

Marrickville Peace Group

E: marrickvillepeacegroup@gmail.com W: www.marrickvillepeacegroup.org

The Hon. Kevin Andrews MP
Minister for Defence
PO Box 6022
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister Andrews

Over many years now, the Marrickville Peace Group has argued that the Australia/US alliance works to the advantage of the US, at the expense of Australia's best interests. A copy of our submission to the 2015 Defence White Paper, which includes an introduction by the late Malcolm Fraser, is enclosed.

Consistent in its position, the group was taken aback and outraged at reports (on May 15) that assistant US defense secretary, Mr David Shear, had announced that US B1 bombers were soon to be stationed in Australia, as a deterrent to China's 'destabilising influence' in the region.

One reason for our concern was that the announcement came, not from within the Australian government, but from the Pentagon. This made us wonder once again, 'Who actually makes decisions about military matters involving Australia?' and 'Are these decisions made in Canberra, or Washington?'

We were somewhat relieved to hear subsequently that Mr Shear had 'mis-spoken'.

Speaking on the ABC's 'Lateline' program on the same day, Mr Hugh White of the Australian National University took a charitable view and interpreted Mr Shear's action as a mistake. However, what concerns us is the unlikelihood of such a senior official actually 'mis-speaking'. We consider it much more likely that Mr Shear knew exactly what he was doing and that he spoke quite deliberately – although we can only speculate on the true purpose of such an extraordinary statement.

Whatever his purpose, MPG takes the view that Mr Shear's announcement reveals the truth that the US would like to, and probably already has plans to, base military assets in Australian on a permanent basis, as a component of a disguised intention to use military means to prevent China from gaining sufficient power to threaten US interests in Asia. We invite you to contradict us.

We base our position on the continuing succession of reports and communiqués of one sort or another, which consistently promote the 'enhancement' of the military alliance; the importance of 'interoperability'; the threat (to US interests) posed by China's ascendancy; the need to station military assets in Australia etc. One recent example is a report by the US

Council on Foreign Relations, *Revising US Grand Strategy Toward China* (<http://www.cfr.org/china/revising-us-grand-strategy-toward-china/p36371>). Another is a report by John Kerry and Lisa Murray in the *Australian Financial Review* of May 15, (<http://www.afr.com/news/policy/defence/australia-considering-hosting-us-air-force-airplanes-military-analyst-says-20150515-gh2c2j>). In this article it is reported that it is well known that the US and Australia are discussing such issues. The (predictably angry) response from China is also covered.

In his interview, Mr White raised the problem of Australia being faced with a dilemma over its support of either China or the US, suggesting that, in view of the escalating tension between those two nations, a choice may have to be made. From the perspective of the Marrickville Peace Group, that choice has already effectively been made. We have gone so far down the path of military alliance with the US that it will be impossible to remain neutral in the event of actual hostilities breaking out - suiting US interests, rather than Australia's. This is in line with the argument expressed by the late Malcolm Fraser, in his book *Dangerous Allies*. Again, we invite you to contradict us.

We hope never to be in a position to say "We told you so!" Meanwhile, we continue to hold very serious concerns about the manner in which the US is confronting China - and the manner in which Australia is content to be a willing partner, carried along in this dangerous process. We are witnessing Australia surrendering her sovereignty to a country that appears determined to maintain its position of privilege, wealth and power through the exertion of its military might. We feel that Australia has been recruited to serve the interests of the United States, the country that Dr Martin Luther King described in 1967 as "The greatest purveyor of violence in the world". (<http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/45a/058.html>)

The group would be most interested to learn your 'take' on the situation, in light of Mr Shear's unfortunate statement of May 15.

Yours sincerely

Nick Deane
17 Riverside Crescent
Marrickville NSW 2204

For Marrickville Peace Group

May 26, 2015