



WATCHING BRIEF WB 16-8: INDEPENDENT AND PEACEFUL AUSTRALIA NETWORK (IPAN) Oct 2016

As Quakers we seek a world without war. We seek a sustainable and just community. We have a vision of an Australia that upholds human rights and builds peace internationally, with particular focus on our region. In our approach to government we will promote the importance of dialogue, of listening and of seeking that of God in every person. We aim to work for justice and to take away the occasion for war.

This Brief provides a summary of IPAN's aims and activities. Quakers are affiliated to IPAN through QPLC. Recently IPAN held its annual meeting in Alice Springs NT in conjunction with a protest gathering at Pine Gap Base to mark its 50th anniversary.

Background

IPAN has emerged from the wider peace movement and, according to its website – www.ipan.org.au – is “a network of organisations from all regions of Australia who are united by our support for an independent Australian foreign policy based on peaceful resolution of conflict”. At its first AGM, held in July 2015 and attended by 40 groups, a Brisbane Declaration affirmed:

- ! Australia urgently needs an independent foreign policy that de-escalates regional tensions.
- ! Australia's alliance with the USA should be re-assessed in view of US adventurism and drawing Australia into its strategic plans.
- ! The US 'pivot' to Asia/Pacific increases the likelihood of war.
- ! The Australian Government unfettered level of military spending is to be deplored.
- ! We will build links with peace movements in our region.

Affiliated Groups

The range of national and local groups linked with IPAN is extensive and includes:

- ! Religious organisations such as Quakers, Pace e Bene, Unitarians, Ecumenical social justice groups.
- ! Peace groups such as War Resisters, Mayors for Peace, Just Peace, Anti-Nuclear Alliance, Nuclear Free Alliance, People for Nuclear Disarmament, Campaign for International Cooperation and Disarmament.
- ! Unions such as Electrical Trades Union.
- ! Women's groups such as Union of Australian Women.

A national coordinating committee including representatives from each State and Territory guides the organization. David Purnell represents QPLC on this committee (with Margaret Bearlin as alternate). Peri Coleman (SA) represented QPLC at the Alice Springs conference. The formal constitution of IPAN is still being finalized.

Alice Springs Conference

On 1 October 2016 IPAN held a national conference in Alice Springs, attended by around 130 participants. The topic was *Pine Gap: Serving US Militarism for 50 years... Time for Independence?* Speakers included Professor Richard Tanter (Melbourne University), Lisa Natividad (Guam), Kosuzu Abe (Okinawa), Senator Scott Ludlam, Alex Edney-Brown (Melbourne University), and Margie Beavis (MAPW). Associated events included a public forum on 30 September focusing on Pine Gap, public demonstrations in the town and near Pine Gap base about the dangers of nuclear war and the role of Pine Gap as part of the US strategic military system. Three 'Quaker Grannies' held a protest near the base using a 'tea and scones' table to attract the interest of officials and passers-by for conversation. Media coverage over the four days of the gatherings was patchy but worthwhile. Social media conversation was extensive.

The conference addressed issues relating to Pine Gap, including its role as a means whereby Australia supports US strategic targeting, drone attacks, and global military operations, and thereby reduces Australia's independence in foreign policy. The following letter was presented to the Chief of Pine Gap:

TO THE CHIEF OF STATION JOINT DEFENCE FACILITY-PINE GAP

Ms Amy Chaput,

Following the well-attended and successful conference organised by the Independent and Peaceful Australian Network (IPAN) at Alice Springs this weekend, it was determined that:

- 1. The Pine Gap facility is a threat to the peace and security of the people of Australia and Alice Springs, in particular.*
- 2. The illegal drone assassination program perpetrated by the United States with the assistance of Pine Gap makes the Australian people complicit in this illegal activity*

For these reasons, IPAN, on behalf of all concerned people of Australia, calls for the immediate cessation of this illegal drone program and the termination of the Pine Gap facilities as soon as possible.

Australia will then be a safer place for all of us.

*Yours in peace,
IPAN Co-ordinating Committee*

In a report (7 October) after the conference and gatherings, Senator Scott Ludlam (Greens WA) made the following statement:

In 2002 this ground station gave the US military 'eyes on' to the horror that it would shortly inflict on a country which posed it no security risk whatsoever. Fourteen years later it tracks the grim fallout from this invasion on behalf of thousands of US personnel coordinating airstrikes across the region. It helps guide a covert drone assassination program in at least six countries. It collates billions of civilian telecommunications records, Facebook profiles, phone calls and

realtime GPS locations of ordinary people, vacuumed up by huge spy satellites parked over our hemisphere. Documents sourced by Edward Snowden identified Pine Gap as a key node in the domestic collection network; each Torus antenna can harvest up to 35 communications satellite beams at a time, in addition to an acronym soup of other poorly understood capabilities. This torrent of intercepted traffic is merged with social media feeds accessed through PRISM and then queried through programs like X-Keyscore, in which the privacy of hundreds of millions of people are casually violated for no security benefit whatsoever. Some things haven't changed.

See Appendix 1 below for the IPAN statement issued after the conference.

Contacts

Friends are encouraged to learn more about IPAN and make links where possible in ongoing peace witness. If you wish to contact IPAN in your area, please e-mail IPAN as follows: ipan.australia@gmail.com

QPLC will continue its association with IPAN on behalf of Australia Yearly Meeting, and inform Friends from time to time of its work. Feedback from Friends about contacts and activities will be welcome.

Canberra
October 2016

Appendix 1

IPAN National Coordinating Committee Statement – October 2016

The Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN), representing more than 30 peace, anti-war, community organisations and unions from around Australia, held its third National Conference in Alice Springs (1-2 October), marking the 50th anniversary of the establishment of one of the world's most important US military spy bases, Pine Gap near Alice Springs.

The well attended IPAN conference titled - *Serving US militarism for 50 years – Time for Independence*, called for the following:

- ! an independent Australian foreign policy ,
- ! no more involvement in US foreign wars,
- ! opposition to US bases on Australian soil,
- ! the sending home of the US marines currently stationed in Darwin. The recent upgrading and expansion of US military bases and stationing of thousands of US marines in Australia and in the Asia-Pacific are all indications of preparations for wars of aggression.

Today's world is in economic, political and military instability. The threat of a new major world war is becoming very real. Fierce competition for the world's resources and global dominance by the big powers is intensifying military tensions in many regions. There are preparations for a major world war on a scale never seen before. The increasing tensions in the

South China Sea and in Eastern Europe are threatening to engulf the world, including Australia, in devastating wars.

A world wide people's movement for peace, justice and security has the power to stop these wars, and is needed now more than ever before.

Against this background the new IPAN National Co-ordinating Committee issued the following statement :

1. We reaffirm our belief that Australia urgently needs an independent and peaceful foreign policy. We seek a policy that would de-escalate the tensions that have been provoked by the military build-up in our region, especially as exemplified by the USA's 'pivot to the Asia-Pacific'.

2. We call on the Australian government to re-assess Australia's military alliance with the USA, sharing the concerns of the growing number of voices in Australia, that the alliance has a negative impact on Australian independence and security.

3. We are concerned at the real possibility that territorial disputes in the South China Sea could develop into war between the USA and China. This concern is heightened by the realization that, in such an eventuality, Australia's alliance with the USA would make it impossible for this country to retain its neutrality but would draw Australia into another offensive US war against countries and people who do not threaten Australia's peace and security. (See attached IPAN Statement on South China Sea Territorial dispute.)

4. We question our government's increased defence budget for offensive, not defensive purposes, reflected in the White Paper 2016 that services mainly the US global military and war agenda, and re-directs people's taxes away from community and social services, public infrastructure, public health and education. In particular, we condemn the excessive public funds spent on the acquisition of the 'F35 Joint Strike Fighter', hosting US marines in Darwin and upgrading Australia's defence facilities and infrastructure for deeper integration of Australia into the US military war machine. Rather than contributing to peace, such escalating expenditure increases regional instability and the possibility of future war.

We also condemn the projected expenditure of \$A6 billion on drones by early 2020s, one third of this on killer drones that are not in any way defensive, but would draw Australia into unlawful civilian mass killings by the US.

5. We believe the presence of US bases and US marines in Australia threatens our country's security, and risks Australia being embroiled in more US wars.

The removal of US bases and US marines from Australia, and implementing an independent foreign policy that respects the sovereignty of countries, is one of the ways that can guarantee our security and independence.

This will be the Australian people's contribution to making the world a more peaceful and secure place for people and the environment.