



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

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MR HAYDEN'S POSITION ON NORTH WEST CAPE AGREEMENT

Mr Hayden last week once again raised doubts about his real commitment to the Australian-US alliance. Early last month, Mr Hayden stated a policy which meant that no US, British, or French Naval vessels could visit Australian ports. Australia's ability to co-operate under the ANZUS Treaty would have been shattered.

After talking with the US Deputy Secretary of State, Mr Stoessel, Mr Hayden said he supported ANZUS and would allow the ships of allies into Australian ports, although his statements were at all times equivocal.

Then last week, Mr Hayden apparently repeated his statement of last year that Australia must be able to veto all US orders initiating military action which might go through the joint communications facilities at North West Cape.

Why, only days after claiming to support ANZUS, did he revive his North West Cape policy which would so damage ANZUS and Australia's defence co-operation with the United States? The ANZUS treaty commits Australia and the US separately and jointly, through continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid, to maintain and develop their individual and collective capacities to resist attack. One of the steps we took together against the background of ANZUS was to set up the North West Cape facilities for defence communication.

The North West Cape agreement provides for consultation at the request of either government concerning the station and its use. It is a relay station, a way of ensuring that information can always be transmitted to submarines, even underwater. The most urgent messages would concern US response to an aggressor. In such a situation, Mr Hayden's proposed veto would be absurd. In requiring the US to ask the Australian Government whether it wished to interpose a veto, Mr Hayden must know he is demanding the impossible.

It has always been known that the North West Cape facilities are part of the United States deterrence system. Mr Hayden's position would seriously weaken the effectiveness of the US deterrent to nuclear war, which is important to Australia's security and to the security to all Western nations.

North West Cape is a joint facility for the benefit of Australia and the US as independent and co-operating allies. Australia uses it to transmit messages to our ships. We would not accept any interference in messages we send. Nor would we expect to dictate to the US what messages it could or could not send.

The North West Cape agreement contains no idea of control, by either government, of the messages which the other might send through the facility. Successive Labor Defence Ministers in the Whitlam Government accepted the operations of the facilities. They recognised that there could be no veto. With that experience behind him, why does Mr Hayden now call for a veto? It is because he wants to shut the facility down, as he has threatened to do? If that is what he wants, then the community ought to know, because closing it down would weaken the US and Australia significantly.

Mr Hayden's renewal of his veto demands, after the ANZUS conference, and after his discussions with Mr Stoessel and his subsequent statements, raises serious questions about what his real position is on defence co-operation with the United States.

It raises basic doubts about what he means when he talks about support for ANZUS. How can Mr Hayden say that Labor "will do nothing to undermine" ANZUS when he wants to impose these impossible demands on the United States? Australia's relations with the US would inevitably be damaged if these demands were pursued. Mr Hayden must know this. Why then has he renewed them? After his equivocations on admitting nuclear armed ships to Australian ports, why is he now insisting on a North West Cape position so much more acceptable to the socialist left?

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