

US officials demand stepped-up militarisation of Australia for war with China

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Under conditions where the Labor government is already completing Australia's transformation into a frontline state for an American-led war against China, top US officials this week demanded more, insisting that the militarisation must be accelerated.

The public calls underscore the centrality of the confrontation with China to the perspective of American militarism, as well as Australia's central place in that program which threatens a catastrophe in the Indo-Pacific. The US has identified China's economic growth as the greatest threat to the global dominance of American imperialism, and is engaged in a full-court press on every front to curtail it, up to and including war.

The calls were made in articles by the *Sydney Morning Herald's* international editor Peter Hartcher. An ardent war hawk who has played a leading role for many years in a frenzied anti-China campaign within Australia, Hartcher has the closest of ties to the US national-security apparatus.

Hartcher featured a comment by US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, who indicated that the Biden administration wanted to have "two or three signature projects" involving Australia "launched and under way" by the time it leaves office on January 20 after the upcoming American presidential election.

Hartcher wrote: "The US is pushing for the AUKUS partnership to launch some world-leading new military technology projects before Joe Biden's presidency ends, amid signs of growing impatience with the initiative."

The unspecified projects come under Pillar 2 of AUKUS, the militarist pact between the US, the UK and Australia directed against China. While Pillar 1 refers to Australia's acquisition of nuclear-powered submarines, slated to begin with the delivery of three US Virginia-class subs early next decade, Pillar 2 covers a broad and vaguely defined array of "advanced" military and defence capabilities.

Among those that have been publicly listed are the development of additional capabilities in advanced cyber, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, undersea warfare, hypersonics, electronic warfare, innovation, and

information sharing.

Every aspect of AUKUS and the war drive, including research and development is shrouded in secrecy and takes the form of a conspiracy against the population. As with the establishment of AUKUS itself and the nuclear submarine program, there is every likelihood that the "projects" called for by Sullivan will be publicly-revealed after they are already well underway, without even the pretense of a democratic mandate.

Hartcher, while promoting Sullivan's call, remained silent on what these "projects" may be. He cited Australia's Defence Industry Minister Pat Conroy who indicated "Areas of progress... included sharing data between the three nations' P8 submarine-hunting aircraft and successful joint exercises of undersea drones."

A particular focus appears to be on the development of hypersonic missiles. In June, the US government revealed that Hypersonic Attack Cruise Missiles would be tested in Australia. The next month, the Labor administration quietly admitted that the missiles would be integrated into the Australian air forces fleet of F/A-18F Super Hornet fighter jets.

In a promotion of hypersonic missiles, the Northrop Grunman weapons company explained: "A hypersonic pace—five or more times the speed of sound—can put a missile on target before enemy defense systems can respond effectively. Having long range hypersonic systems allows pilots to prosecute targets without having to put themselves within range of air defense systems."

That is, these are an offensive capability, clearly being acquired for use in a major war, such as one against China.

Last month, during a visit to Australia, Michael McCaul, the Republican chair of the US House Foreign Affairs Committee, floated the possibility of a joint production of hypersonic missiles between the two countries. As is always the case, such developments, floated as "suggestions" or "possibilities" are a limited revelation of activities already underway.

That was directly hinted at by McCaul, who stated: "I was

at a hypersonic company just yesterday and we want to move towards co-production. It is already starting and that is the exciting thing and it will help relieve the stress that we see on the defence industrial base.”

In a chilling remark, pointing to the implications of Australia’s full alignment with the anti-China drive, McCaul added that a Chinese hypersonic weapon “could hit Australia in a matter of minutes and Australia cannot stop that right now. So we need to catch up to that.”

The demands for an acceleration of AUKUS and the military build-up inevitably mean a greater diversion of resources to the armed forces. While Sullivan did not spell that out, Nadia Schadlow, who was deputy national security adviser in the Trump administration, did.

Schadlow, Hartcher noted, was the primary author of the 2017 US National Security Strategy. It formalised the developing war drive, proclaiming that “Great Power competition,” not “terrorism,” was the primary threat to US “national security” and identifying Russia and above all China as the main targets.

Schadlow, having been sought out by Hartcher, told him “On the allies side, countries clearly need to do more, at least on the capability side. We know what needs to be done—more defence spending, more integrated planning, more actual development of capabilities, which is where some of AUKUS comes in.”

Australia’s defence spending is at record levels, increased by the Labor government to more than \$50 billion a year, or over 2 percent of gross domestic product, with that percentage to rise to 2.4 percent over this decade. Not enough, Schadlow declared. “That’s lower than what it needs to be, especially given where Australia sits in terms of Asia, and the important role that it plays in AUKUS.” As with McCaul, she touted the possibility of expanded high-level munitions production.

In a separate, fawning profile of Sullivan, Hartcher emphasised that the economic transformation associated with the war drive goes beyond the vast expansion in military spending. It means the development of independent, war-related supply chains and the integration of the industrial bases of the AUKUS nations.

Hartcher noted US fears over China’s central role in the supply chains for critical minerals, which are necessary for the production of most technologies. Here, Australia had a central role to play given its vast deposits.

Comparing the strategic significance of critical minerals to oil in the post-World War II era, Hartcher wrote: “You can’t make sophisticated missiles without them. Or radars or lasers. Which is where Australia comes into its own. Australia’s ambassador to the US, Kevin Rudd, often tells American interlocutors: ‘When you look at a map of

Australia, you are looking at the periodic table.’”

Australia, he stated, was therefore “endowed with every element that a renewable energy system could possibly want. Or a military industrial complex.”

Sullivan made the same point, declaring: “The single biggest thing the US and Australia can do, from a strategic perspective, is really to create effective, diverse, resilient supply chains when it comes to critical minerals that have huge implications for clean energy but also for our defence industrial base.”

Already, the Labor government has employed extraordinary powers to curtail the ownership of one northern Australian mine by entities that it claims are linked to China. In July, the US Congress passed legislation introduced by the Biden administration, designating Australia as a “domestic source under the US Defense Production Act.”

That removes a whole set of regulations and requirements for joint weapons production between the two countries. It also enables the US government to directly fund economic activities in Australia as it would domestically, such as the development of mining for critical minerals.

In his gushing tribute to Sullivan, Hartcher particularly praised the US national security advisor for maintaining a focus on the Indo-Pacific as the “dominant region” of the global economy and the sphere from which the preeminent power could “command the world.”

Speaking as a proponent of militarism, Hartcher hailed the fact that even as it is waging a de facto war with Russia in Ukraine, overseeing a genocide of Palestinians and threatening a regionwide Middle Eastern war, American imperialism is pressing ahead with a confrontation with China that threatens to end human civilisation.



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