

Australian Labor government explicitly backs US assault on Iran

Mike Head
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After a still-unexplained day of delay, the Australian Labor government yesterday made categorical its support for the weekend's illegal, unprovoked US attack on Iran. Today, it followed up by immediately denouncing Iran's limited retaliatory strike on the giant US base in Qatar.

Yesterday, following a meeting of his cabinet's National Security Committee (NSC), comprised of key ministers, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese declared: "The world has long agreed that Iran cannot be allowed to get a nuclear weapon and we support action to prevent that—that is what this is."

At a terse and short joint media conference with Foreign Minister Penny Wong, Albanese was anxious to publicly back the US aggression, while falsely insisting it had narrow objectives. He claimed that the bombing was only "directed at specific sites central to Iran's nuclear program" and "we don't want escalation and a full-scale war."

That assertion was made after US President Donald Trump had called for "regime change" on his Truth social media platform, to "make Iran great again," making clear the wider US war aims across the Middle East.

Albanese and Wong echoed Trump in declaring Iran to be a threat to the world, when it is the United States and its Israeli proxy, which is armed with an estimated 90 to 400 nuclear warheads, that is again setting the Middle East aflame as part of the emerging global conflict.

Labor's backing for the brazen US aggression continues its support for the intensifying US-funded Israeli genocide in Gaza, and Israel's repeated attacks on Lebanon, Syria, Yemen and Iran. This onslaught is part of an overarching plan to establish a "new Middle East," totally dominated by Washington, as part of the rapidly escalating preparation for a US-led war against China.

Echoing the Trump White House, Albanese further sought to turn reality on its head, blaming Iran for the US bombing. He accused Iran of refusing to "come to the table" and "abandon any nuclear weapons program."

In fact, Trump's calls for negotiations were simply a ruse to lull the Iranian regime into a false sense of security, enabling Israel's initial surprise attack on Iranian military and nuclear facilities and the assassination of top Iranian officials—including a top nuclear negotiator.

After again calling for talks and declaring he would do nothing for two weeks, Trump just days later unleashed an unprecedented barrage of huge "bunker buster" bombs and missiles on three Iranian nuclear sites.

At their media conference—which they shut down after just nine minutes—Albanese and Wong refused to answer questions from journalists about their government's involvement in the assault on Iran. Albanese instead kept repeating that the strikes were a "unilateral action taken by the United States."

Asked why it had taken 24 hours to endorse the US attack, Albanese unconvincingly said it was because Australia was not "a central player in this conflict" and "we run an orderly, stable government."

Asked again, Albanese claimed that the government had already issued a statement on Sunday. But Sunday's statement, issued by the Prime Minister's Office from an anonymous government spokesperson, offered no explicit endorsement of the US strikes, while declaring Iran's nuclear program to have been "a threat to international peace and security."

Other questions likewise went unanswered.

Asked what was discussed at the National Security Committee, Albanese replied: "We don't talk about what we discuss at NSC."

Questioned whether Australia had provided any military support for the US bombing operation via its bases in the region or "joint" US facilities in Australia, such as the Pine Gap satellite surveillance station in central Australia, Albanese refused to confirm or deny. He insisted: "We don't talk about intelligence matters."

Albanese also refused to say if any intelligence had been shared with his government about Iran supposedly being imminently at the point of having a nuclear weapon.

The truth is that the official US intelligence assessment, made public in March, concluded that Iran had neither the capacity nor desire to create a nuclear weapon in the foreseeable future—a process that would take many months, if not years.

Significantly, Albanese displayed Labor's contempt for international law. He declined to answer a question about whether he or his government believed the US attacks were legal, even though it was endorsing them.

Earlier in the day, Australian legal experts had joined

international lawyers in labelling the US attacks unlawful under the 1945 UN charter, which only allows countries to use force to defend themselves against armed attack, not in anticipation of one.

Ben Saul, a professor of international law at the University of Sydney, said the US strikes amounted to an “international crime of aggression.” Don Rothwell, professor of international law at the Australian National University, said the US bombings had “no legitimacy under international law.”

Rothwell said the US claim of a right to pre-emptive self-defence—which was invoked in invading Iraq in 2003 on the basis of proven lies about “weapons of mass destruction”—had “never been endorsed by either the UN Security Council or the International Court of Justice.”

Despite the 24-hour delay in convening the NSC, there was never any real doubt that the Labor government would line up behind the US aggression. That was despite the Labor leaders being evidently nervous about the prospect of mass opposition.

Labor has long been totally committed to the US military alliance. It backed Washington’s illegal and catastrophic wars of aggression against Iraq and Afghanistan, and its barbaric military and CIA operations in Libya and Syria.

Moreover, Labor is desperate to ensure that the Trump administration’s announced “review” of the AUKUS military pact between the US, the UK and Australia does not end the deal to sell Australia nuclear-powered attack submarines.

Before the NSC meeting, Wong made a flurry of appearances in the morning on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and commercial radio and TV outlets, followed by a doorstop media conference at parliament house, to make clear the government’s unequivocal endorsement of the US attacks.

Wong repeatedly denied any advance notice of the US assault, despite having had a phone call with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Friday. Later that day, the Australian embassy in Iran was suddenly closed down and diplomatic staff were quickly evacuated out of the country, leaving behind more than 2,000 Australian-Iranians and their families seeking to escape the US-backed Israeli bombing.

Wong confirmed that Albanese was still anxiously seeking a meeting with Trump to discuss AUKUS and trade tariffs, a hope that was dashed when Trump left last week’s G7 summit in Canada early to preside over the attack on Iran. “The Prime Minister is looking forward to the meeting being rearranged,” she said.

The government’s initial response on Sunday triggered a barrage of condemnation from within the media and political establishment for not going fast and far enough to back the US assault.

Yesterday’s editorial in the Murdoch media’s *Australian* declared Albanese’s “silence” on Trump’s “courageous action” to be “inexcusable.” The *Australian Financial Review*’s editorial hailed Trump for reasserting “American hard power on the world stage,” saying this was “reassuring for

Australia as we continue to look to the US to underwrite our security in the Indo-Pacific.”

Liberal-National Coalition leader Sussan Ley and acting Shadow Foreign Affairs Minister Andrew Hastie issued a statement vowing full support for the “proactive” action taken by the United States.

Yesterday’s Albanese-Wong press conference has not appeased the critics.

Today, the *Australian*’s foreign editor Greg Sheridan vehemently denounced the performance of the government, and Albanese in particular, as “passive” and “weak.” He derided the press conference as “unbearably stilted, constipated, almost pre-AI robotic” and “a national embarrassment.”

Sheridan accused the government of wanting to preserve the US alliance but being “perpetually scared of internal rebellion and terrified of losing votes to the Greens domestically.”

Labor’s real fear is of the widespread anti-war and anti-Trump sentiment, which was displayed in the May 3 election. Labor won the election, despite obtaining only a third of the vote, because of the collapse of support for the Liberal Party, which was associated in voters’ minds with the fascistic Trump agenda.

As for the Greens, on Sunday they ludicrously called on the Labor government to state it would not participate in the war, including by allowing the use of military bases in Australia. The party’s foreign affairs spokesperson David Shoebridge said: “Our government needs to call out Donald Trump for the warmonger that he is.”

In reality, Labor has continued to collaborate as closely as possible with the Trump administration. Moreover, Australia is automatically involved in US wars through the provision of intelligence and targeting data from Pine Gap and other facilities. As part of the US build-up to war against China, US access to air and naval bases in northern and western Australia have vastly expanded.

Since World War II, the Australian ruling class and both its major parties, Labor and the Coalition, have relied upon Washington’s military backing to pursue its own predatory imperialist interests, especially across the Indo-Pacific.

Now the Labor government has openly backed US aggression against Iran, in flagrant violation of international law, that could plunge the world into a full-scale Middle East war and a third world war, unless it is stopped by the international working class.



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