

Australia, New Zealand solidify pro-US military alliance against China

John Braddock
24 March 2026

The annual ANZMIN 2+2 meeting held in Canberra on March 17 brought together Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong and Defence Minister Richard Marles with New Zealand Foreign Minister Winston Peters and Defence Minister Judith Collins for their third round of consultations.

The ANZMIN meeting took place amid the criminal, unprovoked US-Israeli war of aggression against Iran, which is a step towards full-scale war with China, US imperialism's main global competitor. The meeting consolidated a strategic alignment that binds Australia's Labor and NZ's National Party-led governments to the escalating US-led war agenda.

The joint communiqué emphasised the importance of the ANZUS alliance—established between Australia, NZ and the US following World War II—as part of the security architecture in the Indo-Pacific, including AUKUS (Australia, United Kingdom, US) and the Quad (Australia, India, Japan, US). Canberra and Wellington pledged further “coordination, alignment, and interoperability” of their armed forces by constructing a unified “Anzac” war machine in the US-led confrontation with China.

Anzac refers to the joint military forces that fought at the disastrous Gallipoli campaign during the allied invasion of Turkey in the First World War, which cost over 130,000 lives on both sides. The campaign has since been mythologised to promote warmongering and patriotism, encapsulated in the Anzac Day ceremonies held in both countries every April 25, which present militarism as the natural expression of a supposed “special relationship” and shared Australian-NZ values.

Marles declared in a post on X: “Anzac 2035 is a plan to bring our two defence forces even closer together. We fought alongside each other as Anzacs 111 years ago, we are close friends and neighbours, and this plan speaks to our shared commitment for a peaceful, stable and

prosperous Indo-Pacific region.”

The reference to peace and stability is entirely bogus. Australia and New Zealand are formal allies of Washington in the escalating confrontation with Beijing that is destabilising the region. ANZMIN continues and intensifies decisions taken over the past two years to create an integrated trans-Tasman force structure.

A separate statement by the Defence Ministers emphasised that the countries' militaries are “operationalising our Alliance with a vision of being able to operate seamlessly as an increasingly integrated, combat-capable Anzac force by 2035.” They are already building “deep interoperability and interchangeability,” through common procurement practices, platforms and systems. “We will be force multipliers for each other,” the statement boasted.

The document calls for more joint training exercises, secondment of senior military staff, and joint procurement of platforms and equipment.

Both societies are being rapidly militarised. Australia's 2023 Defence Strategic Review outlined tens of billions of dollars in additional expenditure and a reorientation of forces toward long-range strike and maritime warfare. New Zealand's 2025 Defence Capability Plan commits to doubling military spending from about 1 to 2 percent of GDP and to making the armed forces more “combat capable [and] interoperable with our partners.”

An ANZMIN communiqué in 2024 praised the AUKUS pact, which includes Australia's acquisition of nuclear-powered submarines and other advanced weapons systems. The agreement is designed to turn Australia into a base for US naval operations aimed at blockading Chinese shipping lanes and threatening Chinese cities with attack.

NZ Defence Minister Judith Collins underscored the belligerent, anti-China character of the Australia-NZ alliance. Asked by the *New Zealand Herald's* Ryan

Bridge on March 19 whether there was a risk that NZ would be “drawn in to some American-led war if we get too close to the Aussies,” Collins replied: “The fact is that we have, in history, been with the Americans on almost everything that the Australians have in the past anyway, except Iraq 2 [the 2003 invasion of Iraq].” In fact, New Zealand’s then Labour government sent dozens of combat engineers to join the illegal US occupation of Iraq.

Collins then provocatively stated that China had missiles that could “reach New Zealand,” adding: “We live in some of the most dangerous times that I have known in my lifetime.”

The main ANZMIN statement expressed “concerns” about “destabilising activities and instances of unsafe and unprofessional behaviour by China in the South China Sea.” The ministers also made the usual, thoroughly hypocritical denunciations of alleged “human rights violations” in Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong.

The joint statement “opposed any unilateral action to change the status quo” in the Taiwan Strait. This echoes US talking points which are used to legitimise ever greater US arms shipments and other preparations for war with China over Taiwan.

Meanwhile the Australian and NZ ministers said nothing about the unprovoked US-Israeli war against Iran, which has killed thousands of people. Instead, they condemned Iran’s retaliation against this imperialist aggression as “reckless and indiscriminate.”

A spokesperson for the Chinese Embassy in New Zealand responded to the statement with outrage, saying: “Before pointing fingers at others, one should first look in the mirror. The allegations leveled against China in the relevant statement are full of prejudice, lies and inexplicable colonial-style arrogance.”

The spokesperson accused ANZMIN of ignoring “acts that violate international law and universally recognized norms of international relations, as well as flagrant military strikes against other countries that killed innocent civilians and has disrupted the world economy.”

The ANZMIN communiqué underscored the role that Australia and NZ play as minor imperialist powers, which depend on their alliance with the US to support their own predatory operations. It called for “defence and foreign affairs resources” to be deployed across the Pacific region on the pretext of countering “transnational organised crime” and “concerning military vessel activity.”

The ANZMIN statement also emphasised the importance of Australia’s military treaty signed last year with Papua New Guinea (PNG)—which would draw the

impoverished country into any military conflict that Australia embarks on—and New Zealand’s “responsibility for the defence and security” of its colonies, the Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau.

The Pacific Response Group (PRG) —which brings together the militaries of Australia, NZ, France, Fiji, PNG and Tonga under the aegis of the South Pacific Defence Ministers—will be enhanced as “a regional asset that enables more effective co-deployments in times of need.” The PRG will allow the imperialist powers to deploy rapidly anywhere in the Pacific to suppress popular unrest and secure strategic areas in times of war.

The militarisation orchestrated through ANZMIN goes hand in hand with sweeping attacks on the working class in Australia and NZ. Tens of billions of dollars are being poured into submarines, missiles, bases and surveillance systems, while health, education and social services face chronic underfunding, privatisation, and restructuring.

Workers and youth are expected to sacrifice living standards and democratic rights to finance and support preparations for an imperialist war that serves only the interests of the ruling classes, who seek a cut of the spoils in the division and redivision of the world, just as they did in previous world wars.

The entire political establishments in both countries—the conservative parties as well as Labour and the Greens—are united behind the military alliance with US imperialism, differing only over minor tactical questions.

The outcome of the ANZMIN meeting underscores the urgency of building a conscious political movement of the working classes in Australia, New Zealand, across the Pacific and internationally against war and its source in the capitalist system. Only through such an internationalist struggle based on a socialist perspective can the mounting threat of a catastrophic conflict in the Indo-Pacific—and the broader descent toward world war—be halted.



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