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US Think Tank Urges Albanese to Fortify North

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The Albanese government is being urged to accelerate investment in northern Australia's defence infrastructure amid escalating strategic tensions in the Indo-Pacific. A leading U.S. think tank, the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments (CSBA), has called for immediate action to strengthen Australia's military capabilities in the region, warning that current infrastructure may be insufficient in the event of a major conflict.

In a detailed report released this week titled *Indo-Pacific Stronghold*, the CSBA recommends that Australia transform its northern territory into a robust operational hub for

allied defense cooperation. The report emphasizes that key military installations across Northern Australia including the Northern Territory, Northern Queensland, and Western Australia must be upgraded to support long-range strike capabilities, faster force projection, and greater logistical resilience.

The report also urges closer integration between Australian and U.S. forces, including expanded joint training and logistics frameworks. These enhancements are viewed as critical to operational success under the AUKUS security partnership, particularly given the likelihood of high-tempo operations in a regional crisis.

CSBA analysts cite the growing Chinese military presence in the Pacific, including naval patrols and construction of dual-use facilities across island nations, as a major concern. The report warns that the opportunity for peaceful deterrence may narrow in the coming years, necessitating urgent steps to improve Australia's defence readiness.

While the Albanese government has launched several initiatives under the 2024 National Defense Strategy including the creation of a domestic guided weapons manufacturing facility defense analysts have warned that further action is needed. These include concerns about limited fuel storage in Darwin and delays in delivering critical infrastructure upgrades announced in previous budgets.

Although the federal government has not issued a formal response to the CSBA's recommendations, Defence Minister Richard Marles has consistently reaffirmed Australia's commitment to expanding its northern military presence and deepening strategic ties with the United States.

The CSBA report follows earlier government plans, including a \$3.8 billion investment in northern base infrastructure announced in 2023. However, the think tank stresses that more decisive and timely implementation is needed to ensure that Australia can support allied operations and defend its territory in the event of escalating conflict in the Indo-Pacific.

With regional security deteriorating and strategic competition intensifying, pressure is mounting on the Albanese government to prioritize northern defense enhancements as a national security imperative.