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www.nowwethepeople.org

The ‘War on Terror’

The USA, Australia, the Philippines and the UN

US policy in war on terror

The ‘War on Terror’ is being driven by the Bush Administration, and in particular by the US Department of Defence under its Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld.

The policy has its origins in the military plans of US Vice-President Dick Cheney when he was Defence Secretary for the first President George Bush. Cheney wanted to invade and occupy Iraq in 1991, but was over-ruled. His policy was elaborated by the Project for a New American Century in 1999, before George W Bush stole the 2000 election. September 11 2001 was seized to justify this war policy.

This policy of preemptive war and unilateral global projection of US power, including economic and cultural power, has the enthusiastic support of the Howard government. Another strong supporter in our region is the Arroyo government in the Philippines.

What has the Bush Administration done in the ‘war on terror’?

- Failed to capture Osama Bin Laden and neutralise Al-Qaeda
- Failed to capture any senior Taliban leaders in Afghanistan, and renewed the warlord regime in Afghanistan
- Failed to prosecute even one of the 645 ‘worst of the worst’ people, including Australians David Hicks and Mamdouh Habib, detained for years without legal rights in the Guantanamo Bay concentration camp
- Overthrown the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq through a bloody invasion and occupation, but failed to find any of the alleged weapons of mass destruction
- Overseen an election in Iraq which lead to a Transitional Government dominated by pro-Tehran Shiite fundamentalists
- Supported a regime of torture in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Egypt, Iraq and Guantanamo Bay
- Established new military bases in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Georgia, with an eye on oil
- Reorganised its military bases in South Korea, Japan and the Philippines
- Encouraged the escalation of Israel’s violent occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territories
- Escalated military tensions with Iran by deploying military forces on its eastern and western borders, and by threatening its ally, Syria
- Imposed a security state ‘homeland security’ regime in the USA, victimising people from the Middle East, Muslims, and immigrants generally.
- Testing new nuclear weapons and pushing for a strategic missile shield
- Developed a major military training capacity in northern Australia.

In its March 2005 policy statement, *The National Defence Strategy of the United States of America*, the Department of Defence declared: "America is a nation at war..."

<http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Mar2005/d20050318nds1.pdf>

The National Defence Strategy is to go on the offensive on a global scale to meet the 'challenge' of states with strong military capacity and a capacity to modernise (Russia, China, India); states that may use irregular warfare to neutralise the US military advantage in traditional arms; state and non-state players who may acquire nuclear or other catastrophic weapons; guerrilla forces that may threaten allies.

The National Defence Strategy does not mention the United Nations. Instead its aim is to transform other states into US allies by getting them to share 'US values', and see the world the way the US sees it. In turn, this means these allies will transform and enhance their military capacity by 'harmonising' with the US military.

The US will retain superiority in nuclear weapons, install a strategic missile defence shield, continually modernise its military forces, and maintain the capacity to fight two major wars in separate continents, as well provide for smaller, shorter missions.

To project its power, the US will maintain, outside the USA, main operating bases, forward operating sites, and cooperative security locations, as well as pre-positioned equipment and stores, to ensure it can use international airspace, seas, space and cyberspace to intervene anywhere in the world at any time to 'protect its interests'.

Questions: *Does the US war on terror see a role for the UN? What are the implications?*

How does this policy impact on Australia and the Asia Pacific region, particularly the Philippines, the Korean Peninsula and Taiwan-China?

Australian policy in war on terror

The Howard government committed fighting forces to the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, and to the ongoing occupation of Iraq. It has instituted a series of sweeping 'anti-terrorism' laws since October 2001. It has declared its support for the Bush doctrine of preemptive war and states that it would launch its own preemptive military strikes into the Asia Pacific region to combat terrorism. Copying the Bush Administration, Australia has listed the democratic opposition in Iran and in the Philippines, the Communist Party, the New People's Army, and Prof Jose M Sison as 'terrorists'.

Speaking to the French Institute for International Relations in Paris on February 1, 2005, Australia's Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said:

"We - Australia - are taking advantage of existing cooperation arrangements in our own region, and putting in place new ones to help address the major global security challenges of our time - terrorism, WMD proliferation and the dangers posed by weak and failing states.

"Effective cooperation with the United States - a major ally - remains pivotal to success against these threats..... with significant assets and capacities to bring to bear in our own region and globally."

In relation to Weapons of Mass Destruction, Mr Downer emphasised the Proliferation Security Initiative created by US Under-Secretary for Weapons Control John Bolton, outside the UN framework, as the best way to deal with Iran and North Korea.

He reasserted that "Counter-terrorism activities remain at the forefront of Australia's agenda. While working towards enhanced global counter-terrorism cooperation, the Asia Pacific region remains the major focus of our practical assistance." Jemaah Islamiyah is the main target, and Australia has made intelligence-sharing and police cooperation agreements with Indonesia and the Philippines.

"Our bilateral counter-terrorism capacity-building programs to Indonesia and the Philippines - for which we recently doubled funding - are assisting those countries to improve law enforcement, border security and anti-terrorist financing".

Australia has made significant interventions in the 'failing states' of Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. Mr Downer referred more vaguely to other states in the region that need institutional

support. Clearly these include the Philippines, Thailand and corrupt Indonesia with its secessionist movements in Aceh and West Papua.

United Nations role

The United Nations was sidelined by the Bush Administration in the 'war on terror' and the invasion of Iraq in particular. The Bush Administration's modernisation of its nuclear arsenal is against the spirit of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. During the Clinton Administration in November 1997, the US Senate refused to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

The United Nations post-Cold War reform program included ideas to expand and make more accountable the membership of the UN Security Council, including the removal of the veto power held by the five Permanent Members – the USA, UK, France, Russia and China. However, it was the French veto threat which ensured that the US-led invasion of Iraq was illegal. There were 101 recommendations for reform presented to the United Nations in December 2004. The main ones were:

- "Force, if it needs to be used, should be deployed as a last resort", and should be authorized by the Security Council. Five criteria to guide the Council in deciding whether to authorize use of force are: seriousness of threat, proper purpose, last resort, proportional means, and balance of consequences (i.e., whether military action is likely to have better or worse results than inaction).
- Expansion of the UN Security Council from 15 to 24 members. Two options: one involving six new permanent members with no veto, the other based on new four-year, renewable seats that would be regionally distributed.
- Strengthen the UN Economic and Social Council to boost genuine development to reduce poverty and prevent severe health crises
- Strengthen the UN Commission on Human Rights
- Create a new Deputy Secretary-General for Peace and Security
- Creation of a new UN Peacebuilding Commission <http://www.un.org/secureworld/>

Question: *How can Australians support a reforming UN and international law following the invasion of Iraq?*

Philippines in war on terror

The Philippines government has been as enthusiastic about the 'war on terror' as the Howard government, since September 11, 2001. While not taking part in the invasion of Iraq, it deployed 54 soldiers there as part of the multinational force in 2004. Filipino contract workers are a major labour force in the US military bases in Iraq.

In the Philippines itself, it has boosted military cooperation with the US through a continuous series of military training exercises known as "Balikatan" – 'shoulder-to-shoulder'. Under the 1999 Visiting Forces Agreement, the US military have access to all military facilities in the Philippines, and military equipment is pre-positioned there for use in the Middle East and the Asian region.

The Balikatan exercises have been used to equip and train light infantry companies for counter-insurgency warfare in the Philippines. The targets are the Abu Sayaff kidnap-for-ransom group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), and the New Peoples Army (NPA), led by the National Democratic Front – Communist Party of the Philippines.

With the Abu Sayaff gang largely suppressed after heavy fighting in south-west Mindanao since 2002, and the MILF in peace negotiations with Manila, these military exercises are now justified by allegations that Jemaah Islamiya has major military training facilities in Mindanao, hosted either by Abu Sayaff or the MILF.

Australia provides \$2.53 million per year in Defence Cooperation aid to the Armed Forces of the Philippines, and in July 2003, Prime Minister Howard visited Manila and donated a \$5 million package of anti-terrorism support for the Philippines National Police, customs and port control.

The 'war on terror' is being used by some elements in Philippines politics to wreck the peace process with the MILF, and to derail the drawn-out peace talks with the NDF. So far, these schemes have not succeeded, but they have caused massive human rights abuses of Moro people in Mindanao.

So far, no Jemaah Islamiya training camps have been found, nor any JI fighters arrested in Mindanao.

As well, in 2003, President Arroyo used the 'war on terror' against trade union strikes and minimum wage campaigns – "we will crush those who terrorise the factories".

The Philippines military has used the 'war on terror' to launch a bloody repression of progressive political parties, worker and peasant organisations, and priests and lawyers who advocate for the rights of peasants and workers. In the first three months of 2005, 32 of these people were murdered by suspected military intelligence units in the provinces north of Manila and in the eastern Visayas. In early 2005, the Armed Forces of the Philippines produced a long PowerPoint presentation titled "*Know The Enemy*" for public education. This lists even the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines as infiltrated by communists, and states that all infiltrated organisations have to be 'cleansed'. www.bulatlat.com

According to the International Federation of Journalists, there were 13 Filipino journalists murdered in 2004 in relation to their work. This makes the Philippines the world's most dangerous place for journalists after the war zone of Iraq. An IFJ investigation team concluded that government inaction encourages the culture of violence. www.ifj-asia.org

Question: *Is the Howard government's support for the Philippines 'war on terror' any help to human rights in the Philippines?*

Resources and Action options

Anti-war campaigns in Australia

Victorian Peace Network www.vicpeace.org; Peace Tasmania www.peacetasmania.org
Sydney Peace and Justice Coalition www.nswpeace.org; Queensland Peace Network www.qldpeace.org
NOWAR SA (South Australia) www.nowar-sa.net ACT NOW (Canberra) www.actnow.canberra.net.au
No War Alliance, (Western Australia) www.nwawa.org Medical Association for the Prevention of War (Aust.) www.mapw.org.au/iraq/iraq-index.html

Overseas campaigns

United for Peace and Justice, USA – www.unitedforpeace.org;

Stop the War Coalition, UK – www.stopwar.org.uk;

BAYAN (New Patriotic Alliance), Philippines - <http://www.bayan.ph/>

This briefing paper was written by Peter Murphy for a workshop at the third national Now We The People conference: Advance Australia Fair – Building sustainability, justice and peace, 30-31 July 2005, Melbourne Trades Hall.

For more information about the conference, how to register, this particular workshop and the Now We The People network, please visit www.nowwethepeople.org.

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