

Australian corporate papers call for war with China, nuclear weapons and mass conscription

Oscar Grenfell, SEP candidate for NSW Legislative Council
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In a militarist barrage, Nine Media and its main mastheads—the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Age*—published a major series this week insisting that Australia must prepare to fight an imminent war against China.

“Red Alert” called for the stationing of nuclear weapons and long-range missiles in northern Australia, the introduction of mass conscription and preparations for the country to host as many as 200,000 US military personnel.

The articles are a demand for total war, not far off in the future, but as an immediate practical order of business. The series stressed that a war will be fought in the Indo-Pacific, not in twenty years or a decade, but within the next three years.

The multi-part series was not published in response to any specific development. Over the past week, there has not been a major geo-political occurrence in the region. China has not carried out any acts of aggression.

Instead, “Red Alert” is part of a coordinated onslaught by those sections of the US and allied media that speak directly for the American military-intelligence apparatus. In concert, publications such as the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Washington Post* have published frothing condemnations of China. It is as though someone in the White House, the Pentagon or both flicked a switch that sent out an alert to their lackeys in the media.

The provocative attacks on Beijing come as the US and NATO escalate their proxy war against Russia in Ukraine. It is becoming ever more open that the war effort in Eastern Europe is one prong of a far broader militarist project. The US is seeking to inflict a crippling military defeat on Russia, as the essential prelude to war with China, which is viewed as the chief threat to American imperialist interests.

“Red Alert” was couched as an “independent” review by five “experts” of Australia’s capabilities to fight a major war over the coming years. It was timed to precede the release of an official review commissioned by the federal Labor government, due out later this month. The claims of “independence” are a violation of the most basic journalistic ethics and standards related to disclosure.

One is employed directly by the Australian government, four are employed by or contribute to the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, one of the most hawkish government-funded think tanks, or the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, which is

among the most militaristic Washington think tanks. In other words, they could not be any less independent. They are mouthpieces of the state apparatus, as well as of private arms manufacturers that are making a fortune on the back of the military build-up.

The contents of the “Red Alert” review are no less false than its purported independence. The series is a compendium of the lies, double speak and incendiary accusations used by Washington and its allies in the Australian political establishment to justify an aggressive military encirclement of China.

The timeline featured by “Red Alert,” of a war with China within three years, comes straight from the American military. It is simply a promotion of views advanced by US Air Force General Michael Minihan, who earlier this year forecast an American war with China by 2025.

The supposed cause of such a war advanced by “Red Alert” is identical to that put forward by Minihan. The Chinese government would purportedly launch an invasion of Taiwan, compelling US intervention and rapidly spiralling into an all-out war.

“Red Alert” tries to present the US, as well as its allies, such as Australia, as engaging in a defensive effort on behalf of “little Taiwan,” as they have supposedly done in defence of “little Ukraine.” This depiction is a fraud on every level.

The US has been carrying out a vast military build-up throughout the Indo-Pacific since it unveiled the “pivot to Asia” in 2011. The Pentagon has outlined an “Air Sea Battle” plan as to how an aggressive US war against China would be waged. Chief US strategists have openly acknowledged that this is motivated by fears of China’s economic rise, and American imperialism’s relative decline.

Taiwan is simply a pretext. The US and its allies have sought to transform it into a flashpoint. Successive US governments, beginning with Obama, have undermined the status quo. Since the 1970s, the international community, including American administrations, de facto acknowledged the Chinese Communist Party as the sole legitimate government of all of China, including Taiwan, located just 160 kilometres from mainland China.

But now, Biden has repeatedly declared that the US would fight a war to defend Taiwanese “independence.” His administration has tripled US forces on the island, while directly providing military aid and expanding diplomatic ties with Taipei. The aim is

to provoke a Chinese response, which would serve as the justification for longstanding US war plans.

“Red Alert” asserts that such a war would immediately become region-wide. Australia would be involved from the outset and within 72 hours of such a conflict, there would be Chinese attacks on Australian cyber networks and critical infrastructure. The US Pine Gap spy and military coordination base in central Australia would be a target, as would other Australian-US installations.

The series declares that in the event of such a war, as many as 200,000 American troops would descend on Northern Australia. That is, 47,000 less than the entire population of the Northern Territory, meaning the entire region would be transformed into a massive US base.

“Red Alert” links this scenario to a call for the acquisition of major missile systems and other offensive weaponry. This is in line with a rapid build-up already underway, which is being dramatically accelerated by the Labor government. Virtually every week, there is a new announcement of military acquisition, be it sea mines, US HIMARS or naval strike missiles.

Conscious of the historic opposition to war among workers and young people, the document cites the necessity to break the “taboos” of conscription and nuclear weapons.

Perhaps the one note of truth in the series is its description of what a major war in the Indo-Pacific would involve. It would be a “whole of nation” effort, essentially requiring the militarisation of the entire society.

Along these lines, the “Red Alert” series calls for the introduction of conscription. This would involve not only teenagers and young adults, but potentially anyone required for the war effort in what would be a war economy and the militarisation of society.

The series also advocates the stationing of US nuclear weapons in Northern Australia, on long-range missile systems that could fire them into the Indo-Pacific. As is the case whenever such proposals are made, the “experts” assert that this would serve as a “deterrent.” But they contradict themselves because in the previous parts of the series, the “experts” insisted that war is inevitable. The inescapable conclusion is that they are calling for nuclear war.

“Red Alert” serves several purposes. It comes amid a debate within the Australian ruling elite, over Australia’s full alignment with the US war drive against China. A minority wing has voiced concerns over the implications of this. It is not anti-war or anti-imperialist, but fears that war with Australia’s largest trading partner will devastate the economy while provoking mass social and political upheavals.

The dominant sections of the political establishment, however, are all the way with the US. Australia, as a middle-order power, has always functioned under the umbrella of the dominant power of the day to prosecute its own imperialist interests. Australia, moreover, is completely integrated into the US war machine, meaning its participation in a conflict with China would be automatic.

This integration is only deepening. Next week, Labor Prime Minister Albanese will stand alongside President Biden in San Diego, as they announce that Australia will purchase US nuclear-

powered submarines. The Labor government has already permitted nuclear-capable American B-52 bombers to “rotate” through northern Australia, meaning American nuclear weapons may already be stationed here.

The primary target of the “Red Alert” series is the population itself. Its authors write about the need to change Australian “psychology.” They know that their mad plans for war are deeply opposed by the vast mass of workers and young people.

Conscription provoked massive social upheavals, both in World War I and during the Vietnam War. There is likewise a long history of broad opposition to nuclear weapons.

The propaganda blitz is aimed at bulldozing these popular sentiments by asserting that there is no alternative but to fight a war. A conflict is inevitable, so the population will simply have to accept it.

But the response to “Red Alert” itself shows that this will not happen. The series has received a torrent of hostile commentary on social media. The *Sydney Morning Herald* posted the final part, containing the recommendation for nuclear weapons and conscription, to its Twitter account yesterday. The tweet has been viewed by 161,000 people. But only 20 of them hit the like button. While proclaiming the need for an “open” and “bold” discussion, the *Herald* has hidden all responses to its Twitter post.

The type of war that “Red Alert” advocates is incompatible with democracy. That is the real meaning of the comments by the “experts” on the “Zelensky test.” They are referencing Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, a front man for the US and NATO. The “Zelensky test” is a willingness to place the entire country on a war footing. In Ukraine, this has involved the banning of all opposition parties and the promotion of fascist and Nazi forces.

The working class must take a sharp warning from the “Red Alert” series and the broader turn to war with China. Longstanding plans for a catastrophic conflict are being activated. Governments and their mouthpieces are not only asserting that war is near. They are making it so.

This is a product of the deepest crisis of the profit system since the 1930s. The alternative to the catastrophe that is being prepared is the fight to build an international anti-war movement of the working class directed against the capitalist system itself and fighting for the socialist reorganisation of society.

Contact the SEP

Phone: (02) 8218 3222

Email: sep@sep.org.au

Facebook: [SocialistEqualityPartyAustralia](https://www.facebook.com/SocialistEqualityPartyAustralia)

Twitter: [@SEP_Australia](https://twitter.com/SEP_Australia)

Instagram: [socialistequalityparty_au](https://www.instagram.com/socialistequalityparty_au)

TikTok: [@sep_australia](https://www.tiktok.com/@sep_australia)

Authorised by Cheryl Crisp for the Socialist Equality Party, Suite 906, 185 Elizabeth Street, Sydney, NSW, 2000.



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[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)