

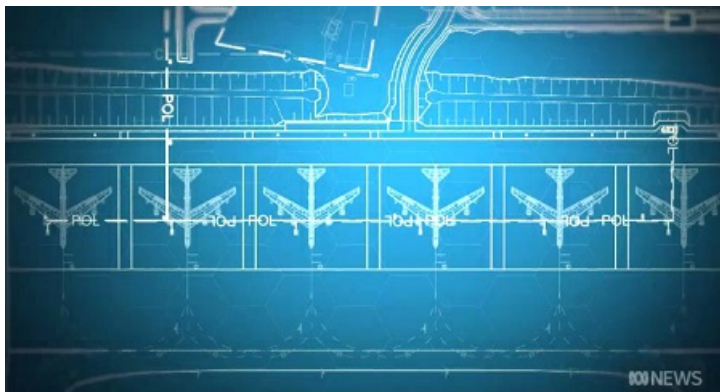
B52s, NATO integration: Albanese courts WWII on two fronts

Australia's surrender of even the palest imitation of sovereignty to our Anglo-American "allies" continues under Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, and with it the danger that Canberra will soon be complicit in starting a war that might end human civilisation. By agreeing to host US Air Force B52 strategic bombers permanently at Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Base Tindal in the Northern Territory, Albanese has unambiguously signalled Canberra's willingness to make Australia a launching pad for nuclear war with China, thereby painting an equally unambiguous bullseye on our backs. And not content to pick a fight with only one nuclear-armed superpower, Albanese has also agreed not only to donate yet more weapons and materiel to support Ukraine in its war with Russia (an act which under international law has already made Australia a co-belligerent in that conflict), but to commit Australian troops to a UK-led training operation obviously designed to lure its participants into a new "Coalition of the Willing" to fight Russia directly. Australia has nothing to gain—and literally everything to lose—from making an enemy of either country, and no conflicting national interests that should prompt us to do so. The inescapable conclusion is that Albanese is either as committed as were all his recent predecessors to preserving US strategic hegemony even if it means Armageddon, or simply too spineless to resist AngloAmerican demands.

Australia's acquiescence to hosting US B52s was revealed 31 October by the ABC's flagship current affairs program Four Corners. "An investigation by Four Corners can reveal Washington is planning to build dedicated facilities for the giant aircraft at Tindal air base, [320 km] south of Darwin", presenter Angus Grigg wrote in a summary article for ABC News. "The US has drawn up detailed plans for what it calls a 'squadron operations facility' for use during the Northern Territory dry season, an adjoining maintenance centre and a parking area for 'six B-52s'." The upgrade of Tindal to accommodate the bombers is part of a general militarisation of Australia's north at the USA's behest which former

Defence Minister Peter Dutton foreshadowed in a June 2021 speech,¹ and was apparently included in a slew of agreements signed by Dutton and then-Foreign Minister Sen. Marise Payne at the annual Australia-US Ministerial Consultation (AUSMIN) meeting held in Washington DC three months later. As the *Australian Alert Service* reported at the time,² the publicly acknowledged upshot of AUSMIN 2021 was that Australia had effectively agreed to host unlimited numbers and types of American military personnel, weapons and war materiel—which China would be forced to assume included nuclear weapons, and to respond accordingly.

Locked in to US war plans



US tender documents discovered by Four Corners reveal plans to house six B52 bombers as well as jet fuel storage tanks at Tindal Air Base. Centre for New American Security wargames anticipate Chinese retaliatory attacks on the NT base. Photo: Screenshot

The latter is now confirmed by the deployment of B52s to Tindal—but not by the Australian government, which continues to keep the details of that and any other AUSMIN agreements secret. Instead Grigg, who was previously a Walkley Award-winning investigative journalist for the now defunct Fairfax Media, pieced the details together from tenders submitted to the US Defence Department, which designed and (at least in this case) is paying for the project. Officially the base is to be used for training exercises, and the deployment "rotational" rather than permanent, but all concerned acknowledge its real purpose: "The US documents say the facilities will be used for 'deployed B-52 squadrons'", Grigg reports, and goes on to quote a statement by the US Air Force (USAF) that "The ability to deploy ... [the] bombers to Australia sends a strong message to adversaries about our ability to project lethal air power." Other documents show the US military also plans to build an "ammunition bunker" at Tindal, and a huge store of jet fuel in Darwin; and as Grigg wrote in his article, "The bombers are part of a much larger upgrade of defence assets across northern Australia, including a major expansion of the Pine Gap intelligence base, which would play a vital role in any conflict with Beijing."

Melbourne-based academic and peace activist Professor Richard Tanter, who is senior researcher at the Nautilus Institute and a leading expert on US military and intelligence operations in Australia, told Four Corners that hosting strategic bombers effectively locked Australia into participating in a US-led war on China, and the attendant consequences thereof. “It’s a sign to the Chinese that we are willing to be the tip of the spear”, Prof. Tanter said. “It’s very hard to think of a more open commitment that we could make—a more open signal to the Chinese that we are going along with American planning for a war with China.”

Tanter also told Four Corners that Pine Gap, which was already the USA’s biggest and most important intelligence facility outside its own soil and a key component in its strategic nuclear command-and-control and enemy launch detection systems, has grown enormously in both size and capability over recent years and continues to do so. “There are changes happening all over Pine Gap, all of the time”, he said, but “this is one of the big ones, right now.” By comparing before-and-after satellite images of the site, Tanter showed that a “crucial” antenna used to spy on Russian and Chinese satellite communications had undergone a major upgrade in June-October this year; while the overall number of antennae of various types had increased by almost one third, from 33 to 45, since 2015—which incidentally was the year before Australia officially declared China a threat, in the Malcolm Turnbull-led Liberal government’s 2016 Defence White Paper.³ “The searching for Chinese missile sites, the searching for Chinese command sites, in a preparatory way, is absolutely on high priority at Pine Gap now”, Tanter said. “This indicates the extraordinary importance and the increasing importance [of Pine Gap] to the US at a time of potential war with China.” Yet in all that time, he pointed out, “the Australian Parliament has been informed of none of this—no statements by ministers, no questions by politicians.”

Former senior Australian defence official Mike Scrafton suggests 9 November in the online public policy journal *Pearls and Irritations* that in the absence of any such official statements, Australians should instead seek enlightenment from US government statements, since it seems Washington now pens all Australia’s policies anyway. He points in particular to the Biden Administration’s 2022 National Defence Strategy (NDS; see p. 9), wherein any reference to “allies” and “partners” can be taken to apply to Australia. “In the context of the basing of US aircraft at RAAF Tindal”, writes Scrafton, “the initiative to ‘Modernise the B-52H Stratofortress bomber fleet through 2050 as a nuclear stand-off platform with global reach’ is revealing. In sum, the NDS effectively confirms Australia’s role in American nuclear war planning. It declares ‘The 2022 National Defence Strategy is a call to action for the defence enterprise to incorporate Allies and partners at every stage of defence planning’, including nuclear.”

Global NATO

What goes for the western Pacific also holds true for the North Atlantic, where the Albanese government again continues its predecessors’ work of officially integrating the Australian Defence Force into the Anglo-American-dominated NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) war machine—just as its lunatic leaders seek to escalate their proxy war against Russia in Ukraine to the brink of direct confrontation. As the AAS has previously reported, NATO has for some time been eyeing off the South Pacific as a new theatre of operations, intending to use the supposed “challenge” posed by China to justify a global role for itself.⁴ Conversely, it has also long sought to bring its “partners” from beyond its own region along on its own disastrous and usually illegal military escapades (think Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria), to give itself a veneer of support from the so-called “international community” that it in fact has never had.

With US- and UK-engineered tensions between Europe and Russia growing more fraught by the day in the wake of the sabotage of the Nord Stream gas pipelines by parties unknown in late September, NATO’s media centre reported in a 14 October press release that the alliance had “forged a new partnership with the [RAAF] through its maritime security operation in the Mediterranean”. For the first time ever, “A RAAF P-8A Poseidon Maritime Patrol Aircraft deployed from its base in Edinburgh, South Australia, to Sigonella, Italy, accompanied by a team of 45 crew, maintenance, and security personnel from the RAAF’s 11 Squadron”, the release said. “The aircraft completed several flying missions ... [between 3 and 14 October] over the Mediterranean Sea, conducting overwater surveillance in support of NATO’s ongoing maritime operation in the region, known as Operation Sea Guardian. The P-8A added significantly to the maritime picture and overall maritime situational awareness.”

The P-8A was developed by American aerospace giant Boeing (from its venerable 737 airframe) for the US Navy, which operates them in large numbers, as do several other US allies, so the idea that one Australian aircraft somehow added an important capability to the mission is laughable. The real point, as 11 Squadron commanding officer Wing Commander Adam Saber was quoted saying, is that “we confirmed Australian capacity to seamlessly integrate into the coalition environment”. Or as the Australian Defence Department quoted Chief of Joint Operations Lt.-Gen. Greg Bilton in a 4 October release announcing the exercise: “Australia is a NATO Enhanced Opportunities Partner and an *important Asia-Pacific member [sic!] for the Alliance*. Our partner status recognises Australia’s significant contributions to NATO operations and the value that the Australian Defence Force has demonstrated over several decades.” (Emphasis added.)

That is, so far as our top brass are concerned, *South Pacific* nation Australia is already a member in good standing of the *North Atlantic* military alliance, and thus shall it ever be. So it was no surprise that on 27 October, Albanese and Marles announced in a joint press release that in addition to giving Ukraine another 30 Bushmaster light armoured vehicles (for a total 90), “Australia will also join other partners providing critical training to Ukrainian troops. A contingent of up to 70 ADF personnel will deploy to the United Kingdom in January 2023 as part of the UK’s Operation INTERFLEX”, a multinational training mission set up by the British Army in July. The other countries involved are a typical roster of NATO bitplayers and hangers-on, including Canada, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Lithuania and Latvia, as well as previously neutral Sweden and Finland, which have both recently applied to join NATO.

Albanese and Marles hastened to add that “No ADF personnel will enter Ukraine”, but we have heard that line before. In 2016 the Turnbull government, for example, promised that no Iraq-based Australian forces would get involved in the USA’s “anti-ISIS” campaign in neighbouring Syria; months later, RAAF pilots were sent illegally into Syria’s Deir ez-Zor governorate, to bomb Syrian Army positions that were defending civilians from ISIS. The danger of similar “mission creep” into Ukraine is made all the greater by the idea floated by retired US Army General and former Central Intelligence Agency Director David Petraeus, in a 22 October interview with French news weekly *L’Express*, that “a multinational force led by the US and not as a NATO force” should intervene, apparently in the delusional belief that this would force Russia to negotiate peace on Washington’s terms.

Colonel Douglas Macgregor (US Army, retired), a prominent strategic thinker who willingly sacrificed his military career by publicly opposing the USA’s neoconservative turn under the George Bush Jr Administration, [wrote](#) 14 October in *The American Conservative* that though bizarre, Petraeus’s suggestion “should not be dismissed. Not because Petraeus’s military expertise warrants consideration—it doesn’t. Rather, it merits attention because Petraeus would never make such a recommendation unless he was urged to do so by powerful figures in Washington and on Wall Street. ... In other words, Petraeus’s real message is that the only way to prolong the life of the Zelensky regime is for Washington and its coalition of the willing to intervene directly before it’s too late ... [and] that the commitment of US forces in Ukraine without a declaration of war could facilitate a face-saving deal with Moscow.

“It’s dangerous and stupid to think so, and Americans should reject this notion, but it’s not unreasonable to assume this deluded thinking is prevalent inside the [Washington DC] beltway.” Indeed—and all the more reason that Australia should cut loose its Anglo-American “dangerous allies”, as the late former PM Malcolm Fraser called them, before they drag us into their most disastrous misadventure yet.

Footnotes:

- [1.](#) “Morrison moves to militarise ‘Top End’ for war with China”, AAS, 23 June 2021.
- [2.](#) “AUSMIN/AUKUS make Australia staging point for WWII”, AAS, 22 Sept. 2021.
- [3.](#) “‘Black-is-White’ Paper singles out Russia, China as threats to ‘global order’”, AAS, 30 Mar. 2016.
- [4.](#) “NATO invades the Pacific”, AAS, 8 July 2020.

By Richard Bardon, Australian Alert Service, 9 November 2022