

**From: Nick Deane**

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**To: [letters@smh.com.au](mailto:letters@smh.com.au)**

**Subject: US Marines in Darwin. No debate on foreign policy**

In an opinion piece in the Guardian on April 3, freelance journalist Stuart Rollo wrote:-  
“Recent news of Chinese military construction in the South China Sea is troubling, but in the context of the unprecedented American regional military expansion that has been occurring for years it is unsurprising. If the Australian government desires to dampen regional tensions, and seek a path different from unquestioning support for the US in a zero-sum confrontation with China, an honest dialogue on how our foreign policy supports the national interest must be undertaken. While the nature and purpose of the Darwin marine rotation remains obscured, the prospects for this are bleak.”

[http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/apr/03/why-is-china-building-a-great-wall-of-sand-look-no-further-than-darwin?CMP=edi\\_2115](http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/apr/03/why-is-china-building-a-great-wall-of-sand-look-no-further-than-darwin?CMP=edi_2115)

Alan Ramsey, writing in the Sydney Morning Herald on March 27, has also commented on the lack of any serious debate about the presence of foreign military forces on Australian territory.

<http://www.smh.com.au/comment/australias-deferential-treatment-of-the-united-states-has-gone-on-for-too-long-20150327-1m8pd2.html>

For several years now, Australia’s peace movement, represented by the Independent and Peaceful Australia Network, has been trying to have the strategic justification for the presence of a US garrison in Darwin publicly expressed. No rationally satisfactory explanation has been forthcoming from any government. Thus, as Rollo says, the purpose of the deployment remains obscure.

Meanwhile, the logical position is that the presence of the US marines in Darwin actually raises the risk of Australia’s involvement in conflict. This has been persuasively argued by the late Malcolm Fraser in his book ‘Dangerous Allies’.

I challenge anyone within Australia’s defence establishment to refute the logical points made by Rollo, Ramsey and Fraser.

When will ‘honest dialogue’ on the matter, that Rollo and Ramsey advocate (and that the nation needs), take place? When will politicians of either major party speak about it publicly?

Nick Deane