

Hegseth demands Indo-Pacific allies escalate military spending, prepare for war on China

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U.S. military bases surrounding China, from John Pilger's The Coming War With

China. Graphic: Consortium News

At the annual Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore on May 31, U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth delivered an ultimatum to Washington's Indo-Pacific allies: Escalate your military spending and prepare for imminent war with China.

Framing China as the aggressor, Hegseth accused Beijing of seeking "hegemony in Asia" and warned that a Chinese move on Taiwan would bring "devastating consequences for the Indo-Pacific and the world." "There's no reason to sugarcoat it," he declared. "The threat China poses is real. And it could be imminent."

Please note that Taiwan is internationally recognized as part of the People's Republic of China. Under the One China policy, the United States officially acknowledges this. Since the 1970s, the U.S. has agreed not to recognize Taiwan as a separate state.

So when U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth speaks of preparing for war over Taiwan, what he's really advocating is: **a U.S. military intervention to take away a province of China.**

This is akin to China threatening war if the U.S. deployed troops to Long Island, N.Y. or Isle Royale in Lake Superior on Canada's border.

Hegseth and the Trump administration are attempting to recast China's efforts to maintain national sovereignty as "aggression," while portraying U.S. military escalation in China's immediate periphery as defensive. It's a textbook example of how imperialism inverts reality.

Furthermore, the U.S. has systematically undermined the One China framework by increasing arms sales to Taiwan, sending high-level officials to visit the island's capital, Taipei, stationing U.S. troops and conducting joint military training there, and encouraging Taiwanese political figures who flirt with formal declarations of

independence.

In addition to arms sales and military visits, the U.S. has steadily undermined the One China policy through a range of provocative actions. These include expanding intelligence sharing and joint military planning with Taiwan, increasing naval and air patrols near the island, and passing legislation to deepen official ties. The U.S. has also promoted Taiwan's participation in international organizations, supported the development of its domestic arms industry, and formalized trade agreements that treat Taiwan as a separate entity. Collectively, these moves aim to transform Taiwan into a U.S. military and economic outpost, escalating tensions with China and pushing the region closer to open conflict.

All of this raises the stakes deliberately. The U.S. is trying to provoke a response from China, just as it did with Russia over NATO's expansion to Ukraine. In essence, what Hegseth is demanding is a U.S. military takeover of China's Taiwan — disguised as "defending democracy."

A global war strategy

Hegseth made clear that Trump's "MAGA" doctrine now means aggressive militarization across the globe. The war in Europe and the U.S.-backed and armed genocide in Gaza are not isolated crises.

"As our allies share the burden [in Europe], we can increase our focus on the Indo-Pacific," Hegseth told leaders in Singapore. He demanded that regional governments "do their part on defense," warning that any reluctance would provoke "tough conversations."

Washington's pressure campaign mirrors its bullying of NATO allies to dramatically raise military spending. Now the same expectations are being placed on Indo-Pacific partners: massive arms buildups, greater interoperability with the U.S. military, and

unconditional alignment against China.

Engineering confrontation with China

The Trump administration's confrontation with China did not appear overnight. It was Obama's "pivot to Asia" that began the military and economic encirclement of China, with plans to shift 60% of U.S. air and naval power into the region — now a reality.

Trump and Biden alike escalated this trajectory, launching trade wars, restricting Chinese tech, and ramping up military provocations near China's coast.

U.S. militarization of the Indo-Pacific

Hegseth outlined an extensive list of deployments and war plans already underway. These include the deployment of NMESIS anti-ship missile systems and joint military exercises in the strategically sensitive Batanes Islands near Taiwan.

The U.S. is also planning live-fire tests in Australia of its Mid-Range Capability missiles, which have a range of up to 2,500 kilometers.

Additionally, this year's Talisman Sabre war games in Australia will involve 30,000 troops from 19 countries, marking the largest of these exercises to date.

The U.S. is further expanding the Quad's military logistics network to integrate the forces of Japan, Australia, and India into a more unified warfighting structure.

Meanwhile, Washington is establishing a new "integrated defense industrial base" through the Partnership for Indo-Pacific Industrial Resilience (PIPIR), which aims to reorient regional industry toward large-scale war production in support of U.S. plans for conflict with China.

But Hegseth insists this is only the beginning. He is demanding that Asian governments stop hedging between the U.S. and China economically, and instead commit fully to Washington's war effort — even though China is the region's largest trading partner. Echoing Trump's tariff threats, the U.S. is now using economic pressure to enforce military compliance.

Capitalism's drive to world war

To view the descent toward war as simply a product of Trump's fascist ideology misses the deeper cause: the global crisis of capitalism. The U.S. ruling class once welcomed China into the world market as a low-wage manufacturing base. But China's transformation into a major economic and technological rival — threatening U.S. dominance in electronics, green energy, and AI — is no longer tolerable.

The Trump administration is determined to strangle China's rise — by war if necessary. This is not a defensive strategy. It is a conscious plan to preserve U.S. global supremacy, even if it risks nuclear war.

