

UK Signals Robust Stance on Pacific Security

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The United Kingdom has signalled a firm commitment to countering potential conflicts in the Indo-Pacific, with Defence Secretary John Healey declaring readiness to engage militarily if necessary. Speaking aboard the Royal Navy's HMS Prince of Wales in Darwin, Australia, Healey underscored the UK's resolve to stand alongside allies like Australia in the face of regional tensions.

In an interview reported by *The Telegraph* on Sunday, Healey addressed rising concerns over China's growing military assertiveness, especially in relation to Taiwan. "If we have to

fight, as we have done in the past, Australia and the UK are nations that will fight together,” he stated, alongside Australian Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Richard Marles. The remarks, regarded as among the strongest yet from a British official on Indo-Pacific engagement, came as HMS Prince of Wales prepared for joint military exercises, including the Talisman Sabre drills with the United States and allied forces.

Healey emphasised that the UK’s preference remains peaceful resolution through diplomacy. “We secure peace through strength, and our strength comes from our allies,” he said, highlighting the importance of collaborative deterrence. The deployment of HMS Prince of Wales, marking the first visit by a British carrier strike group to Australia in over thirty years, reinforces this strategic commitment. The carrier, on a nine-month regional tour, has already visited Singapore and is set to proceed to Tokyo, potentially navigating the sensitive Taiwan Strait en route.

The UK’s National Security Strategy, released earlier this year, highlights a “particular risk of escalation around Taiwan” in the context of Beijing’s militarisation of disputed maritime features and pressure on neighbouring countries. Healey reiterated the UK’s interest in upholding international rules, particularly freedom of navigation and regional stability. The Royal Navy’s continued presence in the Indo-Pacific, maintained through the regular deployment of two offshore patrol vessels, reflects this strategic orientation.

Following the Australia-UK Ministerial Consultations in Sydney, attended by Healey, Foreign Secretary David Lammy, and their Australian counterparts Penny Wong and Richard Marles, a joint statement reaffirmed the “critical importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.” The ministers called for dialogue to resolve cross-Strait issues without force or coercion, opposing unilateral changes to the status quo.

Taiwan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs welcomed the statement, noting that both Australia and the UK are key partners in supporting a rules-based international order. The ministry pledged to strengthen cooperation with democratic partners in promoting peace, stability, and prosperity across the region.

Healey’s comments come at a time when the UK’s Labour government faces scrutiny for its foreign policy priorities. Critics argue that such bold posturing in the Indo-Pacific risks overextending Britain’s military resources, particularly when domestic challenges demand attention. Nevertheless, the deployment of HMS Prince of Wales and the strengthening of

ties with allies like Australia signal a proactive stance in a region of growing geopolitical significance.