

New Zealand and Australian leaders discuss stronger military ties against China

Tom Peters
14 August 2025

Australia's Labor Party Prime Minister Anthony Albanese met with New Zealand's right-wing National Party Prime Minister Christopher Luxon on August 9 to discuss stronger military integration, as the two countries join US imperialism in its accelerating build-up to war against China.

The annual bilateral talks were held in the New Zealand tourist town of Queenstown a few days after the conclusion of Talisman Sabre, the largest war games ever hosted by Australia. The US-Australian exercise involved 40,000 troops from 19 countries—including more than 650 New Zealand personnel—and tested advanced long-range missile systems that play a major role in Washington's war plans.

NZ Chief of Army Rose King told the *Sunday Star-Times* the training was essential for New Zealand soldiers to be ready to “fight tonight.”

In a joint statement, Albanese and Luxon highlighted the “alignment” of Australia's 2024 National Defence Strategy, which outlined a \$50 billion military build-up, and New Zealand's recently-announced Defence Capability Plan, which will double military spending from 1 to 2 percent of GDP. Both documents provided the “basis to drive interoperability” between the two countries, to “deter actions inimical to our interests, and respond with decisive force if necessary.”

Luxon told a media conference that even more money could be diverted into the military in coming years. “We want to be a force multiplier, we want to be one essential Anzac force operating within our region,” he declared, invoking the Australia and New Zealand Army Corps (Anzac) of World War I.

Both countries hold annual Anzac Day commemorations, which glorify the “sacrifice” of tens of thousands of lives in WWI and other wars in the

service of imperialism.

As the US seeks to establish its hegemony over the world's resources, trade routes and labour markets, its imperialist allies—including Australia and New Zealand—are determined to have their seat at the table, regardless of the cost in human lives and resources.

Amid what they called “the most unpredictable and dangerous strategic environment in decades,” Albanese and Luxon reaffirmed the 1951 ANZUS Treaty, which is the basis for the military alliance between Australia, New Zealand and the US. They repeated previous statements that “a cyber-attack on either nation could constitute an armed attack under the ANZUS Treaty,” triggering a response.

The leaders praised the AUKUS military pact between Australia, the UK and US, under which Australia is to be armed with nuclear-powered attack submarines and other weapons, as it is transformed into a frontline base of operations for war against China. The joint statement noted that “consultations with New Zealand are continuing on potential future collaboration opportunities under AUKUS Pillar II,” which involves the development and sharing of military technology.

All these military preparations are being sold to the public as a “defensive” response to the supposed threat from China. Albanese and Luxon “expressed grave concern about dangerous and provocative behaviour in the South China Sea and the intensification of destabilising activities by coast guard and naval vessels as well as maritime militia. This behaviour has created risks of collision, miscalculation and injury.”

The two leaders “also expressed serious concern about the situation in the East China Sea” and “underscored the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.”

All of this is utterly hypocritical and a distortion of

reality. It is the US which has deliberately inflamed tensions with China, including by arming the Philippines and Taiwan to the teeth and staging provocative military exercises near Chinese territory, in which NZ and Australia are frequently involved.

New Zealand and Australia are imperialist powers, which are seeking to defend their own neo-colonial control over the Pacific region, with the support of the US. The joint statement hailed “significant progress in the design and implementation of the Pacific Policing Initiative (PPI),” which will create a militarised, mobile police force under Australian control, capable of being deployed across the Pacific to suppress popular unrest. Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Samoa and Vanuatu have agreed to host “PPI Regional Centres of Excellence.”

Australia has established full control over security policy in Nauru, Papua New Guinea and Tuvalu, while New Zealand’s government is attempting to bully its colony the Cook Islands into ending its economic deals with China.

Another component of the militarisation of the Pacific is Australia and New Zealand’s strengthening of military ties with Japan. While Albanese was visiting NZ, Wellington hosted two Japanese warships—JS Suzunami, a destroyer with a crew of about 500, and the JS Ise, a large helicopter carrier—which are touring the Pacific region.

It was the Japanese navy’s first visit to the NZ capital since the 1930s. The Luxon government is promoting enhanced military “interoperability” and intelligence sharing with Japan. The Japanese ruling class, which retains its imperialist ambitions, has ditched any pretense of having a “pacifist” foreign policy. It is being closely integrated into the US-led network of alliances and will play a major role in any conflict with China.

The call for “peace and stability” in the Indo-Pacific region is just as dishonest as Albanese and Luxon’s fake show of concern for the people of Gaza. Their statement mildly called upon the Netanyahu regime to “reconsider” its plan to occupy the Gaza Strip and remove its population. Such actions “would be wrong, risk violating international law, and exacerbate the human catastrophe,” they said. The two prime ministers “reiterated their commitment to a two-state solution as a just and lasting peace depends upon it.”

Both Australia and New Zealand continue to support

Israel, including by allowing the uninterrupted shipment of weapons components and other supplies to its military, and by providing military and intelligence assistance to the US. Albanese’s pledge to recognise Palestinian statehood is nothing but a cynical attempt to deflect mass opposition to Israel’s genocide.

The ruling class on both sides of the Tasman is already deeply involved in US-led imperialist wars in every part of the globe—from the Middle East to the warmongering against China and the US-NATO proxy war against Russia over Ukraine. These are three fronts in a developing third world war, which threatens a catastrophe far greater than the two world wars of the last century.

All of this is being done despite overwhelming public opposition to war. But the past two years have demonstrated that the imperialist governments are impervious to mass protests urging them to change course. The entire capitalist political establishment, including New Zealand’s Labour Party and the union bureaucracy in Australia and NZ, are supporting the military build-up.

The urgent task is to build a socialist, anti-war movement to unite workers and young people across Australia, NZ, Asia, the Pacific and internationally, in order to put an end to capitalism, which is the root cause of war, social inequality and dictatorship.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact