

From Valerie Joy: 11/01/21

To IPAN Enquiry

Subject: US-Australia Alliance: Australia's continued involvement in US led wars

Thank you for the opportunity to express my great anxiety on the military paths on which Australia is increasingly involved, to the detriment of improvements to our welfare structures.

Federal Government Policies: The Prime Minister has issued statements that he is proud that Australia is shaping up to be the 10th biggest producer and exporter of arms in the world. His justification appears to be the creation of jobs, but principally it assists the US in its military operations destabilising the globe.

As a Quaker, member of several peace organisations, including WILPF and Secretary of Alternatives to Violence Queensland, I have a concern for the sanctity of human life and the belief that all humans are part of one family. Diplomacy, not killing, will lead to more peaceful outcomes.

As a member of *Just Peace*, my reading of their last quarterly newsletter fills me with alarm. In particular, the article on the 800 US Military Bases encircling the globe paints a picture that does not promote peace. In Australia, Pine Gap, the Darwin US Military Training Base and the regular Talisman Sabre joint exercises off the Yeppoon coast all reduce Australian sovereignty over our own land. These are all potential targets in the event of enemy aggression.

My first problem with the US Military Alliance is Local Arms Manufacture: As a resident of Brisbane, I am alarmed at the numbers of companies producing arms, including drones, tanks, weaponry, technologies and services. These items are to be included in a *Land Forces Exhibition* at the Brisbane Convention Centre from 1-3 June 2021 promoting these agents of destruction to be used by the Australian army and many other countries. The expo is about big business, involving multimillion-dollar commercial deals, but hides behind the curtain of defense and national security. Australia spends \$98m a day on the military industry but baulks at providing a sure, strong, adequate income and housing safety net for many Australians.

The Australian Government recently launched a new grants program to offset up to 50% of the costs of Land Forces Expo exhibitors. My understanding of government grants is that applicants produce evidence of benefits to the community. In this case it is difficult to fathom any benefit our community might receive from arms manufacture.

It's chilling to note that a weapons component manufactured in Queensland was found in a downed Azerbaijani military drone recently. We may be saddened for the plight of besieged nations and their civilian populations from the safety and comfort of our lounge rooms, but we may also be assisting in their demise! We think of all the housing, jobs, and quality aged and health care that could be provided with the millions spent every day on the military.

Our Parliament is never consulted on expansions to warfare spending. Prime Minister Howard did not even consult with his cabinet prior to Australia becoming part of the Bush/Blair "Coalition of the Willing" in 2003. As such he is a war criminal who acted against the wishes of tens of thousands of people all over Australia who marched the day before our troops entered Iraq.

A second problem with the Australian Government is their unwillingness to sign the **UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)** despite agreement from New Zealand, most of the Pacific Island countries, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines and

soon to come on board, most other countries in our region. Seventy nine per cent of Australians are in favour of Australia signing the TPNW, with a mere eight per cent indicating they are against it.

Previous prohibitions on chemical and biological weapons, cluster bombs and landmines, to which Australia has signed agreement, have reduced their usage. The US is in virtual compliance with the landmine ban treaty despite opposing it. However, they speciously claim that their stockpile of 7000 nuclear bombs is contributing to world peace and many Australian politicians hang onto this promise.

Former UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Angela Kane, said in 2014: How many States today boast that they are 'biological weapon states' or 'chemical weapon States'? Who is arguing now that bubonic plague or polio are legitimate for use as weapons under any circumstance, whether in an attack or in retaliation? Who speaks of a bio-weapon umbrella? It is inconsistent and morally bankrupt to deny the use of biological or chemical weapons, meanwhile maintaining a right to threaten millions of civilians with radioactive incineration and famine.

Through hosting key intelligence and communications facilities at Pine Gap and elsewhere, Australia is a target for a nuclear strike. These facilities assist the command, control and targeting of US nuclear weapons. We cannot have it both ways. We cannot claim to be working for a world free of weapons of mass destruction while also claiming that we need US nuclear weapons. This makes us part of the problem of the most acute existential threat humanity faces. We should be part of the solution instead. The danger posed by nuclear weapons is a fundamental issue of humanity, the right to life, international law, intergenerational justice and sustainability. It should be above party politics. Australia should ratify the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and implement it in good faith.

Other nations have demonstrated that supporting this Treaty is compatible with a military alliance with the US. More than half the states that the US designates as its "major non-NATO allies" voted to adopt the Treaty. New Zealand and Thailand have ratified the Treaty without causing any disruption to military cooperation with the US. This is because their cooperation does not involve the use of nuclear weapons. Another US ally in our region, the Philippines, has also signed the Treaty. Joining the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is an effective way to build a safer future for all Australians. It will help advance the peace and security our world so desperately needs. Notably, Australia is the only member of a nuclear weapon-free zone anywhere in the world to also claim "protection" by nuclear weapons.

In fact, there has never been a plausible nuclear threat to Australia, other than as a consequence of hosting US intelligence bases. Moreover, the US has never made an explicit promise to protect Australia in the face of a nuclear threat as it has done to its NATO and East Asian allies. Given the long and opaque history of Australian involvement with US extended deterrence, ending any agreements or policy arrangements with the US on nuclear deterrence must be demonstrated.

The Australian government has declared that two Australian defence facilities regarded as "joint facilities" with the United States and which are operated "with the full knowledge and concurrence of the Australian government", make the Australia-US alliance incompatible with Article 1(1)(e) of the TPNW. These are the Joint Defence Facility Pine Gap and the Joint Geological and Geophysical Research Station; a US Air Force operated seismic monitoring station, both in or near Alice Springs in the Northern Territory. Pine Gap is by far the more important of these two facilities. A careful examination of precisely what Pine Gap does shows there is a viable pathway for Australia to become compliant with the TPNW without disrupting its alliance with the US. The US has for some time built technological warning satellites which are known in US military jargon as Overhead

Persistent Infra-Red, or OPIR, consisting of older satellites and more powerful modern satellites. The infrared OPIR sensors detect the heat bloom of intercontinental and submarine-launched nuclear ballistic missiles launched against the US. Data from these sensors is downlinked to Pine Gap and sent automatically in virtual real time to the system's Mission Control Station at Buckley Air Force Base in Colorado, US Strategic Command and the White House, as early warning of nuclear attack. Pine Gap is a US-constructed and financed intelligence facility operated by the US National Reconnaissance Office. More than 800 Australians and Americans staff the facility, including units from all four branches of the US military. Pine Gap's multiple and complex intelligence activities can be basically characterised as providing big ears and big infrared eyes. There are three distinct major surveillance systems installed at Pine Gap, one of which has a critical role in US nuclear command, control and intelligence. This is the Relay Ground Station (RGS) in Pine Gap's western compound.

The TPNW provides the first comprehensive framework outlawing nuclear weapons. It bolsters the safeguards regime set up by the NPT, and has the ultimate goal of universal adherence and a world free of nuclear weapons. The TPNW gives Australia an opportunity to fulfil our existing legal obligations under the NPT. It broadens the taboo against the spread of nuclear weapons and makes real the taboo against the very possession of nuclear weapons. The TPNW helps to fulfil the promise of the NPT and provides an avenue for the implementation of Article VI. The first step to getting on the right side of history is for Australia to sign the TPNW, signaling an unambiguous commitment to nuclear disarmament. Ratification should follow, binding Australia to abide by the TPNW and bringing consistency to Australia's existing position on indiscriminate weapons. The absurdity of a world bristling with nuclear weapons is that the consequences of their use are almost unthinkably awful. By joining the TPNW, Australia would honour the victims and survivors of nuclear weapons and nuclear testing, respect the wishes of the vast majority of Australians and uphold our international obligations. It is time for Australia to choose humanity.

My third objection to the Australian/US Alliance is its slavish and blind **support for Israel's far right wing government**, following the Trump US decision to re-locate its embassy in East Jerusalem. This will serve to prevent Palestine ever becoming an independent state with its capital in East Jerusalem. I also note that DFAT assistance to Palestine in this current year has been reduced from \$20,000,000 to \$10,000,000. I have witnessed IDF (Israeli Defence Force) atrocities and humiliations perpetrated on Palestinian citizens, when serving as a member of Christian Peacemaker Teams in Hebron.

Conclusion: It is now time for Australia to take an independent stand, not mindlessly following US into wars and producing lethal weaponry. We refute any notion that signing the TPNW would put us at great risk of nuclear attack. We are an educated, prosperous democratic nation and deserve better government than is now on offer. I have not addressed Climate Change- which is not directly relevant to this discussion- but we need newer, clearer thinking which will translate into policies that bring peace, not division, in Australian civil society.

Valerie Joy