

Australian Labor government pledges collaboration with Trump in anti-China war drive

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Australian Defence Minister Richard Marles visited Washington over the weekend, meeting with US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth in the newly-installed Trump administration.

Even under conditions where other Labor leaders, including Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, have welcomed Trump's ascent, Marles' trip was striking for its full square alignment with the fascistic US government. The message that he emphasised was that on issues of foreign policy, above all the war drive against China, there was not a skerrick of difference between the US and Australian governments.

The immediate context underscored the criminality of this collaboration. Marles arrived in Washington the same week that Trump made his most blatant statement of imperialist intent in repeated declarations that the US would seize Gaza and ethnically cleanse it of its Palestinian inhabitants.

Marles refused to answer reporters' questions about Gaza, declaring that it was not the "focus" of his discussions with Hegseth, and "let's not go there." That echoed remarks by Albanese earlier in the week, who similarly would not condemn the naked neo-colonial plan. Like Albanese, Marles would also not rule out the possibility of Australian troops being sent to Gaza, declaring that he would not comment on "hypotheticals."

A refusal to condemn Trump's statements, which are a blatant violation of international law, is a de facto endorsement. But more generally, the reality Marles outlined, of the complete integration and "interoperability" of the US and Australian militaries, was a clear signal of Australian involvement.

"[T]here has been nothing other than positivity about

Australia, about the Alliance, about the place of AUKUS within the Alliance, in all the conversations that we have had with members of the Trump Administration," Marles proclaimed in an interview after his meeting with Hegseth. Having already been asked about Gaza, he added: "When we look at our strategic landscape ... we look at the importance of American leadership in the world."

In their joint press conference, Hegseth and Marles both hailed the history of Australia and the US partnering in imperialist wars. Hegseth rattled off a list of one such operation after another, "from the Western Front, to Guadalcanal, to Vietnam, to Afghanistan." Marles in turn congratulated Hegseth on his own military record in Afghanistan.

Hegseth is an unabashed defender of war crimes. He successfully lobbied for the previous Trump administration to pardon three US soldiers convicted of war crimes, including the murder of prisoners. Hegseth has declared the "right" of US troops to violate international law and has denounced all opponents of militarism as "enemies."

For its part, the Labor government is continuing a decades-long cover-up of documented Australian war crimes in Afghanistan, including dozens of extra-judicial killings, for which no one has been held to account.

The central theme of the meeting was the AUKUS pact, a cockpit of war planning and militarisation involving Australia, the US and the UK directed against China. Prior to Trump's inauguration, fears had been voiced in national-security circles over Trump's attitude to AUKUS, given his sometimes transactional approach to foreign policy and his "America First"

attacks on adversaries and allies alike, including such powers as Canada.

Hegseth declared: “The President is very aware, supportive of AUKUS.” Marles hailed the first Trump administration as the originator of a push for a “free and open Indo-Pacific.” That was a reference to the fact that Trump dramatically escalated a full-court diplomatic, economic and military offensive against China initiated by the Obama administration in 2011.

Under AUKUS, Australia is to acquire a fleet of Virginia-class nuclear-powered submarines from the US early next decade, before joint manufacturing of a new design with Britain in the late 2030s. There had been talk in US security circles as to whether America could fulfil the order of the nuclear-powered submarines, given that the construction of its own vessels was years behind schedule.

To assuage those concerns, Labor announced last year that it would subsidise US military shipbuilding to the tune of \$US300 billion. Marles handed over the first installment of \$US500 million, describing the arrangement, whereby the Australian state is helping to fund the American military complex, as “a very unique arrangement,” adding, “we’re not seeing this in any other arrangement in the world, literally.”

The payments underscore the extent to which the dominant sections of the ruling elite view their own interests as being completely bound up with American militarism. As a middle-order power, Australian imperialism has always prosecuted its own predatory interests, particularly in the South Pacific, within the framework of a partnership with the dominant power of the day, first Britain, then since midway through World War II, the United States.

The arrangement also underlines the ever-deepening integration of the Australian and US militaries. That was also demonstrated by another unprecedented move, the decision of the Biden administration last year to designate Australia as a “domestic” US market for the development of critical minerals, which are central to competition between the US and China. That allows the US government to directly fund critical mineral developments in Australia.

While the press conference and ensuing discussion focussed on the submarine question, the US readout also stated that Marles and Hegseth had discussed “accelerating US force posture initiatives in Australia,

advancing defense industrial base cooperation on munitions, and key regional partnerships”

“Force posture initiatives” is a euphemism for expanded American basing and the deployment of US military assets to the Australian continent. That has already expanded dramatically under the Labor government and the previous Biden administration. This included granting the US permission to station its most potent strike assets in the north and west of the continent, including B-52 bombers, which can carry nuclear weapons, as well as the US fleet of Virginia-class submarines.

In think-tanks, it is openly discussed that Australia is being primed to serve as a launching pad for offensive US operations against China. The reference to “accelerating” this, which went unexplained and unquestioned by the assembled journalists, is a warning of a rapidly accelerating drive to war. The assets already deployed to Australia, and those to come, will be under the direct control of Trump as commander-in-chief, a fascistic figure whose foreign policy amounts to a war on the world.



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