



Australian Government
Department of Defence

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Department of Defence
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ASMP/OUT/2015/

2 July 2015

Mr Nick Deane
Marrickville Peace Group
17 Riverside Crescent
Marrickville NSW 2204

Dear Mr Deane

Thank you for your letter of 28 May to the Minister for Defence regarding Australia's Alliance with the United States. The Minister has asked me to respond on his behalf. I regret the delay in replying.

Forged through two world wars, Australia's Alliance with the United States is in its 64th year and is the foundation of Australia's security arrangements. Australia's relationship with the United States is about practical cooperation and collaboration. The US force posture initiatives, announced in November 2011, are an extension of this cooperation and are consistent with Australia's long-standing strategic interest in supporting US engagement in our region in a manner that promotes peace and stability.

The force posture initiatives involve rotational deployments of US Marines and increased US aircraft rotations in northern Australia. These initiatives will enhance the capabilities of both Australia and the US by increasing opportunities for combined training, deepening interoperability and enabling both countries to work together more effectively to pursue common interests. These initiatives will also better position both nations to join with other partners to respond in a timely and effective manner to a range of contingencies in the Indo-Pacific, including in response to humanitarian crises or natural disasters.

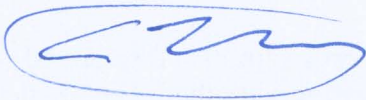
Enhanced aircraft cooperation with the United States will develop over a number of years. It is expected to result in increased rotations of US aircraft through northern Australia, to enhance bilateral collaboration and offer greater opportunities for combined training and exercises. Details of the initiative are the subject of continuing discussions between the Australian Government and the US Administration. No decisions have yet been made, including with respect to the nature, size, location or duration of any additional aircraft cooperation activities. A range of different US aircraft, including bombers, already visit Australia for exercises and training, and increased cooperation will build on these activities.

Defence is aware of recent comments made by US Assistant Secretary of Defense, Ambassador David Shear, in congressional testimony. Contrary to Ambassador Shear's comments during his testimony, there are no plans to base B-1 bombers and surveillance aircraft in Australia. This position was confirmed by the Prime Minister and the US Embassy in Canberra on 15 May 2015.

Any proposed use of Australian facilities by a foreign government is considered in accordance with Australia's sovereign national interests. To protect these interests, Australia and the United States negotiated the *Australia-United States Force Posture Agreement* which entered into force on 31 March 2015 (the Agreement). The Agreement contains important protections and assurances for both countries in relation to the force posture initiatives. It requires for example, respect for Australian sovereignty and the laws of Australia, imposes obligations for consultation, and affirms that the initiatives will occur at Australian facilities, consistent with our long-standing policy that there are no foreign military bases on Australian soil. The Agreement provides the necessary framework for both countries to maximise the benefits of the force posture initiatives while also protecting our sovereign interests.

Thank you for bringing your concerns to the Minister's attention and I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely



Angus Kirkwood
Assistant Secretary Major Powers
International Policy Division