

# Investigative report exposes vast US military basing in Australia

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New data compiled by the Nautilus Institute and reported by the *Guardian* has underscored a vast expansion of American military basing across the Australian continent. Significantly, and rarely for a corporate publication, the *Guardian* notes that the build-up is bound up with US preparations for a war against China.

The data reveals US control over 17 defence facilities in Australia and access to another 75 Australian installations.

The *Guardian* notes: “In total, the US military and US defence corporations have control of or access to 110 facilities on Australian territory, well over half of all the military installations in Australia.”

Some of those facilities and access arrangements are longstanding, reflecting the protracted character of the US-Australian military alliance. However, there has been a major growth of US basing since the 2011 announcement of the US “pivot to Asia,” a massive military build-up throughout the Indo-Pacific, explicitly directed against China.

That has accelerated further under the current Labor government of Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, whose keynote policy is completing Australia’s transformation into a staging ground for a catastrophic war in the Indo-Pacific.

The *Guardian*’s interactive report on the data features some of the most strategically significant US military facilities. For instance:

- “Amid the red dirt of Katherine, the runway at RAAF Base Tindal is being expanded to be able to better accommodate massive American B-52 bombers, the so-called ‘Stratofortresses.’ These aircraft are able to land on Australian soil carrying nuclear weapons. The US government won’t tell Australia if and when they are. The Australian government won’t ask.”

- “RAAF Base Amberley, about 50km south-west of Brisbane, is a vital staging point for US military operations across the region.” The facility, in such close proximity to a major Australian city, is already hosting US B-2 Spirit Stealth bombers, which the *Guardian* points out are also capable of carrying nuclear weapons.

- The Harold Holt naval communication facility in the north of Western Australia “provide[s] vital information to enable US submarine and space warfare. The naval communication station

is designed to reach submerged submarines.”

- Pine Gap, the US war planning facility in central Australia, is also featured, with the *Guardian* noting that it is “regarded by some as the US military’s most valuable intelligence site outside the continental United States.” The facility, which processes data from satellites covering a vast swathe of the globe, “intercepts military communications and provides targeting information for US forces around the world.”

The report underscores not only the breadth of such basing arrangements, but also the extent to which they are part of an interrelated network covering all elements of waging a war.

The facilities in the north of the continent are openly being primed as a launching pad for US warplanes and bombers to conduct operations targeting China throughout the region. A contingent of US marines, based in Darwin, would serve as a spearhead of maritime deployments.

The Stirling submarine base in Western Australia is being “upgraded” by the Labor government, in preparation to permanently host the US fleet of nuclear-powered submarines, beginning next year. More than one thousand US military personnel will be stationed in Perth, along with as many as a thousand contractors. Stirling will become one of the key US bases adjacent to the Indian Ocean, with the US nuclear-powered submarines stationed there capable of carrying out missions throughout the waters of Asia, up to the Chinese coast.

But behind those platforms that could be used for direct warfare, a vast logistics network is being assembled. The *Guardian* reports: “Announced in June, Bandiana base in Wodonga will be the site of tens of millions of dollars worth of pre-positioned US weapons, munitions, fuel and vehicles, stationed for rapid deployment in the event of conflict in the Pacific.” Wodonga, in north-east Victoria, is some 324 kilometres north of the state capital Melbourne.

That is one of the striking aspects of a map in the *Guardian* report, showing all of the Australian military facilities, including those to which the US has access. A far higher number than most people would likely assume are located on the east coast of the country, including near the country’s largest cities.

In addition to prepositioning, there are training facilities,

existing bases of the various branches of the armed forces, many of which the US has access to, and secretive intelligence facilities.

That involves the entire US military-intelligence complex, including the private arms manufacturers. The report states that “at least 42 Australian military facilities are accessed by US defence contractors,” who are engaged in the manufacture of advanced weapons systems and components on Australian soil, as well as their testing, and are increasingly integrated with the country’s own burgeoning military industry.

The data and the *Guardian*’s reportage of it is notable, not only for providing a picture of just how extensive the military build-up is, but because such information is generally not broadcast by the official media establishment.

Throughout the 15 years of the “pivot to Asia,” there has been a veritable conspiracy of silence on the build-up of both the US military presence in Australia and its purpose. To the extent that the prospect of war in the Indo-Pacific has even been openly canvassed in the corporate outlets, it has invariably been in an utterly fraudulent and inverted form, with China depicted as an irrational and aggressive power threatening US allies.

The *Guardian* report underscores the reality that it is Washington and its partners, including Australia, that are engaged in the aggression, based on American imperialism’s attempt to thwart China’s economic rise through military means.

The fact that the *Guardian* was inclined to publish such a report underscores the advanced character of the war preparations, which are undoubtedly the subject of continuous discussion in official circles. The military build-up in the Indo-Pacific, moreover, is not an isolated phenomenon, but is part of a developing global war, from the US-led war throughout the Middle East, including the utterly criminal assault on Iran, to a four-year conflict in Ukraine that has the character of a proxy war waged by the US and NATO against Russia.

The *Guardian* uncritically cites the political assessment of the Nautilus Institute, which is closely aligned with organisations that call for a more “independent” Australian foreign policy. These groups, such as the “Independent and Peaceful Australian Network,” particularly train their fire on AUKUS, the militarist pact between Australia, the US and the UK, under which Australia is to acquire nuclear-powered submarines.

Their opposition is essentially tactical and is utterly nationalist. That is reflected in the *Guardian* report, which leads with a declaration that “some analysts” describe the expansion of US military facilities in Australia as “‘saturation’—even a ‘colonisation’—of the Australian continent.”

Such descriptions reflect the sentiments of a minority wing of the Australian ruling elite itself, which is deeply fearful of the economic and political implications of a complete commitment to participate in a US war against China, which remains

Australia’s largest trading partner.

This layer of the elite, whose spokespeople including figures such as former Labor Prime Minister Paul Keating and Foreign Minister Bob Carr, are not anti-war in the slightest, and do not even oppose the US military alliance. They essentially call for the Australian state to maintain some wriggle room, including through the development of “sovereign” military capabilities, and they point to the instability of the US under the Trump administration.

There are definite historical reasons why the dominant sections of the ruling elite have rejected such warnings and gone “all in” with the US build-up. As a middle-order imperialist power, Australia has always advanced its own predatory interests under the umbrella of the dominant power of the day, first Britain, and then with the opening of the Pacific theatre of World War II, the US.

Australia is not being “colonised,” nor is its ruling elite being dragged unwillingly into the US war plans. Instead, it is aggressively advancing its own imperialist interests in conjunction with the US offensive. That has been expressed in a campaign by the current Labor government of political, economic and diplomatic pressure on the oppressed states of the Pacific Islands to align with the anti-China campaign, and to effectively cede their sovereignty to Canberra. The various “anti-AUKUS” groups, which present Australia as a victim of a dominant US, invariably have nothing to say about Australia’s own neo-colonial operations.

Above all, the nationalist line is a political trap for anti-war sentiment, which will only grow as the danger of war against China becomes more evident and as the global conflict of which those preparations are a part deepens.

For workers and young people, the alternative is not to align with sections of the ruling elite based on Australian nationalism, but to turn to the building of an international anti-war movement uniting the working class around the world on the basis of a socialist perspective directed at abolishing the root cause of war, the capitalist system.



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