

Australian Military Buildup And The Rise Of Asian NATO

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On March 2, 2009 the Australian Department of Defence released a 140-page white paper called *Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific century: force 2030* (1), which announced \$72 billion in new military spending for an island nation of barely 20 million inhabitants with no adversaries except those it chooses to make for itself.

The document details the Australian government's plans to acquire and expand a full spectrum – air, sea and land – arsenal of advanced weaponry in the nation's largest arms buildup since World War II. Canberra will replace six submarines with double that amount possessing greater range and longer mission capabilities, "hunter-killer submarines" [2], representing "a big new investment in anti-submarine warfare" [3] ; three new destroyers "specialising in air warfare" [4], which presumably be be Aegis class ones with missile killing capacity, and eight new frigates.

All of the above are to be equipped with land-attack cruise missiles with a range of up to 2,500 kilometers, almost certainly of the Tomahawk ground-launched cruise missile variety, which will make Australia "the first regional defence force to have the potent weapons system." [5]

The nation is also to acquire 46 Tiger [German-French Eurocopter multi-role combat] helicopters, Hercules and other new generation military transport planes, 100 armored vehicles and, most alarmingly, 100 F-35 Lightning Joint Strike Fighters. The last is a Lockheed Martin-manufactured fifth-generation, multi-role stealth-capable military strike fighter capable of short- and medium-range bombing.

Australia has been working with Norway on the Joint Strike Missile, "a newly developed anti surface warfare and land attack missile that will be adapted to meet an uncovered operational need on the F-35 Lightning II – Joint Strike Fighter" [6], which will be available for the 100 of the latter Australia plans to obtain.

In addition, plans include "the veteran AP-3 Orion [anti-surface and anti-submarine warfare] fleet being replaced with a mix of at least eight P-8 Poseidon [US Navy anti-submarine warfare and electronic intelligence] long-range surveillance aircraft, together with up to seven unmanned aerial surveillance vehicles, possibly the US-made Global Hawk...." [7]

Insular, comparatively isolated, unthreatened Australia has no legitimate reason to amass such an array of offensive, advanced weapons for use on land and sea and in the air. An article in a major Australian daily entitled "Kevin Rudd's push for missile supremacy," referring to the prime minister's unprecedented peacetime military expansion, states inter alia that the "navy will acquire a formidable arsenal of long-range cruise missiles for its new

submarines, destroyers and frigates, able to strike at targets thousands of kilometres from Australia's shores." [8]

To project deadly force thousands of kilometers from its shores, in various interpretations of the new military policy, is based on designs that "Our military strategy will be a proactive one in which we seek to control the dynamic of a conflict, principally by way of sea control and air superiority" and "The government intends to place greater emphasis on our capacity to detect and respond to submarines" [9] and "Force 2030...will be a more potent force in certain areas, particularly in undersea warfare and anti-submarine warfare (ASW) surface maritime warfare, air superiority, strategic strike, special forces, ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance) and cyber warfare" for use in a potential "wider conflict in the Asia-Pacific region."

What the nature of that conflict might be and which nations are viewed as prospective co-belligerents in it was alluded to in a feature in the Financial Times: "Joel Fitzgibbon, defence minister, said the country's first defence white paper in almost a decade acknowledged the continued regional dominance of the US. But he warned of 'strategic tensions' arising from new powers, particularly China but also India, and the re-emergence of Russia." (10)

India is a red herring as it too is enmeshed in US-led plans for the creation of an Asian-Pacific military bloc unless, of course, a change in the political leadership and foreign policy orientation of the country would ally it with Russia and China, thereby in fact creating "strategic tensions" from the West's point of view.

The white paper, as seen above, grants the United States "regional dominance" in an area thousands of miles away from the superpower yet simultaneously attempts to strike a pose of Australian assertiveness and even self-reliance and independence. This is quite in keeping with the foreign policy of the Nixon-Kissinger years in which certain key allies were assigned the role of regional military policemen and enforcers or, as many described it at the time, regional subimperialist strongholds.

There is no truth in this 'patriotic' posturing, though. Australia is being built up as the major military strike force in its neighborhood and far beyond even as it is being integrated ever more tightly with the Pentagon. And NATO.

In February of 2007 in an article called "Secret new US spy base to get green light," it was announced that "Australia's close military alliance with the United States is to be further entrenched with the building of a high-tech communications base in Western Australia" which "will provide a crucial link for a new network of military satellites that will help the US's ability to fight wars in the Middle East and Asia" and "will be the first big US military installation to be built in Australia in decades, and follows controversies over other big bases such as Pine Gap and North West Cape." [11]

Last September Australian Prime Minister Rudd visited Hawaii and met with the head of the Pentagon's Pacific Command, Admiral Timothy Keating, to brief him "on the Australian Defence Force deployments in East Timor and Solomon Islands.

"The pair are understood to be discussing broader strategic trends in the western Pacific, including the steady build-up in regional maritime capabilities.

"Admiral Keating told a seminar at the East-West Center in Honolulu in July that Asia wanted

the US to maintain a strong and visible presence throughout the region. 'It is certainly in the minds of all our friends, partners and colleagues that the US should maintain military superiority in the theatre.'" [12]

Australia has more troops serving with its US counterparts and under NATO command in Afghanistan, over 1,000, with Prime Minister Kevin Rudd announcing a few days ago that 400 more (including some to serve with the Special Operations Task Group elite combat group) on the way, than any other non-NATO member.

Australian troops, along with those from New Zealand, are among the foreign forces scheduled to be evicted from the Manas airbase in Kyrgyzstan where US and NATO personnel have been stationed for several years in pursuit of the war in Afghanistan.

Last June the nation's Foreign Minister, Stephen Smith, was already calling for an expansion of the Afghan War theater to include neighboring Pakistan, saying: "I think we've got to start looking at the border between Afghanistan not just as a bilateral issue between those two nations, but a regional issue in which the international community has to play a role." [13]

In the same month the head of Australia's Defence Force, Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston, said of the US and NATO war in South Asia: "I would say it's an endeavour that will last at least 10 years." [14] If so Australia has no plans to leave.

As it will not leave Iraq. Australia's troops were among the first to enter Iraq after the March 2003 invasion and are among the few national contingents that are remaining there. At the end of 2008 the Iraqi parliament, not without dissension, passed a resolution authorizing individual agreements on the only non-US troops there: Those from Australia, Britain, Estonia, Romania and NATO.

In January of this year when the head of the US Fifth Fleet, based in Bahrain, announced plans for aggressive naval moves in the Gulf of Aden off the coast of Somalia, Australia was one of the first nations to offer support.

A month earlier Australian Prime Minister Rudd traveled to the United Arab Emirates "where Australia is in the process of consolidating its air crews and Middle East command headquarters in a single secret base." [15]

This April Australia completed its first command of the Combined Task Force 152, a permanent naval surveillance and interdiction operation in the Persian Gulf run by the US Naval Forces Central Command. "The Royal Australian Navy's command rotation also saw the integration of representatives from Australia, the U.S., Bahrain and other Gulf Cooperation Council nations into the CTF 152 staff." [16]

Australia also participates in Combined Task Force 150, a sister operation in the Gulf of Oman and the Horn of Africa.

Last summer the commander of the US Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean, Admiral James Winnefeld, referred to Iran as an "unpredictable adversary" that "demands our immediate attention in the event of a need for Australia or NATO response." [17]

Like the secret consolidated Australian base in the United Arab Emirates, Winnefeld was evidently speaking of matters not known to the general public or ordinarily divulged by Western military officials.

In February Canberra announced that it was quadrupling the amount of Pakistani military officers to be trained in Australia for the expanding war in South Asia, the same month that Australian troops killed five Afghan children while engaged in a combat mission.

Foreshadowing what would become this month's defense white paper, in September of last year Prime Minister Rudd stated that his nation needed "an enhanced naval capability that can protect our sea lanes of communication and support our land forces. We need an air force that can fill support and combat roles." [18]

The press wire service from which the above is quoted reminded its readers that "Australia still has 1,000 personnel in and around Iraq, about 1,000 soldiers under NATO command in southern Afghanistan and about 750 peacekeepers in East Timor and 140 in the Solomon Islands."

In the case of the last two nations, Australia's role is indeed that of a subimperialist regional policeman, with its nearly nine-year deployment in East Timor (Timor Este) as much a matter of protecting preferential oil and natural gas concessions in the Timor Gap and defying its major regional rival Indonesia as it is one of peacekeeping.

Though in the same news conference reported above, Rudd also affirmed that "Australia will strengthen security cooperation with Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore."

There are two significant aspects to the last statement. The first is the nation not mentioned, China, and the second is that it reflects a basis for what for several years now has been referred to as Asian NATO.

The expression has been used since the beginning of this century but first gained wider currency after then US Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz paid a five-day trip to Japan, South Korea and Singapore in May of 2003. The first two countries already had troops stationed in Iraq, and South Korea and Singapore would later deploy military forces to Afghanistan with the Japanese navy playing a supporting role in the Indian Ocean.

Asian NATO has been referred to with increased frequency over the past several years and the concept, and project, was poignantly demonstrated in the 2007 Malabar naval exercises in the Bay of Bengal where warships from India, United States, Japan, Australia, and Singapore engaged in the largest multinational exercise of its sort – 25 ships – in Indian history. The exercises ranged from "Vizag on the eastern seaboard to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands that guard the approaches to the Strait of Malacca, considered the world's busiest waterway." [19]

The Malabar exercises before 2007 were bilateral US-India affairs but two years ago were employed to showcase an emerging American-led Asian military bloc.

In most discussions of Asian NATO the term is used metaphorically, as in an Asian-Pacific military alliance that parallels the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in the Euro-Atlantic zone, if in no other manner than it is becoming a military bloc in a world that has only one other, NATO.

This loose connotation of the term doesn't do justice to the truth.

Even with the addendum that Asian NATO is an attempt by Washington to reproduce NATO

in the Asia Pacific, also under its domination, it is not the full truth.

In fact what has developed is an ever-broadening structure for integrating Asian nations directly with NATO as well as with its individual members, the US primarily of course, and an extension of NATO into the East. Previous articles in this series have examined direct NATO penetration of Asia and the South Pacific [20], the stationing of the bloc's military forces and the securing of permanent bases from the Balkans to the eastern rim of the Caspian Sea [21] and efforts by the US and its NATO allies to establish a global naval fleet to dominate most of the world and the Asia Pacific region in particular. [22].

The main components of this absorption of the Asia Pacific zone include individual partnerships; establishment of bases and positioning of military, including combat, forces; actual invasions, wars and occupations; conducting regular Western-led multinational military, including live-fire, exercises; recruiting and deploying troops from Asian nations to war zones like those in Afghanistan and Iraq; and in general integrating the military of Asia Pacific states under the direction of individual NATO nations and the alliance collectively.

Applying the above criteria, as will be shown below or has been examined in reference to the South Caucasus and Central Asia in the Stop NATO articles referred to earlier, there are few nations in the entire Asia Pacific area, including the South Caucasus and West Asia (the Middle East), that are not to some degree involved in the process of creating a Western-dominated Asian military bloc.

Excluding several smaller island nations in the South Pacific, those exceptions are Russia, China, Laos, Myanmar, North Korea, Bhutan, Iran and Syria.

In addition to collective NATO partnerships partially or entirely outside of Europe and North America – Partnership for Peace includes all three South Caucasus and all five Central Asian former Soviet republics; the Mediterranean Dialogue takes in all North Africa nations on the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea from Mauritania to Egypt except for Libya as well as Israel and Jordan; the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative includes the Persian Gulf states of Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, with Oman and Saudi Arabia soon to follow, NATO has a category of individual partnerships it refers to as Contact Countries.

This is how NATO itself describes it:

“In addition to its formal partnerships, NATO cooperates with a range of countries that are not part of these structures. Often referred to as ‘other partners across the globe’ or ‘Contact Countries’, they share similar strategic concerns and key Alliance values. Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea and New Zealand are all examples in case.” [23]

The Alliance has de facto individual partnerships with Afghanistan and Pakistan and heads up a Tripartite Commission with both nations for the prosecution of the war in South Asia.

Asia Pacific partners are also integrated in other fashions.

Last autumn the US Congress “passed a bill...aimed at helping South Korea purchase American weapons systems cheaper and faster in order to strengthen the Korea-U.S. alliance, as well as increased interoperability between the two countries’ militaries. Under the bill, South Korea will be granted the same status as members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and three FMS [foreign military

sales]-favored nations – Australia, Japan and New Zealand.” [24]

When the Senate passed an equivalent resolution days later, a South Korean official stated, “Now we can call the highest U.S. FMS group ‘NATO+4.’ That is a symbolic move to prove the Korea-U.S. alliance has been upgraded further.” [25]

Australia and Japan both participate in a NATO/Partnership for Peace Trust Fund in Azerbaijan, the Alliance’s main military outpost on the Caspian Sea and the most pivotal partner for trans-Eurasian energy strategies.

This January NATO held a conference in Turkey called Changing Security Environment and a Renewed Transatlantic Vision for the 21st century which “highlighted the importance of setting up cooperation ties with countries such as Japan and Australia.” [26]

This year the Standing NATO Response Force Maritime Group 1 was scheduled to visit Pakistan, Australia and Singapore and travel through the strategic Strait of Malacca – the first time the bloc would penetrate this part of the world – but was diverted to the coast of Somalia. However, the warships joined with the Pakistani navy for a two-day exercise in late April.

In September of last year NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander, General John Craddock, visited Singapore, Australia, New Zealand and Japan to “provide their leadership with an assessment of the current operations in Afghanistan and express his appreciation for their efforts in the NATO-led mission.” [27]

Australia is the only non-NATO country involved in the global SeaSparrow (ship-borne short-range anti-aircraft and anti-missile missile) system, along with members Canada, Denmark, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Turkey and the US.

This March it was announced that “Australia is set to conclude a deal with NATO on exchanging secret military information” in order to insure “a deeper strategic dialogue between Australia and NATO and increased cooperation on long-term common interests.” [28]

In June of last year NATO deployed AWACS to Australia for the first time for Exercise Pitch Black “a Royal Australian Air Force led exercise with international participation that includes 3,000 participants and more than 60 aircraft from Australia, the United States, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, France and the E-3A Component.” [29]

The E-3A is “NATO’s Flagship Fleet. The E-3A Component is the world’s only integrated, multi-national flying unit, providing rapid deployability, airborne surveillance, command, control and communication for NATO operations.” [30]

“This historic deployment to Australia is another example of our transformation into a world-wide deployable force,” said Brig. Gen. Stephen Schmidt, Component Commander.

“We are a lead element of the NATO Response Force and our daily mission requires that we be prepared to deploy on short notice to any location in the world as required by the Alliance....” [31]

Last winter NATO conducted joint training in Germany with Afghan troops and their counterparts from the United States, Germany, France, Hungary, Canada, Slovenia,

Slovakia, Italy...and Australia.

In the same month perhaps the most influential – and infamous – Australian, media baron Rupert Murdoch, citing the “Russian invasion of Georgia,” delivered himself of this demand:

“Australia needs to be part of a reform of the institutions most responsible for maintaining peace and stability. I’m thinking especially of NATO....The only path to reform NATO is to expand it to include nations like Australia. That way NATO will become a community based less on geography and more on common values. That is the only way NATO will be effective. And Australian leadership is critical to these efforts.” [32]

Murdoch echoed demands of a Republican presidential candidate in last year’s primary campaign: Rudolph Giuliani, who in 2007 called for NATO to admit Australia, India, Israel, Japan and Singapore to its ranks as full members.

This January NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer while visiting Israel spoke on this and related topics:

“NATO has transformed to address the challenges of today and tomorrow. We have built partnerships around the globe from Japan to Australia to Pakistan and, of course, with the important countries of the Mediterranean and the Gulf. We have established political relations with the UN and the African Union that never existed until now. We’ve taken in new [countries], soon 28 in total, with more in line.

“[The] Alliance is projecting stability in Afghanistan, in Kosovo, in the Mediterranean (with Israeli support), and elsewhere – including fighting pirates off the Somali coast....” [33]

The incoming US ambassador to NATO, the Brookings Institution’s Ivo Daalder, is reportedly an advocate of “Washington want[ing] NATO to be expanded by inviting counties like Australia, Japan, Brazil and South Africa and becom[ing] a global organization....” [34]

The mainstays for the evolving Asian NATO, or as Daalder’s, Scheffer’s and Giuliani’s positions make clear an Asian NATO plus, are Australia and Japan with India eyed as the third leg of the stool.

Australia and Japan both have, in addition to hosting US military bases and deploying forces for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, entered on yet more dangerous ground by joining the American worldwide interceptor missile system.

In May of 2007 “Australia said...it had joined the U.S. and Japanese missile defense plans and would consider the deployment of a missile shield on its soil” at the same time that NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer announced that his “organization will create its own missile defense system, which would be linked to the American system.” [35]

With US interceptor missile installations in place at Fort Greely on the Alaskan mainland and the Aleutian Islands in the Bering Sea facing Russia, the incorporation of Japan and Australia into the missile shield system complements plans for similar facilities and deployments in Poland, the Czech Republic, Norway and elsewhere in Europe, neutralizing Russia’s deterrent and retaliation capabilities on both ends of its territory.

Ahead of a visit to Japan in October of 2007 Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said “Moscow regarded the joint missile defense effort as an ‘object of concern,’ expressing

wariness over what he called the possibility that the system could be directed against Russia and China.

“We oppose the construction of missile defense systems whose purpose is to ensure military superiority.” [36]

Lavrov would reiterate Russian concerns late last year when he “mentioned the problem of antimissile defences, which actually stands to reason, since the United States seeks to build such system on a global basis and deploy, among others, some of the system elements in Asia and the Pacific.”

The report from which the preceding came concluded with the observation that “Moscow has major strategic interests in Asia and the Pacific, interests that invariably clash with no less significant US interests.” [37]

A week later the US and Japan, in a significant return of the latter’s military to Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, conducted a sea-based interceptor missile test.

“The Japanese missile destroyer Chokai will take part in a training firing session as part of the American-Japanese programme for testing a sea-based missile defence system, Christopher Taylor, a spokesman for the Pentagon’s Missile Defence Agency says, adding that the destroyer which is equipped with the AEGIS BMD Weapon System and with the Standard -3 interceptor missiles, has already arrived at the U.S.-operated Pearl Harbor Base in Honolulu.

“Missile defence complexes the Japanese destroyers are equipped with are linked to the U.S missile defence system.

“They can receive information about targets and provide it to the American warships, equipped with both missile defence systems and bases for interceptor missiles in Alaska and California.” [38]

The US has also shifted substantial military forces and focus from Okinawa to Hokkaido on the Sea of Japan immediately across from Russia.

It is not only Russia that is alarmed by these developments and not only Australia and Japan that are being integrated into the global American interceptor missile, so-called son of Star Wars, network.

Last December the defense ministers of China and Russia met in Beijing and “Anatoly Serdyukov and Liang Guanglie [discussed] a project by the U.S., Japan, South Korea, Australia, and Taiwan to establish a regional missile defense system. China is against the project....” [39]

Earlier in the year Andrew Chang, a Hong Kong-based military expert, remarked on the US missile shield component in Asia that “it is aimed at targeting not only North Korea but China as well” and that “that China has every reason to voice unease over the matter, adding that US plans stipulate the deployment of elements of the missile defense shield also in Japan and Australia.

“Aside from missile interceptors, an array of high-power radars will be deployed in the areas – a move that will make it possible for the US to track down China’s launchings of its

missiles from the main launch pad in the Shangsì province.” [40]

The purpose of Asian NATO, then, is to establish US and broader Western military superiority, even invincibility, throughout Asia across the full spectrum of ground, air, naval and space forces and weapons.

Lastly, the following survey of reports over the past few months is not an exhaustive one, but provides an overview on how the web of Western military penetration of the Asia Pacific region is simultaneously widening and tightening.

As an illustrative example, the US has just completed the two-week (April 16-30) Balikatan 2009 joint military exercise in the Philippines, the latest in a series of annual war games. This year 5-6,000 US troops participated and at one point US Marines conducted a drill that can only be training for use against unarmed civilians – ““When you’ve got a big crowd agitated and moving at you,” the nonlethal grenade would be a good choice.” [41]

The exercise was held on the grounds of the former Clark Air Base which the US Air Force had vacated in 1991, one of only a few bases the US has departed voluntarily. Not only were US Marines back on the site of the base, but F-16 Fighting Falcon aircraft were employed for Balikatan 2009, the first American warplanes operating in the Philippines in sixteen years.

The Pentagon also deployed the PHIBRON-11, the Navy’s only forward-deployed amphibious squadron, consisting of four warships, from Japan for the occasion.

The war games, note, were conducted in a nation that is waging several years-long counterinsurgency operations against not only the Abu Sayyaf Group but also the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the secular New People’s Army.

That war is backed by and includes the direct participation of US military forces (and those of Australia) who have established camps in Mindanao.

Given that the war games were designed for combat operations in an armed conflict zone, it’s revealing that military observers were present from Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, Brunei, Malaysia, Vietnam, Laos and South Korea. [42]

May 2008:

The defense ministers of Japan and South Korea met to “boost three-way military ties with the U.S.” and to “revive a suspended three-way military dialogue with the United States as soon as possible....”

South Korean Defense Minister Lee Sang-hee “also met his Australian counterpart Joel Fitzgibbon and stressed the need for a military information protection accord between the two countries.” [43]

June:

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Japanese and Australian foreign ministers Masahiko Komura and Stephen Smith, respectively, met at the third ministerial meeting of the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue and vowed to “to work in close strategic partnership to boost stability and security in the Asia-Pacific region as well as the world at large.” [44]

July:

US Pacific Air Forces commander Gen. Carrol Chandler, mentioning that the US Air Force has partnerships with Japan, South Korea, Australia, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines, said “We’re not at war in the Pacific, but we’re really not at peace, either,” and stated that a “good example of...bilateral cooperation is missile defense.” [45]

It was announced that a large US military contingent would participate in Exercise Maru in New Zealand along with Australian warships and aircraft and with Japan contributing a P3 Orion surveillance aircraft.

“In what will be seen as another step in breaking down the 20-year freeze by the Americans on joint participation in routine military exercises, its military will be strongly represented....” [46]

The US hosted the annual Rim of the Pacific naval exercise in Hawaii which involved naval forces from Australia, Canada, Chile, Japan, South Korea, the Netherlands, Peru, the United Kingdom, Singapore and the US.

“A total of 35 ships, six submarines, 150 aircraft and 20,000 personnel from the maritime forces of the 10 nations were involved in the exercise.

“[T]he 22-day sea phase exercise which covered combined anti-submarine and air defence exercises including the live-firing of the missile off the Hawaiian coast....” [47]

In a related development, the 2008 Pacific Rim Airpower Symposium was held in the capital of Malaysia, hosted by Royal Malaysian Air Force and US Pacific Air Forces’ 13th Air Force officials and including the participation of delegations from Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, New Zealand, Philippines, South Korea, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, the United States and Vietnam.

“‘Through this symposium, we have a great opportunity to share and understand what each nation brings to the battlefield,’ said Lt. Gen. Loyd S. “Chip” Utterback, the 13th Air Force commander.” [48]

August:

The Japanese defense ministry announced that in his upcoming visit to the United States the country’s defense minister would discuss a series of proposals for expanding bilateral military cooperation including “rendering ...logistical support by Japan to a group of US battleships in the Indian Ocean that are involved in a military operation in Afghanistan.

“[T]he last few years saw Japan and the US successfully cement bilateral military cooperation, including the joint deployment of missile defense systems....Aside from missile interceptors, an array of high-power radars will be deployed....” [49]

September:

Australian and New Zealand troops were among 2,000 from the Anglo-Saxon quint, along with forces from Britain, Canada and the United States, that trained in Germany for warfare in Afghanistan and Iraq.

“[A] group of New Zealand soldiers are practicing breaking into buildings and then making instant decisions on whether the occupants are friendly or hostile.

“The Kiwis are taking part in joint exercises with four other English-speaking nations — the U.S., Britain, Canada and Australia — designed to help them operate together and work out any kinks before they hit the battlefield....” [50]

October:

India and Japan signed a defense pact during a visit by Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to Tokyo, “a security cooperation agreement under which India and Japan...will hold military exercises, police the Indian Ocean and conduct military-to-military exchanges....Japan has such a security pact with only two other countries – the United States and Australia.” [51]

In a trip to the Czech capital of Prague, US Missile Defense Agency chief Henry Obering and Czech first Deputy Defence Minister Martin Bartak signed a framework treaty on strategic cooperation in missile defence, about which the local press revealed, “The United States has signed a similar agreement only with Australia, Britain, Denmark, Italy and Japan.” [52]

A New Zealand government website inadvertently divulged that military ties with the US were being strengthened.

“After decades of cold-shoulder treatment, United States military brass are now saying a US-New Zealand military partnership is vital to meet security challenges in the Pacific region.

“Joint military exercises are on offer again, according to US Air Force commander Lieutenant General Loyd S. Utterback, who was in Wellington last month for a conference hosted by air force chief Air Vice-Marshal Graham Lintott.” [53]

November:

Spanish Defense Minister Carme Chacon and her Australian counterpart Joel Fitzgibbon signed an agreement for defense industry cooperation. “Earlier this year, the two members of NATO [verbatim] struck a deal to enhance cooperation between their naval forces.” [54]

December:

Australia and Japan signed an agreement in Tokyo to increase security cooperation and to conduct more joint military operations.

“Japan only has a similar security pact with the United States, while Australia has agreements with the US and Great Britain.” [55]

Japan’s parliament voted to extend the nation’s naval operations in the Indian Ocean to support the US-NATO war in Afghanistan by another year.

January 2009:

The outgoing US ambassador to Japan, Thomas Schieffer, called for Tokyo to play a larger role in global military missions “including reinterpreting its pacifist constitution to allow it to defend an ally if attacked.” The Japanese constitution forbids what it calls collective defense.

Evoking a hypothetical case, “if a Japanese destroyer failed to eliminate a missile launched from Asia on the basis that it was headed for the US,” Schieffer warned “I think the American people would find that very difficult to understand the value of the alliance with Japan.”

He added that, in regards to US-Japanese post-World War II military relations, a “redefinition would be appropriate.” [56]

The Financial Times reported that “The US is in preliminary talks with India over the sale of missile shield systems” in reference to Pakistan and “other volatile countries in the region.” [57]

An Indian press service reported that “After signing its biggest-ever military deal with the US for eight long-range maritime reconnaissance aircraft for the Indian Navy for \$2.1bn, New Delhi is now eyeing to fast track three key military pacts with Washington.” [58]

February:

In a visit to Japan US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said that Washington and Tokyo had “agreed to intensify consultations and coordination with the Republic of Korea, Australia, and India, which share universal values.” [59]

March:

The head of Singapore’s military, Lt-General Desmond Kuek, visited India to meet with his counterpart, Admiral Sureesh Mehta, to discuss increasing military ties and to sign pacts for joint military training.

“Singapore has signed similar agreements for training facilities with countries like the US, France, Australia, Thailand and Taiwan....” [60]

The US deployed F-15s to Thailand for Exercise Cope Tiger 2009 to engage in air combat training with the Thai and Singaporean air forces.

An American military official speaking of the exercise said:

“This exercise is a great opportunity to hone our air combat skills while practicing against different adversaries than we normally train against here.

“This will facilitate any responses to regional events or contingencies in the future.” [61]

Gen. Songgitti Jaggabatar, chief of the defense forces of the Royal Thai Armed Forces, invited the Philippines to join in a US-led multinational military exercise in his country.

“We have a multi-national exercise between Thailand, the United States, Indonesia, Singapore, and Japan and the Philippine Armed Force still is an observer. After this, maybe the Philippine Armed Force will join the exercise.”[62]

Cambodia announced it will host a US and ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) military exercise.

Pol Saroeurn, Commander-in-Chief of Royal Cambodian Armed Forces, said: “It is an honor for Cambodia to be chosen by ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and the

superpower U.S. as the location for such a large-scale international military exercise” and recalled that in 2008 his forces had participated in a three-week exercise in Bangladesh in 2008 which “involved some 400 soldiers from 12 countries, including Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Nepal, Brunei, Mongolia, Tonga, Cambodia and the U.S.” [63]

South Korean President Lee Myung-bak and Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd met in Seoul and signed a bilateral security treaty, one which “calls for increasing joint military training exercises and peacekeeping operations, as well as military-to-military exchanges and cooperation in defense industry, including the exploration of airborne early warning and control aircraft.” [64]

April:

American arms manufacturer Lockheed Martin officials met with ranking Indian naval officers to discuss Aegis ship-launched anti-missile missile acquisitions.

“Apart from the US Navy, the Aegis system is operational on Japanese, South Korean, Norwegian, Spanish and Australian naval vessels.” [65]

In coordination with US-supplied Aegis class destroyer and joint US-Japanese ground-based missile shield elements, Japan announced what the government called its first strategic space policy.

By which is meant not only space surveillance but preparing for warfare in outer space. Joining the United States in the militarization of the heavens. Plans for Asian NATO are not limited to Asia. Or to the Earth.

Notes

- 1) Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific century: force 2030 (PDF)
http://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/defence_white_paper_2009.pdf
- 2) Christian Science Monitor, May 3, 2009
- 3) The Australian, April 25, 2009
- 4) Financial Times, May 4, 2009
- 5) The Australian, May 2, 2009
- 6) F-16.net, May 1, 2009
- 7) The Australian, April 25, 2009
- 8) The Australian, May 2, 2009
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