GlobalResearch
Center for Research on Globalization

The US-Australia Military Alliance against China

Australian Government Intensifies Commitment to US War Preparations

By Mike Head
Global Research, June 15, 2014
World Socialist Web Site 14 June 2014

Region: Oceania
Theme: US NATO War Agenda
In-depth Report: UKRAINE REPORT

US President Barack Obama and Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott have announced a series of agreements that will open up more Australian bases for American forces and further integrate its military into the US preparations for war against China.

No details were provided after a brief meeting at the White House on Thursday, but there is no doubt that the agreements mark another escalation of the Australian government's involvement in Washington's military and strategic "pivot" to Asia to confront China.

Abbott underscored the total commitment of his government to US war plans. "I want to assure the president that Australia will be an utterly dependable ally of the United States," he declared.

Within hours, Abbott offered to provide whatever the US needed for military intervention in Iraq to try to shore up the Baghdad regime after its defeats at the hands of Islamic fundamentalists. Abbott, who was a member of the Howard government that joined the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq, made clear his government's readiness to again assist Washington's criminal operations.

Briefed by "defence sources," the *Australian Financial Review* reported today: "Australia could send jet fighters, warships and transport aircraft to support US air and drone strikes."

Obama said that alongside the expanding rotational deployments of US Marines to Darwin, in northern Australia—due to reach 2,500 by 2017—"we actually have arrived at additional agreements around force postures that will enhance the bilateral cooperation between our militaries and give us additional reach throughout this very important part of the world."

The US president provided an ominous indication of the militarist agenda involved. "Aussies know how to fight and I like having them in a foxhole if we're in trouble," he told the media after the meeting with Abbott.

Arrangements under discussion behind closed doors since Obama formally declared the "pivot" on the floor of the Australian parliament in 2011, under the previous Gillard Labor government, have been finalised.

The US-Australia Force Posture Agreement reportedly provides an open-ended mechanism for wider US military operations in Australia. According to the *Australian*: "The legally-binding agreement, approved in principle but yet to be concluded by officials, sets out the responsibilities of each jurisdiction for the US personnel based on Australian soil."

As indicated by recent Pentagon-funded reports, which identified Australia as a crucial platform for operations against China, these agreements are certain to include base upgrades to facilitate US air force operations from northern Australia, use by US fleets of the Stirling naval base near Perth in Western Australia, and the deployment of surveillance aircraft and drones on the Cocos Islands in the Indian Ocean.

One such report, by the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, said the Stirling base was critical for US nuclear submarine operations and nominated Australia as the US military's "Gateway to the Indo-Pacific"—a launching pad for US naval and air strikes. (See: "US think tank report: Australia central to American war plans against China").

The *Australian* today indicated that one option now being considered was to base more US Navy destroyers and other vessels at the Western Australian base, "giving the US the capacity to project force further into the region."

No coverage in the Australian media mentioned another far-reaching commitment. A White House Fact Sheet on the Obama-Abbott meeting, spoke of "working together to identify potential Australian contributions to ballistic missile defense in the Asia-Pacific region." The Pentagon's ballistic missile shield program is designed to neutralise China's capacity to respond to a US nuclear attack.

This collaboration was referred to in the Labor government's 2013 Defence White Paper and last November's AUSMIN communiqué issued in Washington. According to the Lowy Institute, a pro-US Australian think tank, this will accelerate under the Liberal-National government, involving the Australian Defence Force "mounting advanced missiles on its Aegis-equipped air warfare destroyers."

The *Wall Street Journal* highlighted the significance of this initiative, under the headline "U.S. and Australia to Cooperate on Asian Missile-Defense Plans" and noted that it was directed against China. "Australia is building a new fleet of warships that could be equipped to shoot down hostile missiles, as part of an ambitious military buildup that includes investments in new stealth-fighter aircraft, cruise missiles, amphibious carriers and submarines. The revamp will cost close to $A90 billion ($US85 billion) over a decade," it stated.

Obama specifically thanked Abbott for ramping up Australian military spending. The Lowy Institute said this indicated that Canberra had agreed to foot the bill for the new military facilities across northern Australia, an issue that had been outstanding since 2011.

Acutely conscious of public opposition to plans for war, the Abbott government has so far kept secret this issue, along with proposals for the hosting of US warships and amphibious groups in Perth, which have been discussed in detail during recent US congressional hearings. The Lowy Institute urged the government to find ways "to bring the public along with what officials have been privately discussing for years."

Abbott and Obama avoided any explicit reference to China, but the White House Fact Sheet denounced "the use of intimidation, coercion, or force to advance maritime claims in the East and South China Seas." Washington is actively instigating territorial conflicts with China by its regional allies, notably Japan, the Philippines and Vietnam, as a pretext for confronting China. While Abbott was in the US, his government also boosted its military ties with Japan.

Before meeting Obama, Abbott told the Sydney *Daily Telegraph* he would call on the president to deepen intelligence cooperation within the "five eyes" network—involving the US, Australia, the UK, Canada and New Zealand—in the wake of Edward Snowden's damaging disclosures of the mass surveillance being conducted by the US and its partners. No reports of this discussion have appeared, however.

In Washington, Abbott extended the term of Australia's ambassador, former defence minister and Labor leader Kim Beazley, a long-time defender of the US alliance. This highlights the bipartisan support in Canberra for US militarism.

During his trip, Abbott also sought to enhance already close economic ties with the US by including large corporate delegations in his travels, from companies such as BHP Billiton, Lend Lease and Macquarie Group. He rang the bell on the Wall Street stock exchange, told corporate audiences that Australia is "open for business" and stressed the half trillion dollar or so investment stakes that each country had in the other.

On his way back to Australia over the weekend, Abbott will stop off in Hawaii to visit the US Pacific Command, where senior Australian officers have been inserted, further underlining Canberra's integration into the US war machine.

The original source of this article is World Socialist Web Site
Copyright © Mike Head, World Socialist Web Site, 2014

Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page

Become a Member of Global Research

Articles by: Mike Head

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca