



Media Release

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ALP Falls into the 'All-the-Way with Obama' Trap

The recent statement by ALP Defence Spokesperson Richard Marles on the South China Sea dispute inflames rather than helps resolve the dangerous situation, the Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN) holds.

“Richard Marles asserted that “Australia's navy and airforce should be “fully authorised” to conduct freedom of navigation exercises in the South China Sea, including within 12 nautical miles of artificial islands built by China,” says Bevan Ramsden spokesperson for IPAN.

These comments follow the belligerent comments of former spokesperson Senator Conroy some months ago. “This is to ostensibly reduce a real and significant but resolvable dispute between neighbours, to the pretext of “freedom of navigation”, whilst in fact giving *carte blanche* to US efforts to provoke confrontation with China.”

“It hands control of a critical Australian foreign policy issue to the ADF, and since the whole 'freedom of navigation' argument is a US-owned and controlled policy, effectively to the US military and executive. Even former PM Keating and current Prime Minister Turnbull have objected to the abandonment of political control.

“‘All-the-Way with Obama’ is no more appropriate or dignified a position than ‘All-the-way with LBJ’ was in the 1960's. That helped drag us into an intractable and bloody conflict in Vietnam: this policy could have even worse consequences.

“The interests of Australia and the Australian people demand a more independent and peace-oriented foreign policy. As China is this country's largest trading partner, we could play a positive role in helping bring these territorial boundary disputes to a negotiated conclusion.

“Whatever the rights and wrongs of a complicated situation, China has gone past the days when it can be bullied into retreat by threats. History tells us that such

border disputes inevitably end in either negotiated compromises or war.

“The ALP could influence the issue in either direction – at present, it is encouraging war,” says Mr Ramsden.

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