

New Pact, Obama Visit: Australia Becomes U.S.'s Closest Military Ally

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AUSTRALIA will become the US's closest military ally under a new treaty that will give local defence firms unprecedented access to the US market and speed up the flow of American arms to Australia.

Defence Materiel Minister Jason Clare will introduce the Defence Trade Controls Bill 2011, to enact the Australia-United States Defence Trade Co-operation Treaty, into Parliament today.

The move coincides with the visit on November 16-17 by US President Barack Obama, who will address a joint sitting of Parliament in Canberra and then join Prime Minister Julia Gillard in Darwin to ratify a new agreement allowing US forces to base equipment and stores in northern Australia.

This is the first step in a proposal for a permanent US military base on Australian soil.

Australia will replace 85 per cent of its military hardware during the next decade and the new treaty will give US firms a big advantage in the race with European companies for the pot of military gold.

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