

Military Expansion Explained: The Australia-Guam Connection

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Abstract:

Focusing on the Australian-United States biennial Talisman Sabre 2007 military exercise, this article sets out to discuss Australia's role in the increasing militarisation of the north-west Pacific which has followed the 11 September 2001 ("9/11") attack on the US. As US concern over China and (to a lesser extent) Russia increases, the US has increasingly turned its attention away from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The US-claimed Chamorro island of Guam (*Guåhan*) has become the western-most linchpin in a new strategy which operates out of the Pacific Command headquarters in Hawaii, and includes Alaska and the US continent. As the US consolidates its forces on what it claims as its own soil (despite the prior claim of the Indigenous Chamorro community), Guam is facing a doubling of the military troops, and a massive increase in the ships, submarines and air craft stationed there. Tied to this expansion, Australia is experiencing its own parallel increase in militarisation. The Australian and US governments have restructured their formal alliance explicitly tying Australia to Guam. The US requires Australia's unique training grounds for the troops and military machinery they have or intend to homebase in Guam. Shoalwater Bay and other Australian military bases provide training grounds for air craft and ocean vessels based in, on rotation to, or transiting through Guam. Talisman Sabre is only one of many exercises that the US carries out in the Pacific-Indian Ocean region, including in Australia, but it makes an essential contribution in the US training and development of its conventional and nuclear military forces. The price of this militarisation is the withholding of the inalienable right of the Indigenous peoples to self-determination, economic hegemony, violence against women and children, and devastating impacts on the health of humans, animals and environments alike.

Introduction

In June 2007 Australia and the United States will engage in the largest military exercise ever held in Australia. Talisman Sabre is just one of a growing number of exercises which increasingly bind Australia inextricably into the US military build-up currently sweeping across the north-west Pacific Ocean. This article analyses the Australian-US alliance, and the escalating militarism in the region. It argues that this expansion, anchored on Guam (known in the Indigenous Chamorro tongue as *Guåhan*), makes Australia a vital and necessary training ground for the US troops and weapons systems homebased in, rotated to, or transiting Guam from bases on continental US.

The Talisman Sabre exercise, while involving Australian military facilities across the continent, is focused primarily on the Shoalwater Bay Training Area in northern Queensland. This area contains both a World Heritage Listed Area and protected zones within the Great Barrier Reef Marine National Park. A 450,000 hectares region, one quarter of which is marine area, it is equivalent in size to the Australian Capital Territory and four times the size of Singapore. All sectors of the Australian Defence Force conduct exercises there all year round, inviting countries such as the US, Singapore, New Zealand, Britain and Japan to join them on a regular basis.

The militarisation of the north-west Pacific is anchored around the small island of Guam east of the Philippines. The majority of US troops, planes, ships and submarines which engage in Australian-hosted military exercises such as Talisman Sabre are either homebased in Guam, are rotated to

Guam, or transit through Guam from bases in Hawaii, Alaska and the US continent. Australia has become an unofficial extension of the US air and naval forces operating out of Guam.

The Australian Department of Defence describes Shoalwater Bay Training Area as “Australia’s most premier training ground”,¹ but for the US Pacific Command it is “the primary training venue for [its] Commander Seventh Fleet as a Combined Task Force” in the region.² The Seventh Fleet is homebased in Guam, with extension to South Korea and Okinawa/Japan. According to the Strategic Policy Institute at the Australian National University, Guam is directly linked to Shoalwater: “The more aircraft they base on Guam the more important it is for them to have access to the kind of large continental training areas Australia can provide”.³

As the US anticipates the need to counter potential tensions with China and Russia, the US war-fighting policy has changed over the past decade with the north-west Pacific theatre gaining heightened strategic value. The US Pentagon now considers the Pacific to be strategically more important than the Atlantic, and has shifted the predominant focus of its nuclear arsenal accordingly.⁴

It is in this context that Australia has engaged in an alliance of gargantuan proportions not yet fully comprehended by its citizens. The alliance implicates Australia in the US military development which demands a heavy toll on all peoples, but particularly women, children, and the Indigenous of the region. Lack of political control, economic hegemony and related poverty, infrastructure collapse, violence against women and girls, and environmental degradation and ill-health are among the major consequences. Australia can no longer pretend isolation in a world where planes can fly from the military base in Guam within hours to drop bombs on the pristine waters, mudflats and waterways, sand dunes and forests of Shoalwater Bay with its fragile populations of endangered dugong and turtle. Australia has become a major player in the dangerous narrative which is US militarisation.

Locating Shoalwater within the US Nuclear Arsenal

Locating Shoalwater within the US military must start with an analysis of the world’s nuclear arsenals, because the US military is a nuclear force – in that many of its aircraft and ocean-going vessels are nuclear powered and/or have the capacity to carry and deploy nuclear weapons. Nuclear warheads may not be deployed at the Shoalwater Bay Training Area during Talisman Sabre 2007, and certainly they are not being detonated there, but many of the aircraft and ocean vessels are nuclear capable. Citing reasons of national security, the US and Australian militaries refuse to provide information on what weapons systems are being used in the training exercises. Nonetheless, because the US military *is* a nuclear force – indeed the world’s leading nuclear force – it would be reasonable to assume that Talisman Sabre may contribute towards training troops who regularly use such weapons. This implicates Australia in the development and use of nuclear weapons, and this contribution to global security or insecurity (depending on your point of view) is surely something that Australians need to consider. As Talisman Sabre is one of Australia’s leading training grounds with the US military it would seem appropriate for concerned citizens of Yeppoon and Rockhampton (and indeed Australia as a whole) to be aware of their government and military’s potential role in the development and use of nuclear weapons.

The US is a nuclear force. In 2007 there are 27,215 nuclear warheads in arsenals globally, 2000 of which are on high alert, meaning that they are targeted and ready to launch within minutes. The US currently has 10,000 nuclear warheads. Seven other countries also have nuclear warheads: Russia (16,000), China (400), France (500), Israel (200), Britain (185), India (40), Pakistan (40). The world is currently watching to see whether North Korea and Iran should be added to that list. The US has less nuclear warheads than Russia, but they are much more powerful and effective. The combined explosive yield of all these weapons is equivalent to about 200,000 times the explosive yield of the bomb used on Hiroshima.⁵

There been some effort to decommission the global nuclear stockpile. In 1998 there were 31,000 nuclear warheads globally, of which 13,000 were deployed and 4,600 were on high alert.⁶ But while the total number of nuclear weapons is 6 per cent lower than at the peak of the Cold War (1987-88), there has been a sharp overall increase since 1998. The US had begun to consolidate its nuclear weapons between 1992 and 1997, withdrawing them from ten states and numerous European bases. In 1997, however, the decommissioning impetus started to slow down. During the 1990s, the US decommissioned 1000 to 1500 nuclear warheads annually, this compares to less than 100 annually in the mid-2000s. In 2004, the US decided to cut its stockpile to 6,000 warheads, but warhead life-extension and rebuild have priority so it will take a long time to retire the decommissioned warheads. Since the end of the Cold War, 16 years ago, the US has only withdrawn its weapons from three states and one European country. On 7 December 2006, Britain announced that it was extending its nuclear weapons program to 2050, claiming that this was entirely in keeping with its obligations under the Non-Proliferation Treaty as its nuclear arsenal was smaller than it had been during the Cold War and the Treaty does not give a date when nuclear disarmament had to be accomplished.⁷ Given this history, any fair analysis of the US military's arsenal would have to deduce that nuclear weapons continue to play a big role in US military activities.

Only 28 per cent of the US nuclear arsenal has been moved to separate storage facilities. The US stores its nuclear arsenal at 12 locations in the US continent and Hawaii, and in six locations in European countries: it does not currently store nuclear weapons in the north-west Pacific or in Asia. However, two-third of all US nuclear warheads are used by operational ballistic missiles on ships, submarines and aircraft – and these weapon platforms are all active in the Asia and Pacific regions. In 2006, 2,300 of the US's 10,000 nuclear warheads were based at the Strategic Weapons Facility Pacific, in Bangor, Washington State on the western shores of the Pacific. This is the highest concentration of nuclear warheads anywhere in the world. Half of these warheads are on board ballistic-missile submarines patrolling the Pacific Ocean. In addition, a further 1,700 nuclear warheads are deployed on Ohio-class ballistic missile submarines patrolling in the Pacific and Atlantic. Three, soon to be six, of these submarines are based in Guam.

The US conducts regular military training at the Australian Department of Defence's Joint Combined Training Centre which is a major training ground for the US military operating in or through the north-west Pacific. Given that the US is a nuclear force with a large portion of its forces using nuclear powered and/or nuclear weapons capable aircraft and ocean vessels, there is a high probability that at least some of the weapons platforms involved in the Talisman Sabre training will be nuclear capable. This is not to suggest that nuclear warheads are used at Shoalwater – they are not – but it does suggest that there is a high likelihood that Shoalwater Bay will be used for training US troops in the use of nuclear weapons in the battlefield.

Placing the Pacific inside the US Military

The military expansion in the north-west Pacific involves Australia by virtue of its contribution of Shoalwater and the Talisman Sabre exercise to the US war effort. Shoalwater Bay Training Area is one of several military facilities which Australia provides to the US, including Delamere Air Weapons Range (near Katherine) and Bradshaw (near Timber Creek) military base in the Northern Territory, and Lancelin Training Area in Western Australia.

Over the past decade, the US military has undergone a policy shift which makes the north-west Pacific one of the most important strategic arenas in the world. The Pentagon has abandoned its old policy of keeping an even balance between the Atlantic and the Pacific. Now, the US is focusing its attention on eastern Asia, with China as the main concern in the jigsaw which is Japan, the Philippines, South Korea, North Korea, Taiwan and India.

Determined to ensure its dominance of the region should confrontation with China occur, the US wants to keep its forces as close to the action as possible – but preferably on its own soil (or what it considers to be its own soil). It is not that the US is withdrawing from the current countries where they currently hold military bases (e.g. Okinawa, South Korea, the Philippines), but the US Pentagon would prefer to have the major focus of their forces on US-controlled land. Having sovereignty over the soil on which they base their forces, makes the US military more flexible because it frees it from host-country political considerations. The US military is manoeuvring so that it will increasingly operate according to a “Pacific Strategic Triangle” concept which links Guam, Hawaii and Alaska – all of which are US territories.⁸ The Pentagon’s perspective is that, within the US’s ‘Global War on Terror’, “Guam offers proximity and valued status as an American territory. ... [because] the military does not need to secure permission to engage in operations from the island – a concern, particularly during crises for forces utilizing operating platforms in non-U.S. territories”.⁹ (The Indigenous peoples in each of these three locations actively dispute the US claim to their ancestral lands, but the military is a tough opponent.)

Leading this decisive push is the Pacific Command (PACOM) headquartered on the island of O’ahu in Hawaii (or *Ka Pahiaina*). Headquartered at Camp Smith, PACOM provides a unified command to about 300,000 military personnel from Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps, one third of which are forward deployed – meaning they are based closer to the Asian continent than Hawaii – in Guam, Japan (including Okinawa), and South Korea.

PACOM is responsible for US military operations for over 50 per cent of the world’s surface. This is an area of 260,000,000 square kilometres stretching from the west coast of the Americas to the east coast of Africa, from the Arctic to the Antarctic. This means that PACOM covers nearly 60 per cent of the world’s population, consisting of 43 countries, 20 territories and possessions, and 10 US territories. The PACOM area is responsible for 35 per cent of US global trade (compared to 19 per cent with the European Union, 20 per cent with Canada, and 18 per cent with Latin America). Asia and Pacific nations, not including the US, account for 34 per cent of the Gross World Product, comparing with the US which accounts for 21 per cent. In addition, the PACOM region contains the world’s six largest armed forces – 1) the People’s Republic of China, 2) USA, 3) Russia, 4) India, 5) North Korea, 6) South Korea.

The U.S. Pacific Fleet (PACFLT), as PACOM’s Naval element, is headquartered at Pearl Harbour, Hawaii. The world’s largest naval command, PACFLT controls more than 213,000 Sailors, Marines, and civilians, approximately 190 ships, about 1,400 Navy and Marine Corps aircraft, and 35 shore installations. PACFLT makes approximately 700 port visits throughout the Pacific region each year – and this includes regular visits to Australian ports. PACFLT coordinates shore support activities throughout the Pacific from through six naval commands, including San Diego, Seattle, and Pearl Harbour.¹⁰ PACFLT’s Seventh Fleet is based in Guam, South Korea, and Japan and is responsible for operations and exercises from the west of Hawaii to the east coast of Africa.

PACOM also has air forces based throughout the north-western Pacific – again in South Korea, and Japan (including Okinawa), and Guam. Andersen Air Force Base in Guam is home to a Navy helicopter squadron and hosts rotating deployments of Air Force bombers and tankers from throughout the Pacific and from the US continent.¹¹ Andersen’s 36th Wing’s official mission statement is to “[p]rovide a U.S.-based lethal warfighting platform for the employment, deployment, reception, and throughput of air and space forces in the Asia-Pacific Region”.¹²

Guam is the Hub of US Military Expansionism

Guam (the Chamorro island of *Guåhan*) is the hub of the US military expansion in the north-west Pacific: “a hub for intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance and strike operations”¹³ providing support for US aircraft and ocean vessels plying the region. The largest US-“owned” island in the strategically important north-west Pacific, Guam lies only four hours flying time off northern Australia. Draw a line east of Manila in the Philippines and another south from Tokyo, Japan, and the lines will cross near Guam. Guam is the nexus between Japan (including Okinawa), Indonesia and the Philippines, all of which are approximately 1500 nautical miles – i.e. three hours flying time or two to three days journey by ship. Strategically worrisome China and Korea are only a little further away. Guam straddles the world’s most important sea lanes, including the Strait of Malacca, through which 50 per cent of the world’s oil passes on its way to the US.¹⁴

Despite the century-long objection of the Indigenous Chamorro peoples, the US claims Guam as a piece of military real estate in the North-west Pacific. Guam is priceless to the US military. A war-prize for the US following the Spanish-American War ending in 1898, Guam is being returned to military prominence as the linchpin of Washington’s new Asia strategy. While the world’s media is directing our attention to the Middle East (Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine) the US Pentagon is quietly fortifying the North-west Pacific against potential conflict with China and/or Russia.

Guam has the misfortune of being only 2400 kilometres from the strategically critical Asian shoreline, with all the unique characteristic of being a largish size island in this prime location. Mountainous at one end, and flat woodlands at the other, Guam has the terrain to accommodate a large airfield, while on the sheltered side of the island is one of the Pacific’s largest and deepest harbours. Accordingly, Guam is considered by Pentagon officials and military advisors to be the US military’s “unsinkable aircraft carrier” – as described by Brig. Gen Douglas H. Owens, commanding officer of Guam’s Andersen Air Force Base.¹⁵

In July 1995, under the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, the Clinton Administration had begun slowly closing some of its facilities on Guam. But the terrorist attack on the World Towers in New York on 11 September 2001 changed that. Thereafter the Pentagon, under Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld, adopted a “lily-pad” strategy of creating a global network of jumping-off places from which they could stage rapid military responses. Within this scenario Guam has been positioned as the Pentagon’s “tip of the spear”.¹⁶

Although only 7 miles wide and 30 miles long, two-thirds of this small island is currently under US military control, housing an array of military facilities. There two bases here which particularly concern Australia: Andersen Air Force Base and Naval Base Guam at Apra Harbour. Both are about to experience a massive influx of personnel and machinery.

In 2002, in the aftermath of September 11, the Pentagon started returning the massive B-52s Stratofortress aircraft to Andersen Air Force Base. With twin airstrips two-miles long (a legacy of World War Two), Andersen provides an ideal location for the US’s Global Strike Force which will involve rotating 48 F-22 and F-15E fighter jets, state-of-the-art B-1 supersonic strike aircraft, B-2s “flying wing” Stealth bombers – all rotated to Guam from US bases in the continent and Alaska. In addition, there will be ten Global Hawk unmanned spy planes homebased in Guam.¹⁷

In September 2006, the US Pacific Command (PACOM) released its military development plan for Guam in which it identified the locations and scope of its military build-up. Most significantly, the US military intends to – and has in some cases already commenced on – developing a Marines Corp base and training area; extending Andersen Air Force Base; refurbishing Naval Base Guam; and building an Army base at Radio Barrigada for a Patriot Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) task force. The BMD facility, expected to be constructed by 2012, will give the Army the capacity to intercept and shoot down incoming missiles aimed at the critical military assets on Guam.¹⁸

The Naval Base Guam on Apra Harbour, it already homeports three nuclear-powered Los-Angeles-class fast-attack submarines, with more scheduled by 2008. These include Trident submarines which, while left over from the Cold War, are currently being upgraded with a new generation of Trident II missiles.¹⁹ Naval Base Guam is to be modified to enhance its Nuclear Aircraft Carrier (CVN) transient operational capability. The US Navy currently has five of its eleven aircraft carriers in the Pacific, and intends to bring this to six by 2010. The Pentagon was considering homeporting the sixth aircraft carrier (the Carl Vinson) in Guam, but recently decided to send it to their much better resourced base in San Diego, again by 2010. The Pentagon plans to have 60 per cent of its Navy's global fleet in the Pacific arena. Transiting them through Guam, places them closer to the projected deployment zones in eastern Asia and the Middle East, cutting down on response times.

The US-Guam-Australia Alliance

Australia plays an increasing role in the militarisation of the north-west Pacific and by this means is specifically tied to Guam. This involvement is through a formal Australian-US military alliance backed by the ANZUS treaty and informed by a series of Australian-US Defence Ministerial Consultations (AUSMIN) which have been held annually since 1985.²⁰

The key outcome of the AUSMIN 2004 meeting was to establish the Australian-United States Joint Combined Training Centre (JCTC) in which Shoalwater Bay plays a major role along with other military and civilian facilities across the Australian continent. JCTC is a "network within Australia" which links with the US-based Joint National Training Capability. As the director general of the JCTC, Brigadier Brown clarified in 2006, "Although it is called a training centre, [JCTC] is something of a misnomer: in fact, it is more a capacity – a network" based on the "ability to conduct distributed training".²¹ While Shoalwater Bay is a major node, the JCTC is coordinated out of the Australia Defence Force Warfare Centre at Newcastle in New South Wales. Other nodes include the RAAF Base at Tindal and HMAS *Watson* in Sydney.²² The AUSMIN meeting in 2005 signed a Memorandum of Understanding which agreed (among other things) to upgrade the JCTC at Shoalwater Bay Training Area.

The AUSMIN's announced purpose was to foster closer cooperation in intelligence matters and improve joint training and interoperability of their military forces, including in missile defence research. Both countries acknowledged the growing importance of confronting contemporary security challenges, including the "proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, global terrorism and pandemic disease".²³ Access to Australian facilities would provide the US with a quick military deployment capability in the region. This links Australian facilities to US bases, particularly Guam and the US Pacific War Fighting Centre in Hawaii, through high-technology communications. It allows the US to train through a regular program of visits to Australia by its high-status air craft and ocean vessels and to engage in combined training with the Australian Defence Force.

The AUSMIN Memorandum of Understanding ties Australia (and *Talisman Sabre*) directly to the US military build-up in the north-west Pacific and makes specific reference to Guam. To quote the MoU: the SBTA is needed because the US is "rebalancing its force presence in the Asia-Pacific region, including through the rotation of US strategic bomber aircraft through Guam".²⁴ The aircraft using the Joint Combined Training Area are either those homebased at Andersen Air Force Base in Guam, or are rotated to Guam or transited through Guam from other US bases in the region including in the US continent.²⁵ The US is developing a Global Strike Force on Guam which operates throughout the north-west Pacific and it needs the unique facilities only Australia to provide training to these forces in use of their weapons systems.

Thus, the AUSMIN agreements have located Shoalwater Bay (and other places such as Delamere, Bradshaw, Lancelin) directly within the training parameters of the US forces on Guam. This is particularly but not limited to the air craft currently or soon to be based at or transiting through Andersen Air Force Base. As evidenced by an increasing array of US military exercises within Australian borders, Australia is for all intents and purposes now located within Guam's military air space.

While some bombing and targeting training is carried out on Guam (e.g. urban bombing raids) and some training is conducted in the even smaller islands of the Northern Marianas to Guam's north, the US military recognises "Shoalwater Bay is the only place in Australia where air, land and sea forces can engage in joint, live-fire training exercises".²⁶ Indeed, Shoalwater Training Area, Lancelin Training Area, and Delamere Air Weapons Range are unique locations in the western Pacific for the US to conduct training exercises.

The US Pentagon rates Australia highly for its ability to provide training arenas for its troops. As the commander of the US 7th Fleet, Vice Admiral Archie Clemens said in 1995 in reference to the Lancelin Defence Training Area in Western Australia (where the US can conduct ship to shore and air to ground bombing):

"You have to have places to drop bombs, you have to have places to shoot live weapons, places to fly planes over that make noise, places where you can actually test and exercise your capabilities. I think Australia in the future is going to be one of the places we'd like to exercise with the Australians, as well as with the US Navy. You now have some of the finest ranges in the Western Pacific which we cannot get anywhere else."²⁷

Talisman Sabre is Only One of Many Exercises

Talisman Sabre is a core element of Australia's role in the military expansion across the north-west Pacific. It is a biennial exercise designed to develop and strengthen interoperability between the Australian and US' militaries. Its espoused purpose is to build regional security by combining and complementing our forces with those of our regional partners and the US. The Talisman Sabre exercise is not limited to Shoalwater Bay. It includes Delamere near Katherine and Bradshaw near Darwin, an array of civilian facilities in cities up and down the coast, and stretches into the Coral, Timor and Tasman Seas. It involves US air, land and naval forces ultimately commanded by PACOM in Hawaii.

Talisman Sabre 2005 was the biggest military exercise ever held in Australia. It provided a valuable opportunity for more than 6,000 Royal Australian Air Force, Navy and Army to train with 11,000 US personnel from their Army, Navy, Marine and Special Forces units. Merging Tandem Thrust, Kingfisher and Crocodile exercises, Talisman Sabre 2005 opened the US-Australian alliance to a new era. According to Australian Department of Defence statements, Talisman Sabre 2007 is expected to engage *at least* 7500 Australian and 9000 US personnel, 20 Australian and 10 US ships (including a carrier Battle group), and 25 Australian and 100 US air craft – numbers which may fluctuate "according to operational requirements throughout the exercise".²⁸ Not all of these forces will be staged at Shoalwater. The key sites for Talisman Sabre 2007 are Shoalwater Bay Training Area, coordinated by the Australia Defence Force Warfare Centre near Newcastle, Bradshaw Field Training Area, civilian airports in Brisbane and Rockhampton, the Royal Australian Air Force base in Townsville, port facilities in Brisbane, Gladstone and Alma ports, and the exercise extends into the Tasman and Timor Seas.²⁹

Although it plays a core role in Australia's contribution to US military expansion across the north-west Pacific, Talisman Sabre is only one of many exercises – some large, other small – which implicate and

embed Australia into the Pacific Command agenda. In 2005-2006 alone PACOM organised and/or hosted 1,700 exercises and other activities engaging a vast conglomeration of foreign military forces throughout the Pacific and Indian Ocean regions – all developing their interoperability under the Pentagon's umbrella.³⁰ Through Talisman, Shoalwater provides a primary training ground for the US Seventh Fleet on a short warning, power projection, and forcible entry scenario.

Another regional exercise involving Australia is RIMPAC (the Rim of the Pacific), a large scale multinational power projection/sea control exercise involving participants from the US, Canada, Australia, Japan, South Korea, Chile and Britain.

Then there are exercises in which Australia is involved but merely as spectator. Take for example, Valiant Shield in June 2006 which, as the largest Pacific exercise since the Vietnam era, was promoted as a show of force to deter North Korea from test-firing its new Taepodong-2 Missile. This massive exercise, in June 2006, brought together three Carrier Strike Groups for the first time – the USS Kitty Hawk, the USS Ronald Reagan and the USS Abraham Lincoln. This totalled 20,000 troops, 300 aircraft, and 28 vessels under PACOM command. The exercise took place off Guam, and involved submarines came from Naval Base Guam and the 36th Wing from Andersen Air Force Base. More than 40 countries went along as observers. It was the first time that China's Communist regime had been invited and attended such an event. Other observing countries were Japan, India, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, South Korea, Russia – *and* Australia.³¹

In July 2006, immediately following the exercise the Guam-based nuclear-capable submarine the USS City of Corpus Christi visited Brisbane, but the more significant event following Valiant Shield was the first deployment of a B-2 Spirit Stealth bomber on the continent of Australia. Called "Green Lightning" this exercise involved two B-2s in conducting bombing sorties to Delamere Air Weapons Range and a B-2 Engine Running Crew Change at RAAF Darwin. This was the first time a B-2 had landed on Australian soil. The B-2 aircrafts, pilots and support personnel were from Whiteman Air Force Base in Whiteman, Missouri (currently based in Guam); the Expeditionary Air Refueling Squadron (EARS) came from McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey. The rotational bomber presence in Guam provides "integrated training opportunities" through "working with our Australian allies". According to Lt. Col. Bill Eldridge, who was the aircraft commander on the B-2 that landed at RAAF Darwin on 27 July and was part of the Engine Running Crew Change, said that, "Sharing training facilities with the Australians greatly enhances our ability to simulate combat conditions". The Royal Australian Air Force had earlier joined in B-2 exercises during the Red Flat Exercise at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada.³²

On 9 April 2007, B-52 Stratofortress bombers flew from Andersen Air Force Base to Delamere Air Weapons Range in a Green Lightning exercise which involved a 12-hour round flight. The B-52s were accompanied by a KC-135 tanker for support. The aircraft landed at Royal Australian Air Force Base Darwin. While over Delamere they deployed six BDU-50 (Bomb Dummy Unit) inert bombs. They were escorted by Royal Australian Air Force Hornets. The B-52s were deployed from Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, to Andersen in Guam – maintaining PACOM's continuous bomber presence in the north-west Pacific.³³

This was the third Green Lightning exercise which involved Guam's Andersen-based aircraft. The others were in July (mentioned above) and October 2006.³⁴ As one of the few overland target ranges in the Pacific theatre, Delamere provides a vast airspace which allows for a wide range of manoeuvres not possible in other fields – and certainly not available in Guam.³⁵

Following the Talisman Sabre exercise PACOM plans to repeat the Valiant Shield exercise. This time, the US military claims, will be bigger than last year. It will include the world's biggest anti-terrorism exercise, called TopOff4 (Top Officers), underscoring Guam's increasing importance to the US

Pentagon. Again the “wargames” will only include US troops but other countries, including Australia, have been invited to observe.³⁶

Land Bases or Lily-pads?

Since “September 11”, the US strategy has moved away from siting land bases in foreign countries to developing jumping-off sites for its troops at bases provided by the host nations. This is ex-Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld’s “lily-pad” strategy. These in-host-country facilities will service expanded military bases in territories which the US considers to be its own. For the north-west Pacific this means Guam and Hawaii, and further afield but still in the northern Pacific is Alaska. This restructuring has changed the appearance of the US presence in the Pacific.

The US is restructuring its bases in Okinawa (in Japan) and South Korea and relocating some of its troops to Guam. However, the relocation of troops to Guam is only a part of the US’s reorientation of its forces and infrastructure in its Pacific theatre. The US military involvement in both Okinawa and South Korea will continue, but as Rapid Deployment Forces operating out of bases maintained by the Japanese and South Korean governments respectively. In addition, the Pentagon is stepping up joint-exercises with these host countries, both within and outside of their borders. This replicates the Joint Combined Training Centre in Australia (which includes but is not limited to Shoalwater) and the co-joined Australian-US exercises (such as Talisman Sabre).

For example, in South Korea, while the US agreed in 2004 to the closure of 34 US military bases on Korean soil and the phased withdrawal of US 12,000 troops to be completed by 2011, the US bases are being replaced by South Korean bases. By using these bases as staging grounds, the US forces will then remake themselves as a Rapid Deployment Force operating under Visiting Forces Agreements (VFA) without the problem of having to deal with local protests or the expenses incurred by having to maintain bases on foreign soil.

Similarly, the US is ensuring that it maintains a continuing and obvious presence in Japan, particularly Okinawa. The Japanese government has recently conducted a marine survey for the relocation of the Futema Air Station to an area near Camp Schwab in Nago City.³⁷ We see here a pattern of the US military bases continuing, albeit in the guise of being “not bases”. On 13 February 2007, US forces conducted large-scale parachute drop training exercises into the waters near Camp Schwab – for the first time in eight years. The parachuters were from the amphibious assault ship Essex. Eleven amphibious vehicles landed and crossed a public road in Ginoza village, with gun-pointing US soldiers lying on their stomachs by the side of the road as Japanese citizens drove along it.³⁸ The US military presence is said to provide 5.3 per cent of Okinawa’s gross income, but 77 per cent of contracts for goods and services to the military have gone off island to companies in the Japanese main islands.³⁹

As for the Philippines, although the US bases were removed from there in 1991 as a result of unified citizenship protests pressuring the Philippines’ Senate to terminate its treaty with the US, September 11 led the US to renew its military presence there also. In 1999 the Philippines’ government signed a Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) with the US – one of many which the Pentagon has engineered throughout the region wherever the US military is active. These agreements allow the US aircraft carriers, destroyers and nuclear armed submarines to enter these countries, as well as (in some cases) stockpile military armaments there. In 2005, 1000 US Marines from Okinawa were deployed to the Philippines to be stationed in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao for the purpose of training and engaging in armed conflict with the Philippines’ forces in a war against the Moro National Liberation Front.⁴⁰

In comparison to these “lily-pads” – such as Okinawa, South Korea, the Philippines – are the US bases on terrain which the US considers its own territory and therefore claims the liberty to build up as

much as it wants without the bother of having to deal with host governments: the US “Pacific Strategic Triangle” links Guam with Alaska and Hawaii.

Hawaii (or to use the Indigenous name, Ka Pai’aina) is the headquarters of the US Pacific Command (PACOM) responsible for US military operations over half the earth. The small island of O’ahu, on which PACOM is headquartered, has 25 per cent of its land under military control – much of the remainder of the land is under tourism or plantations, and the Kanaka Maoli (Indigenous Hawaiians) are a minority in their ancestral land. Every sector of the military is present in Hawaii, including Ballistic Missile Defence and Space Warfare Technologies. Because the US considers Hawaii to be its own, there is little prospect of the US military withdrawing from there. Rather, since September 11, the Hawaiian facilities have been considerably expanded. This includes the training of various forces. The Army resumed training at Makua Valley, the Marines conduct jungle warfare training at Waikane and practice urban warfare training at Waimanalo. Communication and command facilities have been extended in places like Mahaka Ridge, and at the NASA military space program on the sacred mountain of Mauna Kea.⁴¹ The Navy has created an Office for Missile Defense Operations to take command of all “testing and deployment” of naval missile defence systems. With these systems and outfitted with Aegis destroyers homeported in Japan, the Navy can situate its vessels 100 kilometres off the coast of North Korea or China and shoot down missiles headed for the United States while still in their boost-stage.⁴²

Then there is the spectrum of scattered Micronesian countries (those lying north of the equator) which until recently (1979 through 1994) were US colonies and many of which continue to play significant military roles. The US Military Sealift Command stations three Maritime Prepositioning Force ships off the coast of Saipan, the capital island of the Northern Marianas. Prepositioning ships contain all the equipment and supplies needed in battle which can be deployed at short notice to any field of war where they meet with incoming troops. Also in the Northern Marianas are small Tinian (from where the Enola Gay flew to bomb Hiroshima), Rota and Farallon de Medinilla islands all of which are used as bombing ranges by the US military. Farallon de Medinilla, an uninhabited 200-acre island leased to the US in 1976 for 100 years, is the Pacific Fleet’s only US-controlled range available for live-fire training for forward-deployed naval forces.⁴³

The Marshall Islands has the most unenviable role of being the main site of US nuclear testing detonations. In the 1940s and 1950s the US detonated 67 thermonuclear tests on the small islands of Bikini and Enewetak, exploding a force which amounted to 7200 Hiroshima bombs. This was “an average of more than 1.6 Hiroshima bombs per day for the 12-year nuclear testing program”, according to Dr Neal Palafox of the University of Hawaii’s John A. Burns School of Medicine.⁴⁴ The Marshallese have paid the highest price of the US nuclear arsenal, suffering radioactive related illnesses as a result of over 67 nuclear tests.⁴⁵ The young republic’s Kwajalein Atoll is the target zone in a network of military facilities webbed across the northern Pacific (involving Hawaii, Wake Island (in the northern Marshalls), and Vandenburg Air Force Base in California) which is central to the US’s development of missile delivery systems and space warfare technology.⁴⁶ Kwajalein is the “gem in the crown”, according to Lieutenant-General John Costello, head of the US Army’s Space and Missile Defence Command: It is the “singular place where all the capabilities exist to gauge the success or failure of missile defence systems”.⁴⁷

Then there is Palau (or Belau) which created the world’s first constitution to contain a nuclear free clause and whose women stood up to the Pentagon for 15 long years until the US, through a covert pressure, was able to push through a Compact of Free Association agreement which gives it the right to take any land or harbour that it wants, for any military purpose including nuclear, within 60 days notification. The US has not yet actioned its option, but it is important to remain vigilant for the harbour is regularly visited by warships and submarines operating in the north-west Pacific.⁴⁸

Australia's Role in the US Presence

Australia's role in the overall development of increasing militarisation clearly identifies the US military activities at Shoalwater Bay as fitting within the wider spectrum of US "lily-pad" launching zones in foreign countries. Evident are the full continuum of conventional and nuclear weapons systems, and the full gamut of US military forces (army, navy, air, marine, space) including their command, intelligence and support facilities. All of these elements are not necessarily represented at Shoalwater Bay and they don't need to be, for the Talisman Sabre exercise at Shoalwater correlates with military developments in South Korea, in Japan (including Okinawa), in Hawaii – and most directly, in Guam.

Shoalwater is militarily linked with Guam, as are several other major Australian military bases including Delamere and Bradshaw. Many of the aircraft, warships and submarines which visit Australia, to engage in exercises of which Talisman Sabre is only one example, are homebased in, rotated to or transited through Guam. The Australian-US Memorandum of Understanding makes this connection explicit should we ever doubt it. This not so welcome intrusion has increased over the past years, such that exercises are now occurring all year long, touching on many facilities across Australia's vast continent. Guam *is* in Australia's backyard. Guam is intrinsically linked with Australia; Australia linked with Guam.

The question of whether the US intends to stage a permanent base in Australia is of vast importance to many Australians. The Australian Department of Defence (DoD) repeatedly assures an anxious public that the US has no plans of permanently basing US troops at Shoalwater, or at any other military base. Given the US's preference for "lily-pad" facilities in the region this may well be the case. *But*, at this moment the debate is being used as smoke-screen fostered to divert attention, and energy, away from the real issue, which is that Shoalwater-Delamere-Bradshaw (and all the other connected facilities) fit neatly into the US's overall strategy for the region: the Pacific is becoming the US's military centre-piece and Australia is its training ground.

With war-platform technology which can fly from Guam to Australia in a matter of hours it is questionable whether the US troops need to have a permanent presence in Australia. The US military can access Australia readily and regularly does so, from its bases in Guam. There is a possibility that the Australian government might eventually allow the US to stage a support facility for their planes in Darwin: justified on the basis that the B-2 Stealth bombers used in bombing practice at Delamere Air Weapons Range require hangers and other infrastructure support because they cannot be stored in the open. But as they regularly land during their exercises to conduct on-ground services it may be a matter of mere semantics whether the US already has proxy bases at Bradshaw and Darwin. There is a precedence for US bases in Australia. The DoD has long lost the debate about the US involvement in such bases as Pine Gap, a globally vital Command, Control, Coordination and Intelligence (C3I) base near Alice Springs; and the recently announced base near Geraldton in Western Australia will only repeat that structure.⁴⁹

Ultimately, therefore, while the Australian and US governments regularly claim that the US does not have bases in Australia (conveniently ignoring US control over the facilities at Pine Gap, and soon to be Geraldton, as well as its regular use of training areas peppered around the continent), this option cannot be ruled out. In a climate where the Australian government has continually failed to furnish the public with any decisive, independent (and thus reliable) information on the visiting US forces or on the weapon systems they have or can be expected to use during Talisman Sabre, the Australian public still remains to be convinced.

The Australian Department of Defence (International Policy Division) claims that:

“Australia’s strategic alliance with the US is a national asset, resulting in major strategic, political and economic benefits, as well as Australia’s defence and intelligence capabilities, including in relation to terrorism, of which exercises such as TS07 is a critical part.”⁵⁰

The *increasing* US military activity within Australian borders positions Australia as a collaborator in the increasing militarisation occurring in our region. Australia’s citizens need to ask themselves whether they concur with this analysis of the extent to which Australia benefits from the Australian-US alliance. Australians need to assess the *current* level of US military activities in Australia and across the north-west Pacific and ask themselves whether this might not implicate us in something which is *not* in our nation’s best interest. We need to engage in a discussion about whether and, if so, to what extent we are prepared to allow US troops and weapon machinery to use our facilities, water ways, and air space. This requires an in-depth look at Australia’s contribution to the militarisation of the north-west Pacific, with all its impacts (and potential impacts).

Impact: Guam’s Indigenous Chamorro and US Political Control

The US military build-up sweeping across the north-west Pacific is causing concern to many residents in all of the countries involved but the increasing militarisation threatens Guam in a way which is too often overlooked. Guam’s political status is being held hostage by the US’s military ambitions: the Indigenous Chamorro peoples are being systematically disenfranchised under a continuing colonialism. Since the US claimed Guam from the Spanish in 1898, it has anchored its military strategy around its aspiration to make Guam the hub of its forward position close to the Asian continent. The result has been that the US has been holding Guam’s Indigenous Chamorro peoples hostage to its military ambitions for over 60 years. The Chamorro of Guam have been denied their inalienable political right to an act of self-determination.

From 1898, the US Naval governed Guam: Guam was under military rule. Then in 1946, the US listed Guam on the United Nations’ List of Non-Self Governing Territory by and becoming its “administering power”. In 1950, the US unilaterally signed what is known as the Organic Act which both granted Guam’s residents US citizenship (long desired by an element of Guam’s community) *and* promised the Indigenous Chamorro peoples the right to an act of self-determine regarding their political status. The Act guaranteed that this right to self-determination would be reserved for Chamorro.

Although under the United Nations, the US became Guam’s administering power and while this did not make Guam a US territory nonetheless it enabled the US to behave as *if* it has full control over the island. This because the United Nations has, as yet, failed to uphold its commitment in this the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. The UN struggled on while the US, for its part, failed to uphold its obligations under either the UN or the 1950 Organic Act. Almost immediately, the US set about incrementally changing and redefining the Organic Act creating a situation which has bound the small island to the US ever more tightly as the years have progressed.

Granting US citizenship to the residents of Guam seems like a good thing until one realises that while the people of Guam (including the Chamorro) are American citizens they do not have the right to vote in Congress or to elect the US President. They are, in fact, US citizens without the rights enshrined in the American Constitution.

Guam is described by Washington as being an “Unincorporated Territory”, a status which sounds beneficial until one realises that the “unincorporated” aspect of that title means that Guam is a non-entity within the parameters of the US, for no such designation exists within the context of the US constitution.

With control over Guam's immigration, the US has increased that portion of the Guam population most likely to vote in elections for local governments which favour the US military presence. The pending influx of military personnel will increase that percentage yet again. Those who wish to see the inalienable rights of the Indigenous peoples honoured consider that the US wants to maintain perpetual control over Guam as a valuable piece of military real estate in the north-west Pacific. With each increase in the military population the US has added one more hurdle for the Chamorro people to overcome to secure their rightful act of self determination under international law.

If the planned military expansion in Guam goes ahead then Guam's 160,000 residents will experience a population explosion expanding it by about 35,000 strong. This will include 8,000 Marines and their 9,000 dependents being relocated there from Okinawa – with the remainder being construction and service workers from the Philippines. This will more than double the current military presence (now 12,000 troops and their dependents) on the island. The abrupt population increase, expected to start in 2008 and culminate in 2014, will put intense pressure on Guam's infrastructure – and with a large portion of its population already living in poverty, many of which are Chamorro, local citizenship-based resistance is growing.

One thing is certain, however: the Chamorro peoples have consistently striven to regain the political control over their ancestral lands and waters since the arrival of Europeans on their shore in 1668 and they are not yet prepared to give up that struggle: their lives and their future depend on its success. The youthful Chamorro diaspora is awakening, strengthening the Indigenous spirit of resistance. On 4 and 5 October 2006, a delegation of young Chamorro stood before the United Nations' Special Political and Decolonisation Committee and demanded they "hold the United States accountable, as Guam's administering power, to its moral and legal responsibilities to ensure the ... right to self-determination of the native Chamoru people" and put an end to the "massive US military build-up [which] hinders the right of Chamorus to decolonization and violates the human rights of all people from Guam".⁵¹ Chamorro cultural activists charge that:

The sum effect of US cultural hegemony and militarism is to permanently deny Chamoru people our long and uphill struggle for self-determination. The military build-up we speak of today, and the scheduled relocation of tens of thousands of additional US military personnel, is the latest act of negligence and abuse on the part of the US as the official Administering Power of Guam.⁵²

Impact: Violence Against Women and Children

We have seen how the US military has the unfortunate ability to impact negatively on nations and peoples as a whole. I want to turn now to a more intimate field, to show how increasing militarisation impacts on families, on communities. There is a heavy price which comes with this military expansion, and women and children bear the larger burden. As Takazato Suzuyo from the Okinawa Women Act Against Military Violence group writes:

"Combat and sexual violence are essentially tied together. Soldiers who return from combat to bases buy sex as an alternative to violence. ... Rape is warfare against women. Rape occurs at the very first stage of military occupation".⁵³

On 16 March 2007, the Japanese Defence Facilities Administration Agency informed the Japanese House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee that soldiers and civilian workers of US forces in Japan had committed 1,270 crimes and accidents in FY2006 as of the end of January (the Japanese fiscal year starts in April and ends in March). While 90per cent of those cases were traffic accidents, some were serious crimes including violence against and sexual assault of Okinawan women and children. Indeed, there have been more than 4,790 acts of military violence against civilian women in

the 34 years since the US handed Okinawa back to Japanese rule. This includes hundreds of rapes and rape-murders: many of these by the same Marine force which will be relocated to Guam.⁵⁴

Okinawan women have experienced sexual abuse at the hands of US military personnel since the Korean War in the 1940s and 1950s. The sex industry thrived. There were two to four reports of women being raped and killed each year. In one case, a 6-year old girl was abducted, raped and killed by a US soldier, who was never tried in a Japanese court. In 1995, a 12-year old girl was gang-raped by three US soldiers in Okinawa. The outraged Okinawan people demanded the closure of the US bases there, shaking the foundation of the US-Japanese alliance. When the US Admiral Mackie, Commander of the Asia-Pacific area, remarked, "Those soldiers [who raped the girl] were stupid. They could have gotten a woman for the money they rented a car" he was displaying the deep roots of sexual exploitation during war. In November 2005, four US Marines based in Okinawa participating in a US-Philippines exercise in the Philippines visited a bar and raped a Filipino woman. They were brought before the Philippines court but were protected by the US-Philippines Visiting Forces Agreement: one was found guilty and sentenced to 20-40 years imprisonment, but the others went free and returned to Okinawa.⁵⁵

Understandable, then, is the speculation that Japan's preparedness to pay two-thirds of the total US\$15 billion estimate required for the relocation of its troops to Guam is an indication of Japan's desire to see the US troops leave Okinawa, or rather for them to be *seen* to be leaving Okinawa. Notwithstanding the US's commitment to its "Triangular" strategy (land basing in Guam-Hawaii-Alaska), the limited relocation of the Okinawa-based Marines to Guam is driven not by any strategic ambition on behalf of the US military, it is an attempt by the Japanese and US governments to reduce social tension and environmental impact of large numbers of US troops and aircraft on Okinawa's small island.⁵⁶ The US would not relocate some of its troops from Okinawa if it did not have to. The relocation moves the US forces a worrisome 1000 miles further away from the Asian continent and thus from potential flashpoints such as Korea and the Taiwanese Straits where they might be needed, thus significantly extending their response time.⁵⁷ This is another reason for the importance of Guam in the overall increasing militarisation of the region. Not only is Guam relatively close to Asia (compared to Hawaii, for example), but because Guam is a US territory this frees the US government from having to negotiate the right to remain there.

The US military's violence against women and children has been repeated in South Korea. In January 2007, in South Korea, a 67 year old woman was raped by a US soldier and hospitalised. In 1992, a 26 year old woman was raped and brutally killed by US military personnel. Strong protests across Korea forced the US to hand the rapist to the Korean authorities where he was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment. Takazato argues that the victims are invariably blamed for the violence, while the individual soldiers are held responsible, and the military alliance which is the violence-producing structure goes unexamined.⁵⁸ Nonetheless, as with Okinawa, this violence has resulted in the US military having to withdraw their troops from South Korea also. Herein we have the logic behind the "lily-pad" strategy: put your troops in and pull them out fast and protect them and the Pentagon behind a series of agreements.

Within this historical context it is not unexpected that many citizens of Australia are concerned about how the increasing militarisation at places such as Shoalwater Bay might impact on women and children. The Australian section of the Nobel Peace Prize awarded Women's International League for Peace and Freedom expressed this concern in a submission to the Australian Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works in 2006. They wrote:

"The training facility [i.e. the Joint Combined Training Centre, which includes Shoalwater Bay] will see the introduction of many hundreds of US, New Zealand and Singaporean personnel from Navy, Army, Air and Special Forces units who will be looking for Rest and Recreation and

it is expected that this would result in harassment and assault of local women, and the introduction of prostitution to the quiet country town [Yeppoon]. Just as with other Status of Force Agreements which the US has obtained from countries such as Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, and Japan/Okinawa, crimes committed by military personnel from a visiting participating country will not be dealt with in Australia by Australian courts.⁵⁹

Similar concerns are also held by residents of Guam who have identified impacts including:

Increased levels of crime (anticipated higher rates of domestic violence, rape and sexual assault due to increased military population, and higher rates of property crime in civilian population with increased poverty, and drug use if/unemployment and wage depression increases.) ... Other military base communities have experienced heightened levels of racism during build-ups as conflicts of interest between military and local populations get racialized.⁶⁰

Impact: Environmental Degradation and Contamination

Then there is the vexed issue of the environment. In this era of heightened awareness of human impact on the earth, and growing fear about global warming caused by industrialisation, it would be unrealistic if citizens were *not* concerned about the impact of militarisation on our living world. Military activity has an undeniable historical link with health damage and environmental devastation. Whole societies are already suffering from the effects of militarisation that many of us fear as a threat to the future, and which the majority of us ignore at our peril.⁶¹

At Shoalwater Bay, the Australian and US governments and their militaries insist that the safety of the environment is one of its primary considerations and that Talisman Sabre is being conducted in accordance with approved environmental rules, guidelines and audits. Acknowledging the biodiversity teeming within Shoalwater Bay and the concerns of the Australian populace, they stress that their troops have received special training on the unique environment. However, according to Australian Army Col. Mike Goodyer, “balancing the cultural and environmental concerns of the Australian populous with the need to train military forces is paramount” because “Shoalwater Bay is the only place in Australia where air, land and sea forces can engage in joint, live-fire training exercises”.⁶²

The Talisman Sabre exercise has been considered by the Minister for Environment and Heritage under the provisions of Australia’s domestic environmental legislation, the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, and has been found to be appropriate. An Exercise Environmental Monitoring Group has been established to monitor compliance with stringent exercise environmental protection instructions. A Public Environmental Report into the Shoalwater Bay Training Area and the Talisman Sabre exercise has been conducted which, while it has raised many questions, has been accepted by the various authorities acting on behalf of their constituencies.

Yet there is reason for growing local and national concern about the environmental costs of using Shoalwater for military target practice. In regard to the Public Environmental Report (PER) prepared by Maunsell/AECOM on behalf of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) there had been inadequate communication and consultancy with the Australian public, government bodies and non-government organisations: this despite its titles reference to the “public”. Nor had the local group of concerned citizens (Shoalwater Bay Wilderness Awareness Group) been supplied with requested copies of the Statement of Environment and Heritage Principles which had been signed by the US government and the ADF in November 2005.

Studying the Public Environment Review, the Shoalwater Bay Wilderness Awareness Group found that there had been serious omissions.⁶³ Of major concern was that the military’s environmental interest had not extended to its actual or potential impact on the local water supply: regarded as

amongst Queensland's cleanest water supply, being sand dune fed. Similarly absent was any reference to the risks of air, sea or creek born contaminants to the local town of Yeppoon. This when Samuel Hill, the ADF's principle facility, is located on the banks of two creeks, when live artillery firing and ground exercises are conducted in this same area, and where the high explosive target area (Mt Hummock) is only 10 km from the water catchment area. There is a high risk of contaminants being released into the atmosphere and wind blown for 1000s of kilometres. Any contamination of the water supply would have rebounding effects on the entire mid-north coast of Queensland, and extend to impacting the Great Barrier Reef wildlife.

Another major risk that SWAG brought to public attention was the US use of nuclear powered submarines in the exercise, as any accident would result in widespread radioactive contamination. There are not civilian plans to deal with radioactive pollution which may occur from reactor leaks or failure. SWAG also notes that, "in the absence of assurances to the contrary" it is likely that the attending US air craft carriers would be carrying nuclear weapons, and again this carries the risk of accidents or failures leading to emergencies far beyond the scope of local services to deal with. The ADF's PER stated that the Talisman Sabre 2007 exercise would involve training in experimental weapons but did not elaborate on what they might be.

SWAG called for "a cancellation of the TS07 and all future exercises with the US forces", and the declaration of the training area as a National Park. Echoing this warning, the Brisbane chapter of the international Friends of the Earth emphasized that, "Any kind of military activities in the Great Barrier Reef marine park should be disallowed, [as] it is not compatible with sustainability or environmental protection".⁶⁴ They had found the PER to be "fatally flawed" and that it had ignored the significance of the Shoalwater Bay and Coral sea regions which should, it stressed, be "no-go zones for military and any other industrial activities".

The Friends of the Earth (FOE) criticism hinged on the impact of the military exercises on the unique wildlife of the region such as the endangered dugong and green turtle which are effected by the naval use of sonar, resulting turbulence and potential toxic spills. FOE is particularly concerned about the US use of the region, particularly since its environmental record evidences contamination of training areas such as at Vieques in Puerto Rico, and Clark Air Base in the Philippines. US naval use of the small island of Vieques for bomb-target practice, munitions disposal and other activities since 1940 had resulted in heavy metals and toxins entering the local drinking water in civilian areas in the late 1970s, so that from 1985 through 1989 children aged 10-19 were 256per cent more likely, and those aged 0-9 years 117per cent more likely, to contract cancer than children on the main island of Puerto Rico.

Like SWAG, FOE is also concerned about the nuclear risks posed by US nuclear powered and potentially nuclear weapons carrying vessels entering the area. It points out that the mere presence of nuclear powered vessels poses a radioactive risk. In 2006, radiation was detected in the water around a nuclear power submarine harboured in Tokyo, Japan. In March 2005 a US nuclear submarine was involved in an undersea crash that killed crew members – one of at least 10 serious peacetime accidents involving US nuclear submarines which are recorded in public documents. (It is possible that there are more which are not publicly announced.)

These two responses to the Australian Defence Force's Public Environmental Report are only the tip of the iceberg of the citizenship concern increasingly responding to a trail of military misadventures around the world. Place Shoalwater's Public Environmental Report into a wider regional perspective and one begins to see how the argument that the military has the environment in its best interests becomes very shaky ground indeed.

In Guam, the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Establishment and Operation of an Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance, and Strike (ISR/Strike) Capability at Andersen Air Force Base in Guam (DEIS) was released in 2006. The US's not-for-profit environmental legal company EarthJustice responded to this report by highlighting the failure of the DEIS to satisfy the US National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). They challenged the Andersen DEIS on several main points, one of which was that it contained no analysis of potential impacts associated with the "training range and airspace utilization" despite the DEIS's own assertion that there may be environmental impacts. The DEIS had, they said, failed to characterize the number or type of required training sorties or even the ranges or airspaces that would be affected.⁶⁵

Significantly, for Australians, the Andersen Air Force Base's training airspace under question extends to Australia – specifically to Shoalwater and Delamere, but also to Lancelin in Western Australia and Bradshaw in the Northern Territory and other facilities. This is the same air space that will be actively used during the Talisman Sabre exercises.

The US Air Force's excuse that it was yet to determine the specifics of its training was rejected by EarthJustice on the basis that this did not relieve it of its obligation under NEPA to analyse "reasonably foreseeable" impacts. EarthJustice argued that "Obviously, the Air Force would not establish an ISR/Strike capability at Andersen unless it could adequately train the fighter and bomber crews who would be deployed there" so it must have some understanding of the parameters of that training. Noting that the Air Force had already assigned contracts to construction companies, EarthJustice reminded the Air Force that NEPA's basic purpose was to "insure that environmental information is available to public officials and citizens before decisions are made and before actions are taken" and "to help public officials make decisions that are based on understanding of environmental consequences".⁶⁶

There were many points of contention raised by EarthJustice but the environmental point is important to us. EarthJustice charged the US Air Force with having failed to discuss "cumulative impacts ... on the environment which had resulted or would result from past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions" beyond making generalised statements and thus failed to inform "either the Air Force's decision-making or the public's understanding". EarthJustice included the impact on humans within the spectrum of environmental impacts and noted local citizen concerns such as the impact of increased militarisation on traffic, land use, housing, schools, etc. These issues had not been included in the DEIS.

And then there was the point of Cultural Resources. EarthJustice noted that the DEIS had not adequately considered the impact on local cultural resources, particularly Indigenous heritage. The Air Force had, it said, viewed its ISR/Strike project in isolation because it had not yet surveyed all of its project areas for cultural resources and had no idea what it would encounter.

Finally, the DEIS had not considered a reasonable range of alternatives to pursuing its interests in Guam. The Air Force had not, for example, considered housing some of its ISR/Strike aircraft and related infrastructure on Saipan in the nearby Northern Marianas or on Wake Island (a US missile development base in the northern Marshall Islands) rather than at Andersen, although this could reduce the amount of construction and population increase necessary, thereby limiting the severity of the buildup's impact on Guam. Nor had it adequately considered the "No Action" alternative.⁶⁷

This last point is particularly pertinent, given that in October 2006 the San Francisco 9th US Circuit Court of Appeals found, on behalf of EarthJustice, that a military base in Hawaii (PACOM headquarters) had violated environmental laws when it failed to consider alternatives for establishing the Stryker Combat Brigade in those islands. (A Stryker is an eight-wheeled all wheel drive, armored combat vehicle (ACV) which carries an anti-tank guided missiles (ATGM), i.e. it is a vehicle-borne

weapon system which is used to move infantry to and on the battlefield.) The Court ruled that the “Army must cease all Stryker-related activities, including construction and Stryker training until the court can rule on what activities, if any, will be allowed while a supplementary environmental impact statement is prepared.” The US Army responded by challenging the meaning of the court’s ruling, not least because it was worried that the public hearings involved in the supplementary could take several years. The ruling put in limbo 28 construction projects at Schofield Barracks and the Big Island’s Pokakuloa Training Area, worth US\$693 million. Also at stake was the money spent in taking 328 Stryker combat vehicles to Hawaii and retraining the soldiers in the 25th Infantry Division’s 2nd Brigade Combat Team. In total the cost of a single Stryker brigade is US\$1.5 billion – the US Army has seven of them. The court found that, “The Army violated NEPA (the National Environmental Policy Act) by not considering alternatives that include transformation of the 2nd Brigade outside of Hawaii” – such as Alaska and Washington which also have Stryker units. The US Army had hoped to send the 2nd Brigade Stryker Combat Unit Team into war duty by May 2007. This has clearly been delayed.⁶⁸

Perhaps alarmed by these unexpected developments in Hawaii, in March 2007, the US Department of the Navy responded by conducting an environmental impact study in Guam in April 2007. Local Guam residents have noted and anticipated limitations within the inquiry, not least being that (as had occurred in Hawaii) the EIS had come after the US Navy had already contracted several companies to begin construction expected to start in two years. The Navy has promised that it will not proceed with the construction until the EIS is completed and signed off but this is within the same week that a summit of the political leaders of neighbouring Micronesian nations gathered in Guam to discuss potential financial and fiscal benefits for them when the military buildup continues.⁶⁹ In other words, the US assumes the military buildup in Guam is considered a *fait accompli*. The US military attitude seems to be that it simply has to go through the motions, the pretence, that democracy is operating as it should.

In Guam, local residents are concerned about environmental issues such as: military toxins on land, sea and air; increased radioactive exposures if certain weapons systems are stored and used in training; increased noise pollution from military jets and land vehicles; reduced local food supply quality and quantity as a result of air and water pollution; increased levels of hazardous and non-hazardous waste disposal and potential for diversion, dumping or leaks; and “increased potential for missile and other attacks on Guam military assets particularly with the arrival of BMD [Ballistic Missile Defence], as an operational missile defense is very plausibly a first target (as well as being illegal under the 1972 ABM [Anti-Ballistic Missile] treaty”.⁷⁰ Local concern in Guam is informed by a history of being the US’s major base in the north-western Pacific since 1898.

The US military doesn’t have a clean slate when it comes to environmental and health protection in Guam. Recently, University of Guam professor Dr Luis Szyfres identified that Guam’s environment may be causing diseases affecting local residents due to the US military using Guam’s small Cocos Island as a toxic dumpsite more than fifty years ago. In 1946, the Naval Station Guam was built on Cocos Island on the southern tip of the island and was used for the decontamination of US ships returning from service in the US nuclear test detonations in the Marshall Islands. During the Vietnam War, chemical agents including Agent Orange was stored at Cocos. In 1968, military waste, including substances stored in 55 gallon drums, was disposed of into Cocos’ lagoon. Later the US military blew holes in the outer reef to improve water circulation in an effort to clean the lagoon of contaminants. While the dump is not longer operating, evaporation and wind have dispersed the toxic chemicals all over Guam. Dr Szyfres referred to a Government of Guam report which showed that, in comparison to the continental US, residents of Guam suffered from many diseases which were in epidemic proportions and that death rates were higher. This included nasopharyngeal cancer, which is 1,999per cent higher in Guam; cervical cancer, 65per cent higher; uterine cancer, 55per cent higher; depression/suicides, 67per cent; liver cancer, 41per cent; diabetes, 150per cent; Ischemic heart disease, 15per cent; and kidney failure, 12per cent. Many other diseases were also recorded in

extreme numbers. He cited studies by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which presented concrete evidence that the soil and groundwater of Guam contains toxic chemicals, and that concentrations of the toxic chemicals are above their own acceptable levels.⁷¹

Given this history it can be hardly surprising that many people in Guam don't completely trust the US government nor its military. That is the same US military which claims to have the wellbeing and protection of the pristine Shoalwater Bay as its priority. And then, on top of that, Australia has its own problems with trusting the environmental record of its own military.

Take for example the issue about whether Depleted Uranium weapons (DU) have ever been used or are ever going to be used at Shoalwater Bay. According to the Federal parliamentary document the *Hansard* (February 2003), Depleted Uranium weapons were used in Australia by the Royal Australian Navy which expended 43,000 DU rounds between 1981 to 1990 when the supply was used up. The Department of Defence (DoD) informs us, in the *Hansard*, that the Navy stopped using DU weapons due to "occupational health and safety reasons"⁷² but it fails to inform the public of where they were used.

In a situation where the Australian Department of Defence is unable or unwilling to provide information about the use of such weapons at Shoalwater it would be irresponsible if concerned citizens didn't ask questions of our government. Insufficient documentation has been made available to the public about when or where these weapons were expended in the past, and no concise answers have been given to the questions about whether they would be used by military training during the Talisman Sabre exercises, with the public left with no way of knowing whether their communities might be affected. In this context, it is understandable that responsible community members, many with children and families, are going to continue to be worried while their questions go unanswered. To acquiesce and accept the government and military's silence under these circumstances would be to fail in our responsibility as citizens living within a democratic society. Democracy is premised on the right to make an informed decision based on adequate and appropriate information. If that information is not provided then democracy is betrayed.

Impact: Australia's Contribution to the US Nuclear Arsenal

Ultimately, Australia must recognise its contribution to the militarisation of the north-west Pacific, and that involvement supports the development and maintenance of nuclear capable troops, weapons delivery systems and logistical forces.

Locating Shoalwater within the US military must start with an analysis of the world's nuclear arsenals, because the US military is a nuclear force – in that many of its aircraft and ocean-going vessels are nuclear powered and/or have the capacity to carry and deploy nuclear weapons. This is not to suggest that nuclear weapons are currently being deployed at the Shoalwater Bay Training Area during Talisman Sabre 2007, certainly they are not being detonated there. But, citing reasons of national security, the US and Australian militaries refuse to provide information on what weapons systems are being trained-with during its exercises. Nonetheless, the US military *is* a nuclear force – indeed the world's *leading* nuclear force – and Talisman Sabre, as one of the leading military training grounds in the north-west Pacific, may (in part) be about training troops to use such weapons. If this was so, this would implicate Australia in the development and use of nuclear weapons.

In 2007 there are 27,215 nuclear warheads in arsenals globally, 2000 of which are on high alert, meaning that they are targeted and ready to launch within minutes. The US currently has 10,000 of the global nuclear arsenal. Seven other countries also have nuclear warheads: Russia (16,000), China

(400), France (500), Israel (200), Britain (185), India (40), Pakistan (40). The world is currently watching to see whether North Korea and Iran should be added to that list. The US has less nuclear warheads than Russia, but they are much more powerful and effective. The combined explosive yield of all these weapons is equivalent to about 200,000 times the explosive yield of the bomb used on Hiroshima.⁷³

There been some effort to decommission the global nuclear stockpile: in 1998 there were 31,000 nuclear warheads globally, of which 13,000 were deployed and 4,600 were on high alert.⁷⁴ But while the total number of nuclear weapons is 6 per cent lower than at the peak of the Cold War (1987-88), there has been a sharp overall increase since 1998. The US had begun to consolidate its nuclear weapons between 1992 and 1997, withdrawing them from ten states and numerous European bases. In 1997, however, the decommissioning impetus started to slow down. During the 1990s, the US decommissioned 1000 to 1500 nuclear warheads annually, this compares to less than 100 annually in the mid-2000s. In 2004, the US decided to cut its stockpile to 6,000 warheads, but warhead life-extension and rebuild have priority so it will take a long time to retire the decommissioned warheads. Since the end of the Cold War, 16 years ago, the US has only withdrawn its weapons from three states and one European country. On 7 December 2006, Britain announced that it was extending its nuclear weapons program to 2050, claiming that this was entirely in keeping with its obligations under the Non-Proliferation Treaty as its nuclear arsenal was smaller than it had been during the Cold War and the Treaty does not give a date when nuclear disarmament had to be accomplished.⁷⁵ Nuclear weapons continue to play a big role in US military activities.

Only 28 per cent of the US nuclear arsenal has been moved to separate storage facilities. The US stores its nuclear arsenal at 12 locations in the US continent and Hawaii, and in six locations in European countries: it does not currently store nuclear weapons in the north-west Pacific or in Asia. However, two-third of all US nuclear warheads are used by operational ballistic missiles on ships, submarines and aircraft – and these weapon platforms are all active in the Asia and Pacific regions.

The US conducts regular military training at the Australian Department of Defence's Joint Combined Training Centre which is a major training ground for the US military operating in or through the north-west Pacific. Given that the US is a nuclear force with a large portion of its forces using nuclear powered and/or nuclear weapons capable aircraft and ocean vessels, there is a high probability that at least some of the weapons platforms involved in the Talisman Sabre training will be nuclear capable. This is not to suggest that nuclear warheads are used at Shoalwater – they are not – but it does suggest that there is a high likelihood that Shoalwater Bay will be used for training US troops in the use of nuclear weapons in the battlefield.

Conclusion

This paper has placed Shoalwater Bay and its role in the Talisman Sabre exercises firmly into the increasing militarisation of the north-west Pacific. By engaging in shared military exercises with the US, Australia has become an active partner in the reorganisation and increase of US forces across the region – a force which is predominantly, and thus alarmingly, nuclear. A core provider of training facilities for the US forces and the testing of their weapon-delivery platforms (including but not limited to air craft and ocean vessels), Australia is implicated and complicit in the US preparation for war.

Australia's willingness to host US military exercises (even if under our own banner) sanctions and enables the increasing militarisation of the lands and waters of our northern neighbours, particularly Guam. The military build-up on Guam is concurrent with the development of the Joint Combined Training Centre at Shoalwater and with the increasing array of co-joined exercises deemed to develop Australian-US operability of troops and weapons systems. Indeed, Talisman Sabre and other exercises are a vital aspect of the Guam build-up: the US troops need training and Australia provides

that avenue. With the US progressively shifting its permanent bases to what it claims as its own soil (Guam, Hawaii, Alaska) Australia has become just one more “lily-pad” in the Pentagon’s collection throughout Asia and the Pacific.

With militarisation comes the threat of extensive environmental damage, the violation of human and political rights, violence against women and children, over-taxing on limited social and physical infrastructure particularly in communities where poverty is already too common, the destruction of habitats for endangered species and the diminishing of wilderness areas, toxic and radioactive contamination, challenges to health and well-being including rising levels of cancers particularly among children, and the eradication of whole ways of life particularly among Indigenous peoples. The list goes on. In every location where militarism occurs the risks are real, and it is women and children who pay the highest price.

Through its partnership with the US, Australia has tied itself inextricably to the military expansion in Guam, and through Guam to similar developments in Japan (including Okinawa), South Korea, the Philippines, Hawaii, Alaska and the US continent. This connection is made most explicit in the formal agreement between Australia and the US which instigated the Joint Combined Training Centre of which the Shoalwater Bay Training Area and the Talisman Sabre exercises are a part. The Memorandum of Understanding between the US and Australia specifically refers to the need for the planes, ships and submarines based in Guam, or rotated to Guam from the Hawaii or the US continent, to have access to training facilities which only Australia can provide.

Talisman Sabre implicates Australia in the increasing militarisation in the north-west Pacific, particularly of Guam. If Guam is the “tip of the spear” then Australia’s role is to prepare the hand that throws the spear. Australian citizens must ask whether they are willing to acquiesce to that enforced role.

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This paper is based on a public talk given by Dr Zohl dé Ishtar hosted by Shoalwater Wilderness Awareness Group at the Keppel Bay Sailing Club, Yeppoon, Queensland, Australia on 19 April 2007. It is presented here in recognition and honouring of the Indigenous Chamoru peoples of Guåhan (Guam) in the belief that the day will come when they will enjoy their inalienable right to an act of Chamorro self-determination.

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