

Australia, Fiji sign new security agreement aimed against China

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The governments of Australia and Fiji signed a new, upgraded security treaty in Suva on May 8, escalating the Southwest Pacific's involvement in the US-led confrontation and preparations for war against China.

Known as the Vuvale (“family”) Union, the agreement followed discussions between Fijian Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka and Australia's Foreign Minister Penny Wong and Pacific Minister Pat Conroy.

While the text of the treaty has not yet been published, Wong said security was its “central pillar.” Rabuka told a joint news conference, “This represents a huge step-up in our relationship,” also describing security as “a central pillar in our partnership.”

Alluding to the need to counter China, Wong declared that the agreement “reflects our shared understanding that in a world that is challenging and in a world that is more contested, we are stronger together.” Conroy added that the treaty will boost Fiji's capabilities across “interdiction, policing, legislation, prosecution, and health” and also combat transnational crime.

The treaty builds on the Fiji-Australia Vuvale Partnership, signed in September 2019, which formalised closer cooperation between the two nations. It designated security as a fundamental pillar, featuring enhanced maritime security, including Canberra's donation of a Guardian-class patrol boat, and the redevelopment of the Fiji Military's Blackrock Camp headquarters.

The posturing by Australian governments as a benevolent partner in the so-called “Pacific family” is a fraud. For over a century, Australian and New Zealand imperialism have been responsible for appalling poverty and under-development throughout the region, while using Pacific Island workers as a source of cheap

labour.

The regional imperialist powers are solely interested in maintaining their neocolonial and geostrategic dominance in their own “backyard.” In this, the Vuvale agreement is yet another step in the intensifying US-led build-up to counter China's influence across the Pacific, and to prepare for war.

Australia, a key Washington ally, is seeking to tie down a series of security deals giving it the right to dictate the foreign policy of Pacific states. Canberra has conducted an intensive diplomatic campaign to bully governments into signing neocolonial agreements—Papua New Guinea (PNG) in 2025, Nauru in 2024, and Tuvalu in 2023—all with security components aimed at entrenching Australia's diplomatic and military presence and blocking China.

At the Fiji press conference on May 6, Conroy outlined the extremely close military ties that already exist with Fiji, upon which the treaty builds: “We right now have an entire company of the Fijian military embedded in the 7th brigade of the Australian Army. We also have Australian Defence Force officers embedded in your armed forces. We have police personnel embedded in each other's forces as well.”

In November 2020, Australia and Fiji negotiated a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) to facilitate both countries' defence personnel undertaking exchanges and joint deployments and allowing the forces to exercise in each other's jurisdiction.

In 2023, Fiji signed a similar SOFA with New Zealand's then Labour government, providing the “legal framework” for New Zealand and Fijian military forces “to effectively cooperate within each other's territories.” During a visit to Wellington, Rabuka referred to “readjusting” relations away from China, telling a press conference: “If our systems and our

values differ, what cooperation can we get from them?”

Wong pursued the recent Vuvale talks with some urgency after similar negotiations with Vanuatu were put on hold. A proposed deal with that island country, reportedly worth \$A500 million, was shelved over concerns in Vanuatu that it would limit its ability to seek funding from other countries. China is currently providing financial support for critical infrastructure development.

Canberra’s proposed “enhanced strategic engagement” with Vanuatu, similar to the one signed with Tuvalu, provides wide scope for military activities directed against China. It foreshadows an expanded Australian military presence on Vanuatu, declaring that where it is “mutually determined that a mutual security activity requires the presence of Australian Defence Force, Australian Federal Police or Australian Border Force personnel in Vanuatu, the Parties shall facilitate such a presence.”

Fiji, the region’s second largest Pacific nation behind PNG and occupying a key strategic location, is a particular focus of imperialist manoeuvring. It is one of only three Pacific Islands with a standing military (the others being PNG and Tonga) and is the headquarters of the regional Pacific Islands Forum.

In November 2024, during a visit by then US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, the first by any US defense secretary, the two governments initiated talks aimed at strengthening military ties. Austin said negotiations were held on a SOFA pact which would enable the US to “deploy and redeploy forces in support of Fiji,” potentially allowing the Pentagon to station troops either permanently or temporarily in Fiji.

Fiji already hosts regular multinational military exercises, mainly focusing on jungle warfare in preparation for deployment in the Pacific. With troops from the US, Australia, the UK and New Zealand, the annual Exercise Cartwheel uses the Nausori Highlands and other locations to build “interoperability” and combat readiness between forces.

Successive governments in Suva have sought to cement ties with Washington in the face of moves by many Pacific governments, including Fiji itself, to seek and maintain financial aid and other support from Beijing. Several Pacific leaders visited China last year, meeting with Premier Xi Jinping and signing budgetary and development agreements.

Rabuka underscored his government’s pro-imperialist stance with the opening last September of Fiji’s embassy in Jerusalem. The open legitimisation of the Zionist Israeli regime followed Fiji leading half a dozen Pacific countries to vote in the UN against any resolutions, even non-binding, calling for a ceasefire or “humanitarian truce” in Gaza.

The upgraded Vuvale treaty will form part of an expanding web of alliances and partnerships, led by Australia and New Zealand and with Fiji at the centre.

In December 2024, with approval by the Pacific Islands Forum, the Brisbane headquarters of a new multinational police force was opened. The Pacific Policing Initiative (PPI) was created for deployment across the Pacific in response to civil unrest, natural disasters, transnational crime and major events. A series of satellite “centres of excellence” are being set up in Fiji, Samoa and PNG to form a regional network.

Last October, defence ministers from Australia, Chile, France, New Zealand, PNG, Fiji and Tonga, with observers from Japan, the UK and the US attended the group’s tenth annual meeting in Chile. The agenda was devoted to developing “operational collaboration” between the region’s militaries.

The Pacific region, which experienced some of the bloodiest battles of World War II, is being pulled into the imperialists’ plans for an even more catastrophic war. The only way to stop this agenda is for workers and young people in Fiji and across the Pacific, including Australia and New Zealand, to take up the fight to build an international socialist anti-war movement.



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