

Australian Labor PM pledges to boost long-range military weaponry

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In an “exclusive” interview published today by the Murdoch media’s *Australian*, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese vowed that his government would spend whatever is “necessary” to acquire long-range missiles and other hi-tech weaponry—all of which would be critical for involvement in a US-led war against China.

Albanese condemned the previous Liberal-National government for allegedly moving too slowly to execute this vast expansion in military spending and accompanying shift in focus to blatantly target China.

According to the *Australian’s* foreign editor Greg Sheridan, who conducted the interview: “He guaranteed, repeatedly, that the government would spend whatever was necessary to produce the defence force that could defend Australia.”

Albanese declared to Sheridan, who has close ties to the US military and intelligence apparatuses: “Yes! Yes! We will do what is necessary to achieve it. We’ve made that very clear. We’ve been really upfront and we’ll do what is necessary. This is not optional, it’s necessary.”

Albanese and Sheridan presented this vow as one of “defending” Australia against an aggressive China. In reality, without any public consultation, the Australian population is being placed on the front line of a US war to reassert Washington’s hegemony over the Indo-Pacific and prevent China from challenging US global dominance.

This agenda was reiterated in the latest US National Security Strategy, released by the Biden administration last month. It proclaimed a “decisive decade” of “geopolitical conflict between the major powers.” China was “the only competitor with both the intent and, increasingly, the capability to reshape the international order,” something the US would stop at nothing to halt.

For Washington, the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine, which threatens a nuclear catastrophe, is a precursor to a war against China. The Biden

administration is seeking to provoke Beijing into military actions, possibly over Taiwan, just as the US goaded the Russian regime into a disastrous invasion of Ukraine by installing a pro-US government via a coup in 2014 and arming it to the teeth against Russia.

In fact, Albanese was explicit in naming China as a supposed threat to Australia, and the source of “strategic competition” in the Pacific. “China clearly has changed its posture in the region and that’s something that we as a middle power in the region have to take account of,” he told Sheridan. “Strategic competition in the region informs our view of our relationships with nations in the region.”

In that context, Albanese stated: “We need more weaponry that can actually make a difference.” He singled out long-range missiles, missile defences, armed drones and cyber warfare weapons. These would be capable of striking China or Chinese forces or facilities in the region, including the South China Sea.

Labor’s prime minister castigated the previous government for continuing to orient the armed forces for land warfare, following “Australia’s recent military experience” in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Successive Australian governments, Liberal-National and Labor alike, backed, politically and militarily, the barbaric US invasions and occupations of those countries, based on lies, in a bid to assert US dominance over the strategic and resource-rich Middle East and Central Asia.

As he has since becoming party leader in 2019, Albanese positioned Labor as the author, and therefore most committed partner, of the US military alliance. The Curtin Labor government initiated the alliance in 1941 during World War II, shifting from Australia’s previous reliance on British imperialism.

Albanese aggressively rejected criticism from the Chinese foreign ministry over the US decision to rotate at least six US B-52 nuclear-capable strategic bombers

through the Australian air force base at Tindal in the Northern Territory. China warned of a regional arms race.

“We made our decision in 1941,” Albanese said. “That was the right decision and our alliance with the US is the right partnership now.”

The B-52 decision, as the WSWS stated, marks a significant escalation of the militarisation of Australia, the Indo-Pacific region and the world. It involves ending Australia’s official nuclear-free status.

That is reinforced by the construction of US fuel and ammunition depots at Tindal and nearby Darwin, and a significant expansion of the US-Australian Pine Gap facility near Alice Springs in central Australia, which plays a central role in US military operations throughout Eurasia.

This integration into US war plans began long before the supposed change in China’s “posture” under Xi Jinping, and Washington’s sudden professed concern for the people of Taiwan, where it backed a military dictatorship that fled the mainland after the Chinese Revolution of 1949, right up until the 1990s.

In fact, Albanese’s government is taking to a new level the moves undertaken by the Gillard Labor government when it signed up to the Obama administration’s “pivot to Asia”—a vast military build-up throughout the Indo-Pacific, directed against China. That included rotating US marines, now more than 2,000, through bases around Darwin.

Albanese gave no indication of the cash needed for the “weaponry that can actually make a difference,” but it would be on top of the huge expenditure required by the AUKUS military pact with the US and UK, unveiled in September 2021 after months of secretive discussions.

Under the AUKUS treaty, to which the Labor government has committed itself unconditionally, Australia is buying and basing long-range nuclear-powered submarines and hypersonic missiles. The proposed eight submarines alone are estimated to cost up to \$171 billion.

Underscoring the pace of the military buildup, Albanese said his government was not waiting for the final report of its “Defence Strategic Review” due in March, along with a decision on which US or UK submarines to buy. He said cabinet’s National Security Committee (NSC) has been actively involved in the review, and a parallel study into the AUKUS submarine program.

“The NSC meets almost weekly, sometimes more often,” Albanese said. “We have received reports (from the two reviews) on the way through.”

An *Australian* in praise today’s responding to “the growing interest of the US in the strategic value of northern Australia.” Despite “fiscal restraint” in the government’s first budget last week, Albanese was determined to acquire the “assets Australia needs to defend ourselves, but also to project (force).”

Last week’s budget was Labor’s first instalment in boosting military outlays and slashing social spending to do so. Military spending will increase by 8 percent this financial year, continuing growth from \$34 billion in 2016 to \$70 billion by 2030. These figures will be dwarfed by what is to come.

Albanese’s pledge to spend whatever is required on this militarisation stands in stark contrast to his government’s refusal in last week’s vicious budget to provide cost-of-living relief, despite soaring inflation, and its insistence on cutting public hospital and other social services.

Billions of dollars more are to be poured into the US-instigated war drive while the Labor government satisfies the demands of the global financial markets for “budget repair,” even as sky-rocketing prices and interest rates threaten millions of people with financial hardship and potential defaults on home loans.

This militarisation is largely occurring covertly in Australia and internationally because the governments know that workers and young people oppose war and austerity. This popular hostility must be developed into a conscious political movement of the international working class, aimed at halting the catastrophe that capitalism is preparing.

That is the basis for the call issued by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality—the student and youth movement of the Socialist Equality Parties—for the building of a mass global movement of young people to demand an immediate end to the US-NATO proxy war in Ukraine and the reckless escalation toward World War III.



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