

# New Zealand navy vessel joins US-led provocations against China

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The New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) reported on December 8 that a NZ navy ship, the HMNZS Aotearoa, supported by a P-8A Poseidon maritime aircraft, carried out “surveillance and deterrence” activities in the international waters of the East China and Yellow Seas during November.

The Aotearoa, a large supply and replenishment vessel, was part of a mission that included spying on North Korea and purportedly “curbing North Korea’s nuclear and ballistic missile programs.” On November 5, the Aotearoa transited through the sensitive Taiwan Strait on its way to the north Asian region to join UN monitoring of sanctions against North Korea.

According to the NZDF, the Aotearoa, operating alongside US, Canadian, Australian, Japanese and French naval vessels, patrolled an area of 410,000 sq kilometres in the East China and Yellow Seas. It “interrupted two possibly illicit ship-to-ship transfers, identified seven vessels of interest, hailed 49 merchant vessels and broadcast 79 deterrence messages via maritime radio.” NZ’s Poseidon surveillance aircraft reported five ship-to-ship transfers, observed 59 “vessels of interest” and issued 19 “deterrence messages.”

Defence Minister Judith Collins declared that the provocative transit of the Taiwan Strait was done “in accordance with international law and best practice. By doing this, we are demonstrating our commitment to the international rules-based system in our near region—the Indo-Pacific.”

Collins’s statement was a pack of lies. The Taiwan Strait is not in New Zealand’s “near region,” but on China’s doorstep, some 9,000 kilometres from the southwest Pacific. The so-called “rules-based system” invoked by Collins is the set of post-World War II “rules” established by Washington to ensure its global

hegemony.

Collins’ comments were parroted by NZ’s Chief of Navy, Rear Admiral Garin Golding, when the Aotearoa arrived back in Auckland on December 12. “You can’t just talk about [defending the rules-based system]—you have to be at sea doing it—and your friends and partners and the international community need to see you do it as well,” Golding declared.

The US and its allies have militarised the region in preparation for war with China, deliberately staging exercises to provoke Beijing. Wellington has expanded bilateral and multilateral exercises and operational planning with allied forces, including the top-level Five Eyes spy network that involves the US, UK, Australia and Canada.

The NZDF recently participated in the huge Australian-led Talisman Sabre exercise, and is training with the US, Australia and Japan to increase “interoperability” and readiness to operate alongside them across the Pacific.

According to the NZDF, the Aotearoa “was shadowed by seven different People’s Liberation Army (Navy) (PLA) warships, which maintained a safe and professional distance throughout.” This admission drove a frenzied response from the New Zealand media, with headlines declaring that the Chinese had “shadowed” the NZ vessel “around East Asia.”

The hypocritical media responses aim to blame Beijing for the rising danger of war. In February, the NZ government and media joined their Australian counterparts in hysterically denouncing the activities of three Chinese naval vessels, using it to demand greater military spending to meet a supposed imminent “Chinese threat.” The Chinese ships were closely monitored by the NZ military as they conducted live-fire exercises in international waters in the Tasman Sea,

which separates Australia and New Zealand by 1,500-2,000 kilometres. By contrast, the Taiwan Strait is about 180 kilometres wide.

Responding to reports of the NZ navy's activities, Chinese Ministry of Defence spokesman Jiang Bin stated on November 27: "We firmly oppose any country stirring up trouble in the Taiwan Strait or sending wrong signals to Taiwan independence separatist forces."

China is concerned about growing naval activity in its close waters, particularly in the Taiwan Strait. The US and its allies, including New Zealand, have increasingly been using passages through the Taiwan Strait as one method of undermining the One China policy despite continuing to nominally recognize it. The policy regards Beijing as the legitimate government of all China including Taiwan. Beijing, which treats Taiwan as a renegade province, has warned that it will use force if Taipei declares formal independence from China.

In September, China condemned US and British warships transiting the Taiwan Strait, ordering naval and air forces to monitor and warn the two ships. The PLA's Eastern Theatre Command said the destroyer USS Higgins and frigate HMS Richmond were engaged in "trouble-making and provocation," which "send the wrong signals and undermine peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait."

Again in late October, the PLA condemned a "joint patrol" in the South China Sea led by the Philippines, as a "disruptor of regional stability." China mobilized forces to track and monitor the flotilla, one of the largest fielded in maritime drills this year, which included American, Japanese, Canadian and French warships and aircraft.

New Zealand has previously been involved in naval provocations aimed against China. In September 2024 the HMNZS Aotearoa joined the Japanese destroyer JS Sazanami and Australia's HMAS Sydney in a sail-though in the Taiwan Strait.

For 15 years successive US governments have built up the US military presence in the Asia-Pacific region. The Trump administration, driven by the historic crisis of capitalism, is sharply accelerating the warmongering against China, as it seeks to shore up its dominant global position. In May, US Secretary of War Pete Hegseth declared that China posed an "imminent" threat and demanded that US allies in Asia prepare for

war over Taiwan by 2027.

New Zealand, a minor imperialist power allied to the US, is closely integrated into these plans—despite the fact that China is New Zealand's major trading partner.

Prime Minister Christopher Luxon visited Japan in June 2024, where he made clear that NZ's ruling elite is fully committed to the expanding alliance for war. He announced the deployment of HMNZS Aotearoa as part of the encirclement of North Korea. NZ's contribution to the Korean Demilitarised Zone was also increased significantly from 12 soldiers to 53.

The far-right National Party led government, fully supported by the opposition Labour Party, is in the process of doubling military spending from 1 to 2 percent of GDP, at a cost of \$NZ12 billion over four years. New Zealand's military head, Air Marshal Tony Davies, told a parliamentary committee on December 2 that the NZDF is now seeking to raise recruitment numbers "significantly higher, just as our forebears did around each world war."

In other words, the capitalist class is once again preparing to sacrifice lives in a catastrophic world war to defend the profits of the imperialist powers.



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