

Australia becomes a “central base of operations” for US war plans against China

Mike Head
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Australia’s current Labor government is intensifying the transformation of Australia into a crucial platform for a US war against China across the Indo-Pacific region, effectively placing the population in the firing line of a potential nuclear war.

That was underscored last weekend. The *Australian* headlined a front-page “exclusive” interview with a prominent US congressman in which he declared that Australia had become “the central base of operations” for America’s military preparations, ostensibly to deter “Chinese aggression.”

Republican legislator Michael McCaul, the chair of the US House of Representatives foreign affairs committee, told the newspaper that a recently announced boost to US bomber deployments to Australia’s northern “Top End” bases would enable America to project power across the region.

Speaking in Sydney after a 10-day visit, McCaul said Australia’s geography offered key advantages to the US as it sought to answer the “threat” posed by China. “It is the central base of operations in the Indo-Pacific to counter the threat,” he said.

“If you really look at the concentric circles emanating from Darwin—that is the base of operations, and the rotating (US) forces there are providing the projection of power and force that we’re seeing in the region.”

At the latest annual Australia-US Ministerial Consultation in Maryland last week, Australian Defence Minister Richard Marles and Foreign Minister Penny Wong signed off on more frequent rotations of nuclear-capable US bombers and fighter jets through Australia’s Northern Territory bases.

That marks a further step in the escalating US military presence and access to bases in Australia, especially across the continent’s strategic north. This is gathering pace amid reported concerns in US military and ruling circles over the vulnerability of the large US bases in Guam, Japan, South Korea and The Philippines to Chinese missiles.

McCaul shed further light on the real agenda behind the AUKUS pact to supply Australia with US and UK nuclear-

powered submarines, long-range hypersonic missiles and other hi-tech weaponry.

He emphasised the importance of rotational deployments of US nuclear submarines from the Stirling naval base near Perth in Western Australia from 2027, along with AUKUS’s “Pillar II” technology-sharing partnership to integrate Australia more into US weapons-making capacity.

This again indicates preparations for a potential nuclear war against China long before the mooted delivery of US submarines to the Australian navy in the 2030s and the eventual construction of such vessels in Australia in the 2040s.

“Time is really of the essence right now, as Chairman Xi has announced his 2027 project,” McCaul said, referring to Xi’s alleged call for Chinese forces to be ready to “invade” Taiwan within three years.

McCaul, as has been customary for representatives of US imperialism, absurdly depicted these war preparations as efforts for peace. He said closer military ties between the US and Australia would “provide more deterrence in the region and project power and strength so we don’t have a war.”

In reality, Washington is taking increasingly aggressive military and economic action against China, which US governments have designated as the main threat to American global hegemony. It is goading the Beijing regime into a conflict, as it did with Russia in Ukraine, by imposing crippling tariffs and sanctions, and encircling China militarily via a series of military pacts, such as AUKUS.

That confrontation includes pouring military weaponry into Taiwan, effectively repudiating the more than four decade-old One China policy that recognised Beijing as the legitimate government over the entire country, including the offshore island of Taiwan.

McCaul stressed the essential agreement between the Republican and Democrat leaderships in the US. He extolled the AUKUS pact, forged by the Biden-Harris administration, as a “game changer” in a ring of US alliances against China. He said the treaty would survive a Trump presidency, saying it had “very, very strong bipartisan support.”

McCaul hailed the developing integration of the two country's military industries, saying it would accelerate new capabilities such as hypersonic missiles and Anduril's Ghost Shark underwater drone, which is being developed in Australia.

"I envision there being co-production facilities in Australia ... helping to build up our defence industrial base, which is really stressed right now with war in the Middle East and Ukraine and the eastern Europe threat," McCaul said.

This speaks to the creation of wartime economies in both countries for the purpose of conducting what is a three-front conflict. McCaul expressly linked a war in the Indo-Pacific to those in Ukraine against Russia and the US-armed Israeli Gaza genocide and push for a wider Middle East war against Iran.

This is an outline of a third world war. In fact, in an editorial this morning, the *Australian* said McCaul's comments revived memories of US General Douglas MacArthur arriving in Australia from The Philippines in March 1942 to direct the US war against Japan for supremacy in Asia. MacArthur's HQ remained in Brisbane until 1944.

As in World War II, the Australian Labor government is totally committed to backing the US on every front. After the AUSMIN talks last week, Defence Minister Marles said America's military was now operating in Australia across "all domains"—"land, sea, air, cyber and space". He hailed new US logistics facilities to be located in Queensland and Victoria, saying they would enhance the ability of US forces to operate from Australia into the region.

Marles highlighted the growth of the US Marine force in the northern city of Darwin to 2,500. This was an initiative first launched by the previous Gillard Labor government as part of the Obama administration's military and strategic "pivot" to Asia to confront China in 2011.

At the latest talks, the Albanese Labor government signed a revamped AUKUS "Agreement" and "Undertakings" that go beyond those accepted by the previous Morrison Liberal-National Coalition government, which first entered into the AUKUS pact in 2021 with the assured bipartisan backing of then Labor opposition.

Key US bases in Australia have been pivotal to American global military and intelligence operations for decades, notably the Pine Gap satellite surveillance facility near Alice Springs in central Australia which covers the Indo-Pacific all the way to the Middle East.

Since the Obama-Gillard deal in 2011, however, the list of bases where US forces are stationed, rotate or have guaranteed access to has grown to around 30, mostly across northern Australia and as far as the remote Cocos (Keeling) Islands in the Indian Ocean. This includes seven airfield,

port or troop facilities and training grounds in or near Darwin—the hub of the US "concentric circles."

The *Australian* editorial insisted that this was not enough. It called for "national urgency" to "gain the advanced capabilities AUKUS demands." It declared: "As in the Southwest Pacific campaign 80 years ago, failure is not an option. Too much is at stake, including modernising our industrial base to produce the necessary military hardware."

The editorial concluded by denouncing former Prime Minister Paul Keating who gave a television interview last week in which he branded the US as an "aggressor" targeting China in the Indo-Pacific and warned that the AUKUS pact threatened to involve Australia in a catastrophic war against its largest export market.

Evidently, the *Australian's* promotion of its interview with McCaul was in part directed against Keating, and more broadly against the widespread anti-war sentiment among workers and youth which has been deepened by the disgust and outrage over the Gaza genocide and the Labor government's complicity in it.

Keating, however, was just as committed to US militarism when he was in office during the Hawke-Keating governments of 1983 to 1996. In fact, Labor governments have always prosecuted the predatory interests of Australian imperialism, as a middle-order power, in alliance with the dominant power of the period, first Britain and then the US.

While alarmed by the economic consequences of a war against China, Keating and those elements within the corporate elite that share his anxiety have no progressive alternative. Instead, they promote an equally reactionary Australian nationalism. Keating said he favoured acquiring conventional submarines, underwater drones and other weaponry that would inevitably be used to defend the interests of Australian capitalism, including war with China.

No faction of the Australian ruling class has any solution to the global eruption of militarism, fuelled by the decay of American imperialism and the deepening crisis of world capitalism. The only way to halt the lurch into another world war is to build an international anti-war movement, uniting workers on every continent on the basis of a socialist perspective directed against the source of war, the profit-driven capitalist system itself.



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