at all.

“The media is in full agreement with this government and the American government. The current prime minister, Malcolm Turnbull, has said he completely supports these actions and if there was a conflict to break out, our current state would be completely in alliance with what the US wants to do. That’s very dangerous.

“This would not be a war like World War I or II. If war breaks out, it will be war with nuclear weapons, which was recognised long ago as mutually assured destruction. Nobody wins, everybody loses. This is something that has to be fought against with everything we’ve got.

“I don’t think any fair-minded student wants war, but they just don’t understand the situation. This is because in the West, the actions of the US are not portrayed as aggressive. It’s presented as China’s and Russia’s fault.

“It’s a huge responsibility on young people and students to make clear, particularly to workers in other countries, that we will not let this government send troops. If they do, they will send young people, just like in Vietnam and the world wars. To all the workers in China: we in no way support what our government is doing. These are anti-democratic decisions made without the consent of the working class in any way. We oppose it 100 percent. A world conflict cannot be allowed to happen.”

Zac, a house painter who has lived in both Syria and Australia, spoke to the WSWS in Bankstown, a working-class suburb of Sydney. He said: “World War III is coming soon if America doesn’t stop its politics, so everyone watch out! And Australia should stop getting involved because we have nothing to do with it.

“There’s a big issue between the US and Russia, and between the US and China, so the next world war is coming... In the end, we will get hit. Australia is backing

the US in the South China Sea and it's already fighting in Syria and Iraq.”

Commenting on what drives Washington's militarism, Zac said: “The US wants the oil all around the world, especially now that in Syria not one drop has been gotten from the offshore sea, which is full of it... The US wants a puppet government in Syria, but the Syrian people don't want that. That's why we have been attacked by the US.”

“I know the American workers don't want this either, because the government in America is controlling the people too. Everyone should know from the war in Iraq what will happen. Governments never care about the people. We get no say. We could go to sleep tomorrow and wake up and find a war going on.”

Michael, a disability support worker from south-eastern Sydney, said: “I thought the US actions were quite reckless and deliberately provocative, a genuine push for war. They want to check China's military capabilities to see what they would have to confront if a conflict did break out. Conflict would come out of China reacting to the US provocations, possibly with nuclear weapons.

“I think it's completely bogus. I think the US is using this as a pretext, to try and sell what they're doing to the public.”

An Iranian student from the University of New South Wales said US actions in the South China Sea were “part of a wider scheme.”

He said: “Look at what's happening in the Middle East. They can be looked at as separate instances but I think they are all influenced by big money now. Everything is affected by the laws of business. Multinational corporations dictate our everyday lives. To ignore the military force of the US is to be blind to the facts, because they've been carrying out militarist policies all over the world for the last 50 or 60 years.

“Obama is just a puppet, like any other president for that matter. When he was elected his secretary of defense remained the same as in the Bush administration. The overall policies are the same. He took out 40,000 troops out of Iraq and put more into Afghanistan.”

Jemma, a hairdresser from south-west Sydney whose family originally came from Lebanon, said the growing resort to war by the US worldwide was “disgusting.”

She denounced the destruction of Syria and other Middle Eastern countries by US-led military interventions: “Sending soldiers to destroy our countries is not right. No one should have to see a child killed in front of their parents' eyes. Our countries were the most beautiful in the world, but not anymore.”

Jemma was very concerned by the prospect of a US war on China. “Soon Australia will not be a safe country,” she said. “If a war breaks out between the US and China, who will be on the front line? It will be us! But we have no say in this. The government won't let us have a say... Australian politics is so disgusting that I don't even watch the news anymore, except if I see a poor child suffering or a woman getting abused.”

Asked about the connection between the US invasions of the Middle East and its provocations against China in the South China Sea, Jemma said: “It's for money, for oil, for ‘leadership,’ to show the world they are the kings.”

Jemma insisted that most people opposed the drive to war, and would rise up against it. “As much as there are racist and disgusting people out there, there are more people who are caring and sharing, and eventually when those people stand up, we're going to beat them all.”

At the University of New South Wales, **Xavier**, an international student from China expressed appreciation for the SEP's opposition to the US-Australian preparations for war against China:

“I'm surprised because I heard in the media and from a minister in the Australian government that they all agree with what America is doing, so I thought the whole country did as well. I'm surprised that somebody is opposed to it. You oppose war and that's understandable but what surprised me is Australians do care about the relationship of America and China.

“America has been conducting several wars in the Middle East and everywhere else for the past few decades. I hate wars. Most people feel the same, look at all the refugees from Europe.”



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