

US Military Gets ‘Unimpeded Access’ in Papua New Guinea Under New Deal

The US can construct new bases in certain areas

By [Dave DeCamp](#)

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*The US military has gained [“unimpeded access” to sites in Papua New Guinea](#) under a new military pact **Secretary of State Antony Blinken** signed in the Pacific island nation last month.*

AFP obtained a copy of the full deal, which confirmed the US can deploy troops and station vessels to six ports and airports in Papua New Guinea, including the Lombrum Naval Base on Manus Island in the northern part of the country.

According to the text of the agreement, the US can “pre-position equipment, supplies and materiel” at the military sites. The US will have “exclusive use” to some sites where “construction activities” can take place, signaling that the US might build new bases in the Pacific island nation.



Map of the region (US Indo-Pacific Command)

The US military had a significant presence in Papua New Guinea during World War II, and the new agreement is part of the Biden administration's strategy to prepare for a future war with China in the region. US military sites in Papua New Guinea could be used to resupply US forces in Guam, the Philippines, and during a future battle over Taiwan.

PNG **Prime Minister James Marape** has come under domestic criticism for signing the deal. **Former Prime Minister Peter O'Neill** said the agreement has painted a target on Papua New Guinea. "America is doing it for the protection of their own national interest, we all understand the geopolitics happening within our region," he said.

It's no secret that any US military base in Papua New Guinea would become a potential target for China in a future war. **Gen. Kenneth Wilsbach**, commander of the US Pacific Air Forces, [recently told Nikkei Asia](#) that the purpose of expanding in the region was to give China more areas it would need to target.

"Obviously we would like to disperse in as many places as we can to make the targeting problem for the Chinese as difficult as possible," he said. "A lot of those

runways where we would operate from are in the Pacific Island nations.”

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Featured image: Admiral John C. Aquilino, Commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, traveled to Papua New Guinea January 29-30 ([Source](#))

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