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## Russia, China want Labor to win election, says McKenzie

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The Coalition has called on the Indonesian government to curtail its defence ties with Moscow by preventing Russian military aircraft from visiting the nation as a National frontbencher made the striking claim that Russia and China both want Labor to win the May 3 election.

Coalition's transport spokeswoman Bridget McKenzie made the dramatic intervention into the debate yesterday afternoon by claiming that Russia and China had both made clear they wanted Dutton to be defeated.

"The defence minister of Russia and the Chinese leader both have made very public comments that they do not want to see Peter Dutton as the prime minister of our country," McKenzie told the ABC. "There's two world leaders who don't want to see Peter Dutton become prime minister of our country. That's all I'm saying. That's Russia and China."

Senior Labor ministers went on the attack against Dutton yesterday, branding him reckless and unfit for high office for falsely claiming that Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto had announced that Moscow was seeking to base

several long-range aircraft in Indonesia.

This masthead was unable to find any evidence of Russian Defence Minister Andrey Belousov or Chinese President Xi Jinping stating that they did not want Dutton to be prime minister.

McKenzie did not respond to a request for comment.

Indonesia's Defence Minister Sjafrie Sjamsoeddin told Defence Minister Richard Marles on Tuesday evening that "reports of the prospect of Russian aircraft operating from Indonesia are simply not true", but the Coalition urged Jakarta to go further in its assurances.

"We work very co-operatively with them on things like people smuggling, counter-terrorism, anti-narcotics trafficking, and other important issues, and we want to make sure that relationship remains strong," opposition home affairs minister James Paterson told Sky News.

Greg Fealy, an expert in Indonesian politics at the Australian National University, said Indonesia jealously guarded its independence and would be likely to perceive Paterson's comments as meddling.

"Prabowo will not appreciate anyone pressuring him into not co-operating with other nations, including Russia," he said.

Dutton yesterday denied he had "verbalised" Prabowo by claiming he had publicly announced the proposal, saying he was referencing a "very credible military website" in *Janes*.

"The prospect of having Russia with a greater presence in our region is very real, and there are a lot of questions that the [Albanese] government still has to answer," Dutton said.

Albanese accused Dutton of "extraordinary overreach", saying: "He always shoots from the hip. And when you are either the prime minister or the alternative prime minister of this country, what you need to do is to have a considered approach."

Treasurer Jim Chalmers said Dutton's initial comments were a "disqualifying moment", labelling him "temperamentally unfit to manage our relationships in the world".

Foreign Minister Penny Wong said Dutton had "fabricated" a comment by Prabowo to score political points.