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## Netherlands Warns Australia to Heed China's Threat During War-Games

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The Netherlands' top military official has urged Australia to bolster its defence capabilities in response to China's growing military presence, drawing parallels to Russia's threat in Europe. This article examines the Dutch warning, China's regional ambitions, and the implications for Australia's security strategy amid ongoing war games.

On 21 July 2025, General Onno Eichelsheim, Chief of Defence of the Netherlands, issued a stark warning to Australia during the Talisman Sabre exercises, a biennial multinational war game involving 35,000 troops from 19 nations, including the United States (US) and Australia. Speaking to ABC News, Eichelsheim stressed that China's military build-up in the Indo-Pacific mirrors Russia's aggression in Europe, urging Australia to "take it seriously and get ready for something you hope will never happen" (ABC News, 21 July 2025). He emphasised that

preparation deters conflict, citing the Netherlands' increase in defence spending under NATO commitments, reportedly aiming for 3.5% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

China's actions, including naval exercises disrupting commercial flights in the Tasman Sea and its claim over Taiwan, have heightened regional tensions. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) has developed advanced anti-access/area-denial systems, tilting the military balance in its favour, according to Japan's 2025 defence report (Fox News, 17 July 2025). The Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD) has long flagged China as a major economic and cyber threat, accusing it of espionage targeting high-tech sectors such as semiconductors (Reuters, 17 April 2023). Eichelsheim's remarks align with concerns raised by US officials at the Shangri-La Dialogue, where China was described as a "hegemonic power" (BBC, 1 June 2025).

Australia's response remains cautious. Defence Minister Richard Marles acknowledged the need for capability growth but avoided committing to US demands for 3% GDP defence spending (BBC, 1 June 2025). The Australian Labor Party (ALP) government's focus on the AUKUS pact, involving nuclear-powered submarines with the US and UK, signals some action, but critics argue it is insufficient given China's rapid militarisation. As posts on X reflect, public sentiment demands stronger defences (@BartHoogeveen, 21 July 2025). Australia must weigh these warnings against economic ties with China, its largest trading partner, to avoid being caught unprepared.