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US, Australia Expand Military Cooperation

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This is IN THE NEWS in VOA Special English.

This week, Barack Obama became the fourth American president to speak to Australia's parliament. Mr. Obama noted the strong ties between the two countries. And, he described their security alliance as "unbreakable."

BARACK OBAMA: "From the trenches of the First World War to the mountains of Afghanistan, Aussies and Americans have stood together. We have fought together; we have given lives together in every single major conflict of the past one hundred years, every single one. This solidarity has sustained us through a difficult decade. We will never forget the attacks of nine-eleven that took the lives not only of Americans, but people from many nations, including Australia."

Mr. Obama spoke in Canberra a day after he and Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard announced plans for expanded military cooperation. They said the goal of the expanded cooperation is to improve security in the Asia and Pacific area.



Reuters

President Obama and Prime Minister Julia Gillard with US and Australian troops in Darwin

Ms. Gillard said the new cooperation would strengthen the sixty-year-old ANZUS Treaty. The treaty created a defense alliance linking Australia, New Zealand and the United States.

JULIA GILLARD: "We are a region that is growing economically, but stability is important for economic growth, too; and our alliance has been a bedrock of stability in our region."

Mr. Obama said the United States is now moving from the war on terrorism to economic and security issues in East Asia and the Pacific. He said the American message to the area is, "We are here to stay."

Under the new agreement, the United States will deploy up to two thousand five hundred Marines to Australia. There also would be closer cooperation between the two countries' air forces.

Officials say a major goal of the agreement is to increase the ability of the United States to quickly assist countries in East and Southeast Asia. They say another goal is to train and exercise with those countries, in areas like reacting to attacks at sea or disasters.

Also this week, the United States and the Philippines restated their support for a defense treaty between the two sides. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton signed a declaration expressing support of the treaty during a visit to the Philippines.

Security experts have described the American moves as an unmistakable message to China. In Beijing, a Foreign Ministry spokesman expressed concern at the developments:

(SOUND)

Chinese spokesman Liu Weimin called for discussions about the increased American troop deployment in East Asia. He said China has never taken part in any kind of foreign military alliance like those formed by the United States.

President Obama and other American officials have repeatedly said they welcome a China that is strong and successful. And they say the United States has no plan of containing China.

During the past eighteen months, China and some of its neighbors have criticized each other for claiming territorial rights in the South China Sea. China says it wants to settle territorial disputes one on one with the countries involved. However, this way of dealing with the issue has often increased tensions.

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