

US to station powerful radar, space telescope in Australia

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The United States military will station a powerful radar and a space telescope in Australia as part of a major refocusing of priorities towards Asia, the two countries announced Wednesday.

The transfer of the C-band radar "will add considerably to surveillance of [space debris](#) in our part of the world," Australian Defence Minister Stephen Smith told a news conference.

US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta described it as "major leap forward in bilateral [space cooperation](#) and an important new frontier in the United States' rebalance to the Asia-Pacific region".

The deal calls for the first deployment of a US Air Force C-band radar in the southern hemisphere, allowing the Americans to better track space debris as well as Chinese space launches, senior US defence officials told reporters.

"It will give us visibility into things that are leaving the atmosphere, entering the atmosphere, really all throughout Asia," said a US defence official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The C-band is currently in Antigua at a [US Air Force](#) facility.

Australia also agreed to host a new [space surveillance](#) telescope (SST) designed to track small objects at "deep space altitudes" roughly 22,000 miles (35,000 kilometres) high, officials said.

The new telescope was built by the Pentagon's hi-tech research arm, the Defense Advanced Research Project Agency (DARPA), and Australia was chosen as an ideal spot for the cutting-edge device, officials said.

The agreement reflects strengthening security ties between the two nations and the Pentagon's increasing focus on space as a new potential battlefield, in which China has made major progress.

The US military monitors space debris and has long wanted to enhance its [radar network](#) in the [southern hemisphere](#).

Smith said the radar and telescope would be based on Australia's northwest cape, though a site is yet to found.

While the US will help get the C-band up and running and train Australian operators, no US military will be permanently stationed in Australia.

The cost to get it operational is about \$30 million, with annual cost of \$8-10m after that.

Smith said discussions had begun on possibly granting the US military access to airfields in northern Australia as well as naval ports, including Stirling near Perth.

The two sides also conferred on increasing the number of US Marines deploying to Darwin.

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