

Australian government endorses US-led strikes on Syria

Oscar Grenfell**17 April 2018**

The Australian Liberal-National Coalition government of Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull rushed to endorse the US-British-French missile strikes against Syria over the weekend and signalled its willingness to participate directly in future attacks on the beleaguered Middle Eastern nation.

The support of the Turnbull government and the Labor Party opposition for the illegal act of aggression, is in line with Australia's role as a key military and diplomatic ally of Washington. The entire Australian political establishment has supported participating in every US-led war in the Middle East over the past 25 years, and is centrally involved in Washington's preparations for military conflicts in the Asia-Pacific region, including against North Korea and China.

In a joint statement on Saturday, Turnbull, along with Foreign Minister Julie Bishop and Defence Minister Marise Payne, declared that his government "fully supports" attacks on military facilities in Syria. They labelled the strikes over the weekend "proportionate and targeted."

The statement repeated the bogus pretext for the US strikes. They had sent "an unequivocal message to the Assad regime and its backers, Russia and Iran, that the use of chemical weapons will not be tolerated," it declared.

The Labor Party's foreign affairs spokeswoman Penny Wong likewise endorsed the attack. She described it as "appropriate," and declared, "The world has drawn a red line into the use of chemical weapons and an appropriate response to the breaching of that needs to be put in place."

In reality, the claims that the Syrian government carried out a chemical weapons attack, in the Eastern Ghouta city of Douma last week, are no more credible than the lies about "weapons of mass destruction" used

to justify the illegal invasion of Iraq in 2003.

None of the governments invoking the supposed chemical weapons attack as a pretext for aggression against Syria has presented the slightest evidence that the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad was culpable. Nor have they provided a plausible motive for Assad to authorize the use of chemical weapons, under conditions in which his government is routing the US-backed "rebels." Such an attack would only serve to legitimise direct military intervention by the major powers.

This has not stopped every Australian parliamentary party, along with the corporate press, from endlessly asserting the Syrian government's guilt. Like its counterparts in the US and Britain, the Australian press, including its nominally "liberal" wing at the state-owned Australian Broadcasting Corporation and Fairfax Media, has functioned as a government mouthpiece, incessantly repeating the unsubstantiated claims of the Trump administration and the CIA.

Comments by Payne over the weekend indicated the extent of the Australian government's involvement in the US-led intrigues against Syria. Payne confirmed she had been personally briefed by US Defence Secretary Jim Mattis prior to the strikes and had "conveyed Australia's full support for the bombing."

Turnbull indicated that the main reason Australia had not directly participated in the attack was because its Super Hornet fighter jets had left the region in January. They had been involved, for the past two years, in a US-led bombing campaign in Syria and Iraq. While the mission ostensibly targeted the Islamic State, its aim was to carve-out a swathe of Syrian territory that would be under the direct control of Washington and its proxies, to be used in future assaults on the Assad regime.

But Turnbull suggested that his government would consider direct participation in further attacks, declaring, “Obviously we work very closely with our partners and our allies.”

In any event, the Australian military’s full integration into the US war machine, means it is automatically involved in virtually all of the Pentagon’s Middle East operations. The Pine Gap military base in central Australia, controlled by American intelligence agencies, provides “real-time targeting” for the US military across Eurasia and Africa.

The Australian government has also played a key role in the US and British military and diplomatic offensive against Russia—the real motive for the attack on Syria. Last weekend, Turnbull had discussions with British Prime Minister Theresa May over the use of chemical weapons in Syria, or “on a park bench in Salisbury in the United Kingdom.”

He was referencing the unsubstantiated claims by the British and US intelligence agencies that Russian double agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter were poisoned in London last month. As with the Syrian “chemical weapons” lies, the British government and its allies, immediately blamed Russia, without being able to provide a shred of evidence. To “co-ordinate” with the US, UK and several other countries, Turnbull expelled two Russian diplomats from Australia last month—an act historically associated with the preparation for war.

Despite the immense hostility among workers and youth to Australia’s involvement in US-led wars the entire political establishment supports the US imperialist-led drive to war.

The Greens, who once paraded as “anti-war,” backed the CIA orchestrated regime-change operations in Libya and Syria and now endorse the claims of a Syrian government chemical weapons attack. Greens leader Richard Di Natale pointedly declared, “Australia has rightly condemned the reprehensible actions of Assad against his own people.”

Nevertheless, the Greens insist that they have “grave concerns” over the latest bombings, reiterating their calls for an end to the US-Australia alliance. Di Natale also remarked that the strikes would not further “Australian interests.” In other words, the Greens are desperate to prevent the development of a mass movement against war by channelling anti-war

sentiment into the bankrupt nationalist perspective of pressuring the government to adopt an “independent foreign policy.”

From 2010-2013, the Greens participated in a de facto coalition with the Labor government of Julia Gillard, as it authorised Australian participation in the US-led wars in Afghanistan and the Middle East, and aligned Australia with the “pivot to Asia,” a vast military build-up in preparation for war with China. The Greens have duly supported every criminal US-led intrigue and intervention since then.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:
wsws.org/contact