

# A Chinese military base in Vanuatu — or another Fairfax beat-up?

By *Martin Hirst*

12 April 2018



it to “senior security officials” in Canberra. In other words, the reporter, [David Wroe](#), had been given a “drop” a background briefing by an Australian spook, because the Government wanted to float the idea and get a reaction.

*'While no formal proposals have been put to Vanuatu's government, senior security officials believe Beijing's plans could culminate in a full military base.'*

**Should Australia be concerned about a rumoured Chinese military expansion in the Pacific? Or is it yet another distraction from the Government's domestic problems? Political editor [Dr Martin Hirst](#) investigates.**

ON MONDAY this week, the Fairfax papers and websites ran an “exclusive” story with the alarming headline '[China eyes Vanuatu military base in plan with global ramifications](#)' — but is the story accurate? The lead par was an insistent and alarming allegation that China was planning a naval base in Vanuatu,

*'... that could see the rising superpower sail warships on Australia's doorstep.'*

However, in typical fashion – that we've come to expect from mainstream journalists covering the "security" round – the next two pars walked back the suggestion and sourced

What could be more self-serving for our military, spooks & government than a story about about China maybe wanting a Vanuatu wharf? Yes, I have been around long enough to be sceptical about "intelligence" story drops - haven't we all?

— Michael Pascoe (@MichaelPascoe01) [April 10, 2018](#)

**List of U.S. military bases in South Pacific**  
The tell that this was a ploy, all the way in the last sentence of the article, is sourcing: the first few paragraphs of abs Here's David Wroe's story, the ones we know by the appearance of the Chinese military in Vanuatu. *'The prospect of a Chinese military outpost in Vanuatu has been discussed at the Defence in Canberra and the Washington Defence Space Research Institute. The Vanuatu Government has issued denials which Fairfax reports as the story's ending for a while. [China's military bases in the Pacific](#)*



ability to wreak havoc and destruction in our region is not China, it is the United States. However, this is exactly the problem, apparently because national mayhem caused by the unleashing of our own power would be a disaster for our interests.

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— Ben Eltham (@beneltham) April 11, 2018