

BR Speech to NZ Anti-Bases Coalition 30th July, 2023

Intro:

Good Afternoon Everyone.

I am Bevan Ramsden from Sydney and speaking from the unceded land of the Gadigal People of the Eurora Nation whose history, culture, elders and leaders I have the utmost respect.

I would like to thank Murray Horton for his kind invitation to speak to you today about matters which have serious implications for our two countries.

I speak as a member of IPAN, the Independent and Peaceful Australia Network, which like the Anti-Bases Campaign in NZ, also campaigns for an end to foreign military bases on our soil and associated foreign spying activities associated with some of those bases.

Before speaking about AUKUS and the US militarization of Australia, I would like to applaud two policies of NZ which we in Australia would like to see our government embrace.

I mean the signing and ratifying of the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons which I assume only occurred in NZ due to the pressure of the people of NZ exerted on the government. In Australia 80% of our population want the Treaty signed. The Labor Party promised to sign when in government. They are now in government and show no signs of signing it and have been warned by the US Embassy that to sign it would endanger security arrangements with the United States. Public pressure is mounting however to have the Treaty signed.

The second NZ action which we peace activists in Australia admire, is the prevention of warship entering your ports if they will not declare whether they are carrying nuclear weapons. As the US refuses to make such a declaration, you keep their warships out of your ports. We need that policy applied to Australian ports to keep out not just foreign warships but the US and UK nuclear submarines too.

To understand the current position of Australia on AUKUS, nuclear subs, US militarisation of our continent and preparation going on for the next US war, we need to go back a bit in history. I wont go back before WW2 although subservience to imperialism, British imperialism pervaded foreign policy decisions going back to the start of the colonial invasion of the Australian continent.

The Australian government changed from dependence on the UK to dependence on the US for defence during the 2nd WW after the UK's S/E Asian naval base in Singapore fell to Japanese Forces.

When WW2 ended, Australian Government together with the NZ government persuaded the US to form a trilateral alliance called ANZUS primarily with the idea of providing a defence against a re-surgence of Japanese militarism. This ANZUS alliance, unlike the NATO alliance, **did not** specify that the US would automatically come to the defence of Australia and NZ if either country came under attack in the Pacific area but only required a

consultation among the three partners should such an attack occur. However there is a strong belief, perhaps better called a **self delusion** that the US would automatically come to Australia's defence and that belief or delusion has become a fundamental plank in Australia's defence thinking **in government and** by **both Liberal and Labor parties and in defence circles**

The ANZUS Treaty brought with it US military bases. The first was the Pine Gap satellite receiving station in central Australia billed as a Joint facility. The treaty to establish it was signed on 9th December, 1966. Edward Snowden described the facility as a giant "vacuum cleaner" which allows the US to spy on everyone. It is believed that the Australian Prime Minister Gough Whitlam's questioning of CIA involvement in Pine Gap help stimulate US destabilisation of his Labor Government culminating in its dismissal by the Governor General using the little know reserve powers in the constitution, on 11th November, 1975. We understand that currently there are 800 staff at Pine Gap roughly half Australian and half American with the commander of the facility an American. Australians are confined to cleaning, cafeteria and ground maintenance duties whilst the de-cyphering room is exclusive to the US.

The ANZUS Treaty then brought a second base originally named the US Naval Communications Station North West Cape and that treaty was signed on 16th September, 1967. The lease did not allow Australia any degree of control over the station or its use but did allow for Australia to use the VLF radio facility to communicate with its under -water submarines; the US used it to communicate with its nuclear armed submarines and could use this radio facility to provide the trigger signal for launching nuclear missiles.

According to the governments of the time (Liberal or Labor) ANZUS was used to justify Australia's involvement with the US in the Vietnam war, the Iraq War and the Afghanistan war although in the case of the Vietnam war it was claimed by the proponents of involvement that there was a threat to Australia by communism called the domino theory. One S/E country falls to communism and one after that and finally they will be at "our doors".

Concurrent with the establishment of these bases and war involvements there has been a continual backlash of community opposition. The largest of these being the huge anti-war demonstrations of the 1970's and the huge demonstration against the Iraq war in 2003. Both were effective. The anti-war Vietnam Moratorium Campaign on the late 1960's and early 70's brought a progressive Labor Government to power. It cancelled conscription for the war, released those draft resisters in jail that had been imprisoned and completed the bringing of all Australian troops back to Australia from Vietnam. Whilst the huge anti-Iraq war demonstrations didn't prevent Australia's involvement in the Iraqi War, it did force PM Howard to ensure that Australian troops were not put in any position of danger in Iraq which ensured no bodies came home in coffins.

However, coming closer to the present, a new stage of US military involvement in Australia occurred in November, 2011 when President Obama announced to the Australian Parliament that up to 2,500 US marines would be stationed in Darwin each year for six months to train

with Australian military forces as part of his “Pivot to Asia” strategy. The purpose of this strategy was to confront and contain China which was being seen as a threat to US hegemony and economic dominance in the East Asia/Pacific Region. To their shame, all the Australian members of parliament applauded him for this generous gesture. Of course, this new military development was seen as an appropriate development of the ANZUS alliance by the defence establishment and Australia’s subservient leaders.

This new development of a military base and the stationing of US troops in Australia sparked widespread opposition and resulted in the establishment of the Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN) in 2012 campaigning for an independent foreign policy including opposition to all foreign military bases in Australia including the US marines in Darwin and the promotion of peaceful and mutually beneficial relations with all countries. Shirley Winton in her presentation will expand on IPAN formation and activities.

One of the outcomes of this US military presence has been regular training exercises in the NT or which the largest the Talisman Sabre occurs annually with large numbers of US and Australian troops, aircraft, warships, etc. The current 2023 war exercise involves 30,000 troops mainly US and Australian but with smaller contingents from Japan, the Philippines, Malaysia and NZ. The huge war exercise is a practice, under US command, for a war with China.

Another outcome of the Obama’s “Pivot to Asia” and stationing of US troops in Australia is the signing in 2014 of the US-Australia Force Posture Agreement, FPA for short. It legitimizes the stationing of US troops in Australia but affords the US **places and facilities under their exclusive control** for training, storage of munitions, fuel and equipment, spare parts as well as **unimpeded access to our airfields and ports**.

In short it’s a sell out by our government of our sovereignty, if we still had any.

Similar FPA’s have been signed with other countries in which the US has bases and is stationing personnel. One has been signed with the Philippines and now with Papua New Guinea.

Under the FPA huge fuel storage facilities have been built for exclusive US use at East Arm Darwin. The runway at RAAF Tindal in NT has been lengthened at Australian tax payer expense to facilitate US B52 bombers using the runways and excusive areas for the parking and maintenance for up to six B52 bombers are being established at Tindal. One version of the B52 bombers can carry nuclear weapons.

IPAN has a working group to create public awareness of this pernicious sell out of sovereignty and to initiate a campaign to have the FPA terminated.

The FPA also underpins the proposed porting of US and UK nuclear submarines at HMAS Stirling in Western Australia. This is proposed to commence in 2017.

The FPA is a prime document facilitating the US militarization of Australia in which it seeks to base its operations in the Indo-Pacific and from which it could launch or support a war against China

As if that was not enough the Liberal Coalition Leader and Australia PM announced in on 15th September, 2021 that Australia, the UK and the US were joining together in a trilateral security agreement called AUKUS. Whilst it lacks in written content it's clear intent is a defence pact aimed at China. Its first physical act was the promise to Australia of access to the nuclear propulsion technology of the US and UK for building or buying nuclear propelled hunter-killer submarines . These are suited particularly for an attack role in distant waters and no guesses as to where that might be.

To the surprise of some, the election of a Labor Government under PM Albanese in May 2022, **did not** see a repudiation of AUKUS or the acquisition of nuclear propelled submarines. To the contrary and dismay to many, PM Albanese enthusiastically embraced AUKUS and announced that a figure of \$368 billion of tax payers' money would be used to produce this fleet of nuclear powered submarines. This has stimulated widespread **community outrage** as urgent social needs in public housing, rent relief, bringing our hospital and health system up to scratch and addressing the impact of climate change, are being left wanting.

Summing up, Australian political leadership has always embraced a policy of dependence on a big power for basic defence, with a very brief interval during the Whitlam Labor government when attempts were made to exert a degree of independence. They were given a whipping by the US for this and dismissed from office. Dependence was first on Britain and now on the United States. The dependence brought with it subservience to the foreign policies of these imperialist powers and provided enthusiastic support for their wars to remind them **not to forget us**. This support for the Vietnam War, the Afghanistan war and the Iraq war had nothing, **nothing** to do with defence of the Australian continent. **None** of those countries posed a military threat to Australia. All three wars were about the US pursuing its imperial interests. Take the Iraq war. Iraq had nationalised its oil reserves and blocked western exploitation of those oil reserves. Following the Iraq War and defeat of Saddam Hussain and his forces, Shell, BP and Chevron are back again making money out of the Iraqi oil fields. The US militarization of Australia, AUKUS and nuclear submarines is all part of the US preparing for a war against China, probably over Taiwan. China is a challenge to US economic and military dominance in our region if not elsewhere and in US eyes, China must be weakened to prevent it challenging US dominance and they believe a war will do that. Such a war would be disastrous for Australia. China is our major trading partner. So much of our every -day supplies including medical supplies and fuel would be blocked and exports to China cease, jobs lost and hardship worse than during the pandemic would prevail. Even more serious is the possibility of nuclear weapons being used.

Shirley Winton will speak of the growing opposition in Australia to AUKUS, nuclear submarines and the march to war. This movement is growing fast. Lowy Institute opinion polls show that 56% of Australians want Australia to be neutral if such a war breaks out. That is a majority but the position of favouring neutrality and keeping out of such a war is strongest among women with 73 %, nearly three quarter of Australian women want neutrality and two thirds of young people support this position.

If I have a message for you it is simply this. Watch out for an Agreement with the US such as a force posture agreement which gives them a military posture in your country and oppose it strongly. **Keep NZ out of AUKUS**. Don't allow your troops to train with our ADF and the US military in war exercises such as Talisman Sabre as they are doing so at this moment and maintain your strong anti-nuclear stance. We, the people of our two countries, must stop the US militarization of our region, maintain the pacific nuclear free, free our region of foreign military bases and promote peaceful and mutually beneficial relations with all countries.

Thank you