

New Zealand strengthens military, intelligence ties with Japan

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23 June 2024

New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon visited Japan from June 17–20 to strengthen trade and security ties as the two countries, along with other US allies in the Indo-Pacific region, advance their preparations for war against China.

In a joint statement, Luxon and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida announced a new “Information Security Agreement, which provides a framework for sharing classified information” between the two countries. They also agreed to increase joint “activities and exercises, including in the area of maritime security.”

The two leaders pledged to strengthen military cooperation in the Pacific region, voiced “serious concerns” about “recent developments in the South China Sea” and the East China Sea, and called for “peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.”

The statement denounced “the continued militarisation of disputed features [in the South China Sea]? unsafe and unprofessional behaviour at sea and in the air? and other dangerous actions by coast guard and maritime militia... The leaders opposed any unilateral actions that could escalate tensions and undermine regional stability and the international rules-based order.”

These statements, aimed at demonising China, are thoroughly hypocritical and are an inversion of reality. It is the US and its allies that have militarised the region, staging provocative exercises and pouring weapons into Taiwan in an effort to provoke China.

The aim of US imperialism is nothing less than the complete subjugation of China, its main economic rival. Even as the US and NATO escalate the war against Russia in Ukraine, and support Israel’s genocide of Palestinians in Gaza, the imperialist powers are fomenting a potentially catastrophic

confrontation with nuclear-armed China, with the aim of transforming it into a semi-colony.

New Zealand, which relies heavily on trade with China, has sometimes been reluctant to openly join in this warmongering, despite being a member of the top level, US-led Five Eyes intelligence sharing network. Chinese Premier Li Qiang visited New Zealand, Australia and Malaysia this month in an attempt to reinforce economic ties and push back against Washington’s influence.

During his visit to Japan, however, Luxon made clear that New Zealand’s ruling elite is fully committed to joining the expanding alliance for war. He announced, for the first time, the deployment of a New Zealand navy vessel to Japan, the auxiliary ship HMNZS Aotearoa, as part of the encirclement of North Korea.

Kishida welcomed New Zealand’s “continued engagement in monitoring and surveillance activities against such illicit maritime activities, including the recent deployment of the Royal New Zealand Air Force’s P-8A Poseidon.” In addition, New Zealand’s military contribution to the United Nations forces in the Korean Demilitarized Zone, is set to increase significantly from 12 soldiers to 53.

In a speech delivered in Tokyo, Luxon touted New Zealand’s “military and non-military support” for Ukraine. He denounced Russian President Vladimir Putin’s visit to Pyongyang, saying it “underlines the interconnection between what happens in Europe, and stability in our region.”

In fact, such statements underline the fact that the US and its allies are in the opening stages of a world war, against both Russia and China, aimed at establishing imperialist control over the resources and wealth of the entire Eurasian landmass.

New Zealand’s army, navy and air force deployments

to Japan and Korea mean it will immediately be involved when conflict erupts in the region. The National Party-led coalition government did not seek public support for this agenda in the 2023 election, nor has it explained the potential implications for the population. Tens of thousands of New Zealanders were killed during World War I and II, in order to ensure that the country could benefit from the imperialist redivision of the world.

The latest deployments are fully supported by the opposition Labour Party. This exposes the hollowness of the party's stated concerns about the AUKUS (Australia-UK-US) military pact, which is aimed at militarising Australia and the Pacific and equipping Australia with nuclear-propelled submarines. The New Zealand, South Korean and Japanese governments intend to join "pillar two" of AUKUS, which will expand military technology sharing between member countries.

The 2017–2023 Labour-led government, which included the Green Party, strengthened the alliance with US imperialism, including by sending NZ troops to Britain to help train Ukrainian forces for the US-NATO proxy war against Russia. Last year, Labour's Defence Minister Andrew Little declared that the armed forces had to be prepared in case they were "called on to play a role" in a war in the South China Sea.

The Labour government also signed agreements with Japan to strengthen intelligence sharing and military cooperation against China. Labour is also supporting the National government's major increase in funding for the military, at the expense of healthcare and other basic services that are being starved of resources.

A propaganda campaign is ramping up in New Zealand to demonise China and prepare public opinion for war, led by the media outlet *Stuff* and supported by pro-Labour commentators such as those on the *Daily Blog*, and pro-US academics like Anne-Marie Brady. These forces are demanding an official "inquiry" into alleged "Chinese interference," surveillance of Chinese groups in New Zealand, and an even stronger alignment with the US.

On June 20, *Stuff* published an article attacking Chinese-born National Party MP Nancy Lu, on the grounds that she was "mentored" by former National MP Jian Yang. The latter was accused by Brady, without any evidence, of being a spy for the Chinese

Communist Party.

Meanwhile, the latest episode of *Stuff*'s political podcast "Tova" sought to overcome widespread concerns about the danger of nuclear war. James Acton, co-director of the Nuclear Policy Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington, told the podcast the risk was actually "pretty low." He added that the "limited" use of nuclear weapons "might not have catastrophic consequences," and even declared that "the existence of nuclear weapons does help prevent large-scale conflict" by acting as a deterrent, thus making the world safer!

Workers and young people must not be fooled into thinking that cool heads will prevail and the ruling class will be "deterred" from all-out war. The fact that the US and all the imperialist powers, including New Zealand, are supporting Israel's genocide in Gaza and an escalating war in Ukraine that has killed hundreds of thousands, demonstrates that they are prepared to impose mass death to achieve their strategic objectives.

The global protests against the Gaza genocide must be expanded and transformed into a political struggle, mobilising the working class against the genocide, the US-NATO war with Russia, and the war plans against China. This movement must be based on a socialist perspective to abolish the capitalist system, which is the root cause of all these wars and which is threatening to plunge the whole planet into barbarism.



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