



MEDIA RELEASE 24 February 2016

Peace groups blame the US for rising militarism in the South China Sea

Nick Deane of the Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN) says, "Tensions in the South China Sea are being made much worse by the actions of the United States." IPAN is comprised of peace groups from every State and Territory in Australia.

Mr Deane continued, "Whilst some responsibility for the escalating tension in the South China Sea lies with China, a far greater role is played by the United States. The USA has an established string of military bases stretching from northern Japan, through Okinawa, South Korea, Guam, The Philippines down to Darwin (as the attached map shows).

There can be no doubt that these bases are directed at China. They are highly confrontational. It is they that are the primary source of the tensions we now see rising. China's comparatively modest response to this provocative encirclement should surprise nobody.

The surface-to-air missiles, the focus of recent attention, have been installed on Woody Island, the main island in the Paracel Group, that China has occupied since 1956. This island is a mere 300 kilometres from China's main naval base on Hainan Island.

Publications from influential US 'think tanks' make it quite clear that the United States intends to remain the dominant controlling power in the SE Asia area. Apparently US authorities cannot envisage or tolerate China becoming a regional power.

The Australian Government and Opposition are unquestioning followers of United States foreign and defence policies. This is illustrated by the manner in which Australian armed forces have become integrated into the US military strategies in South East Asia as well as the Middle East. Allowing the stationing of US Marines in Darwin; allowing Pine Gap to be used as a US military communications facility, and the lengthening of air-force runways in Darwin and Tindale for US bombers, are all examples of Australian subservience to US military policies. Continuing down the present path could well result in a military confrontation with China - our major trading partner.

In recent days, the US Vice-Admiral Joseph Aucoin and the ALP's Stephen Conroy have urged Australia to send its naval vessels close to the 12 mile territorial zone around disputed islands in the Spratleys. If Australia complies, this would be highly provocative. It would inflame tensions and raise the risk of actual hostilities.



IPAN urges the Australian government not to engage in such provocative actions. It seriously questions the wisdom of risking a military confrontation with China. It urges the government to carefully reconsider its involvement in the US military's confrontational strategy in South East Asia.

The US-Australia alliance has dragged Australia into disastrous wars in the Middle East. Disengaging from it would enable Australia to make independent foreign policy decisions for the benefit of the Australian people. It would provide a proper basis for establishing and maintaining peaceful relations with our neighbours."

Nick Deane
0420 526 929

Bevan Ramsden
0418 697 528