

US confirms threat to invade Solomon Islands over China security agreement

Patrick O'Connor
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The United States government has confirmed its threat to invade the small South Pacific country of Solomon Islands in the event that China establishes a military base there.

The blatantly illegal ultimatum was personally issued to Solomon Islands Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare by a US delegation led by National Security Council Coordinator for the Indo-Pacific, Kurt Campbell, on April 22.

Following the 90-minute meeting, the White House issued a menacing statement: “If steps are taken to establish a de facto permanent military presence, power-projection capabilities, or a military installation, the delegation noted that the United States would then have significant concerns and respond accordingly.”

The State Department has since left no doubt as to what is meant by “respond accordingly.”

On April 26, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Daniel Kritenbrink, who was part of the delegation with Campbell, spoke with the media. He was asked directly whether the US “would take military action against Solomon Islands if China established a base there.” His refusal to rule out such an intervention means that is exactly what is under discussion in Washington.

“We’ve outlined the specific concerns that we have regarding the potential for a permanent military presence or power-projection capabilities or a military installation, and we’ve indicated that should those events come to pass, that the United States would respond accordingly. And I think it’s best if I leave it at that and not speculate on what that may or may not mean,” Kritenbrink replied.

The State Department official added that the recently signed Solomon Islands-China security agreement had implications for the “security interests of the United

States and our partners,” and that in the meeting with Sogavare, “we wanted to be crystal-clear about what that may mean.”

These thuggish declarations have been echoed by the Australian government. Prime Minister Scott Morrison has stated he will not allow the establishment of a Chinese base on Australia’s so-called “door step,” adding that this would represent a “red line,” that is, a trigger for military action in Solomon Islands.

The Solomon Islands-China agreement has erupted as the most prominent issue in the federal election campaign, with the opposition Labor Party seeking to position itself as the most reliable and ruthless advocate of Australian and US imperialist interests.

What has emerged underscores the advanced nature of US plans for a military assault on China. Wracked by enormous social and political crises at home, and confronting a weakened position within the world economy, American imperialism is on a global rampage. The Biden administration previously pledged to end the “forever wars” in the Middle East only in order to better prepare for war against its great power rivals, Russia and China.

Washington has committed \$33 billion to the US-NATO proxy war against Russia that has been provoked in Ukraine. US and Australian threats against Solomon Islands have further exposed the hypocrisy of imperialist geopolitics.

Ukraine’s moves to join the aggressive NATO alliance is defended as an absolute “right,” and Russian objections to additional US bases being established on its western land border dismissed out of hand. For Solomon Islands, on the other hand, despite being separated from the US landmass by 10,000 kilometres of ocean, the government’s decision to enter into a security agreement with Washington’s chief rival

brings with it threats of retaliatory invasion. This demonstrates the reality behind US talk of a “rules-based order” and the sovereign rights of small nations under international law.

The Solomon Islands’ government has insisted it has no plans to house a Chinese military base.

Prime Minister Sogavare delivered a defiant speech to the parliament in Honiara yesterday. He raised rioting in 2006, which occurred during the neo-colonial, Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI), and the three days of destruction that followed last November’s failed coup attempt by US-backed forces from the province of Malaita. “Obviously, the security agreement with Australia is inadequate to deal with our hard internal threats,” he stated, adding that for the wellbeing “of our people and the economy of our country we had look elsewhere.”

Sogavare insisted that Canberra had informed his government that Australian police and military would not protect Chinese assets and infrastructure during their deployment to the Solomons last year. This allegation has been met with angry denials by Australian officials.

Sogavare’s speech also exposed the hypocrisy of US-Australian complaints of a lack of “transparency” with the China security agreement, by pointing to their failure to consult regional countries before signing the AUKUS military pact with the United Kingdom directed against China.

“I learnt of the AUKUS treaty in the media,” he told parliament. “One would expect that as a member of the Pacific family, the Solomon Islands and members of the Pacific should have been consulted to ensure this AUKUS treaty is transparent. But I realise that Australia is a sovereign country, and that it can enter into any treaty it wants to, transparently or not, which is exactly what they did with AUKUS treaty. [...] When Australia signed up to AUKUS, we did not become theatrical or hysterical about the implications this would have for us.”

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison was yesterday asked if he thought Sogavare was “parroting China’s rhetoric.” Completely ignoring what Sogavare actually said, he replied, “Well, there’s a remarkable similarity between those statements and those of the Chinese government.”

There can be little doubt that Washington and Canberra intend to step up their destabilisation campaign against the Sogavare government.

Separately from their discussion with Sogavare last week, Kurt Campbell and the State Department team met with Matthew Wale, Solomon Islands’ opposition leader. Wale has long sought to curry favour with Washington and Canberra, and has pledged that if he is prime minister he will rescind not only the military agreement with China but also the 2019 diplomatic switch from Taiwan to China.

The US also continues its highly provocative financial and political support for violent separatist forces in the province of Malaita. The provincial leader Daniel Suidani has insisted he will not recognise Beijing and has barred Chinese personnel from entering Malaita. Suidani’s supporters in the proscribed Malaita For Democracy (M4D) group have previously issued pogromist threats against ethnic Chinese people on the island, and led the failed coup attempt last November that involved three days of looting and arson in Honiara.

The US and Australian media have maintained a blackout on Washington’s support for these forces, which threatens to reignite sectarian divisions that wracked the impoverished country between 1998 and 2003.



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