



**Office of Senator the Hon Marise Payne
Minister for Defence**

Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

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MC17-000429

Mr Nick Deane
Marrickville Peace Group
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Dear Mr Deane

Thank you for your email 6 November 2017 to the Minister for Defence, Senator the Hon Marise Payne, about your ongoing interest in the ANZUS Alliance and the United States (US) Marines in Darwin. I am responding on the Minister's behalf.

The Force Posture Initiatives have direct strategic and economic benefits for Australia. Strategically, the US presence in the Indo-Pacific region, strongly supported by Australia, contributes to the preservation of stability and security in the region. The 2017 Marine rotation saw Australian and US armed forces work cooperatively with a range of countries including: China, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam to build relationships, and improve response to contingencies in the region.

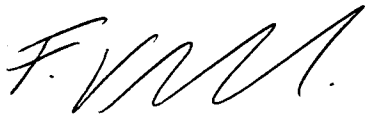
Through the Force Posture Initiatives, Australia is also able to improve the Australian Defence Force's (ADF) capabilities and interoperability with the US through combined training and exercising with highly capable and professional US military units. Australia and the US commenced Enhanced Air Cooperation in February 2017, adding an extra dimension to the Force Posture Initiatives in Australia. Enhanced Air Cooperation saw five exercises occur in Australia, including US Air Force fifth generation air assets. The initiatives allow Australia the unique opportunity to engage with a high end force to improve ADF capabilities.

The economic benefits for Northern Australia are also substantial. The Australian and US governments have agreed to invest in a range of infrastructure and supporting arrangements in Northern Australia for implementation and ongoing support of the initiatives. As a result, there will be business opportunities for Australia through sub-contracting and supply arrangements, bolstering the local economy. All assets constructed under the Force Posture Agreement will be owned by the Commonwealth for future use.

It is worth restating that the US does not have permanent military bases on Australian territory. The US military presence in Australia under the US Force Posture Initiatives is a temporary presence hosted by the ADF which aims to support Australian strategic policy. All activities conducted by US forces in Australia are subject to mutual agreement by the Australian and US government through a careful and deliberate planning process and are subject to Australia's longstanding policy of Full Knowledge and Concurrence.

Your interest in defence matters is appreciated. I trust this information clarifies the matter for you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F. Varjavandi', written in a cursive style.

Faz Varjavandi
Adviser

15/12/17