

# Australia could be drawn into a military conflict on the Korean peninsula under its alliance with the US

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US alliance commits Australia

Matthew Franklin

Australia could be drawn in to any military conflict on the Korean peninsula under its alliance with the US, the government has confirmed.

Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd said yesterday he was watching events on the Korean peninsula with “razor sharp” eyes, as South Korea and the US began war games in the wake of several instances of aggression from North Korea.

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Yesterday, amid reports of more artillery fire and the movement of missiles within North Korea, Mr Rudd used a television interview with the Nine Network to express deep concern about the developments and make clear Australia would have obligations to back the US and South Korea in any conflict.

He said the 1951 ANZUS Treaty set out that any attack on the territory of the signatories or on their armed forces within the Pacific area would require the allies to “act to meet the common danger”, consistent with their constitutional processes. “That does not dictate an immediate course of military action but we need to be mindful of the fact that, when our forebears laid down this alliance, these considerations were taken into account.”

Asked whether this meant that if the US went to war with North Korea, Australia would follow, Mr Rudd said he wanted to be “cautious and restrained” in his language. “Let’s just ratchet this back a bit,” he said. “There is a lot of instability on the Korean peninsula at the moment. I don’t think any of us should be unnecessarily stoking it up.

“But I do simply state the obvious: that under our alliance with the United States, Article 4 of the ANZUS Treaty is clear about our requirements to act to meet the common danger and to do so consistent with our constitutional processes.”

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The Australian asked Mr Rudd whether parliament would debate Australia’s options in the event of a US call for military help. A spokeswoman for Mr Rudd declined to elaborate, saying “Australia would work with the international community to respond in a calm and measured way.”

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