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The changing balance of forces across the Indo-Pacific is having a dramatic effect upon US-led traditional hegemonic positions. Long standing defence and security provision is hurriedly being adapted to counter China.

A major drama is subsequently being played out in Australia as the closest regional US regional ally. Elsewhere, in other areas of the world, however, similar developments are also taking place with similar outcomes.

The developments will have far-reaching implications for Australian people as US-led diplomatic tensions continue to escalate, and look set to enter the domain of real-war scenarios in the future.

A recent statement from the Australian Defence Department announced they were continuing to pursue technological advantage with remotely piloted maritime surveillance capability, scheduled to be operational by 2025-26. (1) The facilities, in the form of six Northrop Gruman MQ-4C Triton high-altitude and long-endurance aircraft, are planned for arrival in Australia in 2024, as part of the Air 7000 Phase 1B program.

The announcement also included information that the Triton aircraft have an air-born capability of up to 24 hours flying time, which is intended for use with concurrent surveillance orbits over the Indian, Pacific and Southern Oceans.

While the Tritons will operate from the northern Australian RAAF Base Tindal, the ground facilities will be based in South Australia, at RAAF Edinburgh. Planned construction work will include working accommodation, operating facilities and supporting engineering services.

What is particularly relevant about the military planning, however, is that it would appear to have been thrust upon Australia from the Pentagon at relatively short notice; part of a 'co-operation' program involving the US Navy and the 'adapting' of Triton capabilities to include Multi-intelligence, codenamed IFC4, which operates through additional sensors and electronically-scanned radar for signals-intelligence (SIGINT). (2)

The US Navy deployed two Tritons to Guam in 2020, to work in conjunction with the 7th fleet and provide continuous surveillance facilities. (3) A recent announcement China had developed a D-26 missile with a range of about 4,000 kms, placing US military facilities on Guam in range, has sent shock-waves into the Pentagon. (4) It has been accompanied by a study conducted by a US congress commission which issued an official statement in 2019, that, 'the US is no longer clearly superior to the threats it faces around the world ... and ... the US is no longer the dominant power in the western Pacific'. (5)

It was, therefore, recommended the US made greater use of traditional allies, including Australia for defence and security provision. (6)

It is, furthermore, important to note recent developments with the Tritons coincided with an Australian government announcement they were allocating a \$747 million upgrade to four military facilities in the Northern Territory and that 'Australia would work with the US to exert a positive influence on regional security'. (7) Such statements leave little to the imagination about the role of Australia in US-led global military planning.

The US military facilities on Guam exist on an arc swinging from Pine Gap in Australia from Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean, westwards across Asia and into Micronesia in the Pacific. Pine Gap is

regarded, by the Pentagon, as one of its most important overseas military facilities. (8) Military facilities on both Diego Garcia and Guam have been updated in recent years for US-led operations.

With Guam now in range of China's missiles, other locations, such as those in Australia, have now been identified. It has far-reaching implications for Australian people as the country becomes increasingly militarised by US-led war-mongering. A recent high-level diplomatic statement from the acting US Ambassador to Australia, for example, included reference to their military assessments requiring 'a more innovative defence partnership between Australia and the US, including co-production of precision-guided weapons on Australian soil'. (9)

The Australian Defence Department has already noted the Tritons will operate alongside US navy facilities in the Pacific region, nominally for twelve months. (10) It is much more likely, however, to become a permanent US-led working arrangement whereby the Tritons will make extensive use of Australian-based ground facilities with temporary arrangements elsewhere in the region for short-term visits, when required.

Elsewhere, in the South Atlantic, a similar development is also taking place whereby the changing balance of forces is causing the US to panic. An announcement, in early May, from US General Stephen Townsend, that China was seeking a military base on the West African coastline, raised serious fears by the Pentagon. (11)

The South Atlantic region has long been a major defence and security consideration for the US; during the previous Cold War the US sought to strengthen their traditional hegemonic position by facilitating stronger links between South Africa and right-wing military regimes in Latin America. (12) A commonly held view from the period was that the UK and South Africa, in conjunction with the US, had military planning to transform the Malvinas Islands (Falklands) 'into a key strategic base for the South Atlantic Treaty Organisation', to maintain traditional US hegemonic positions across the wider region. (13)

With the present US-led Cold War with China, similar defence and security considerations have arisen, once again. The problem facing the US at the present time, however, is their dwindling numbers of allies regarded as 'reliable' with coastlines on both sides of the South Atlantic. It will, therefore, be interesting to monitor developments.

The US-led Cold War rantings are, nevertheless, continual; they carry all the hallmarks of war-mongering. Whether information is true or not, does not appear to be a serious consideration. Readers of the Australian, for example, were notified recently that 'Australia is in range of China's conventional warhead-equipped DF-26 intermediate-range ballistic missile ... and ... there is no doubt the DF-26 rocket can reach northern Australia'. (14) The statement coincided with similar rhetoric from the Peter Dutton, Defence Minister, who announced in his usual bombastic manner, that, 'a war with China ... should not be discounted'. (15)

And not to be outdone, the same media outlet the following day, published sycophantic praise about Peter Dutton accompanied with the statement 'China's newer DF-41 has the range to hit Melbourne. We need anti-ballistic missile defences, long-range offensive missiles, as well as a new sub contract. Get on with it'. (16)

Such statements are not examples of quality journalism, designed to keep people informed; they are examples of war-mongering.

Those in control of class and state power, furthermore, are pursuing very clearly defined political agendas:

these statements are strategies of tension clearly designed to raise fears amongst the civilian population, and channel popular opinion in the direction of war preparation in both the short and long-term. Taken in the context of current developments in Melbourne, with a full shut-down of the state of Victoria due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are truly living through another Cold War which might, in due course, become very hot indeed.

With these type of developments taking place:

We need an independent foreign policy!