

1.3 – Remarks by President and Prime Ministers

September 15, 2021

The on-the-record remarks of the three leaders added more clarity to the official joint statement. Prime Minister Scott Morrison emphasized how the agreement should enhance Australia’s contribution to the network of partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region, naming specifically ANZUS, ASEAN, the Quad, and Five Eyes, while also mentioning “bilateral strategic partners” and “...our dear Pacific family.” The Australian PM also made clear his administration’s intent to “build these submarines in Adelaide, Australia.” This comment sparked a great deal of analysis in the defense community in the following months as to just how long this would take.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson emphasized the original points from the joint statement, but also highlighted that the agreement would create highly skilled jobs across the United Kingdom.

President Joseph Biden emphasized the strategic advantages of the new relationship to address threats and maintain stability in the Indo-Pacific. He also took the opportunity to mention the importance of France’s role in the Indo-Pacific. (Note: A few days later, France would recall its Ambassador from the United States in protest of the deal.)

Remarks by President Biden, Prime Minister Morrison of Australia, and Prime Minister Johnson of the United Kingdom Announcing the Creation of AUKUS

SEPTEMBER 15, 2021

East Room
White House

5:01 P.M. EDT

PRIME MINISTER MORRISON: Well, good morning from Australia. I'm very pleased to join two great friends of freedom and of Australia: Prime Minister Johnson and President Biden.

Today, we join our nations in a next-generation partnership built on a strong foundation of proven trust.

We have always seen the world through a similar lens. We have always believed in a world that favors freedom; that respects human dignity, the rule of law, the independence of sovereign states, and the peaceful fellowship of nations.

And while we've always looked to each other to do what we believe is right, we have never left at — each other. Always together. Never alone.

Our world is becoming more complex, especially here in our region, the Indo-Pacific. This affects us all. The future of the Indo-Pacific will impact all our futures.

To meet these challenges, to help deliver the security and stability our region needs, we must now take our partnership to a new level — a partnership that seeks to engage, not to exclude; to contribute, not take; and to enable and empower, not to control or coerce.

And so, friends, AUKUS is born — a new enhanced trilateral security partnership between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. AUKUS: a partnership where our technology, our scientists, our industry, our defense forces are all working together to deliver a safer and more secure region that ultimately benefits all.

AUKUS will also enhance our contribution to our growing network of partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region: ANZUS; our ASEAN friends; our bilateral strategic partners, the Quad; Five Eyes countries; and, of course, our dear Pacific family.

The first major initiative of AUKUS will be to deliver a nuclear-powered submarine fleet for Australia. Over the next 18 months, we will work together to seek to determine the best way forward to achieve this. This will include an intense examination of what we need to do to exercise our nuclear stewardship responsibilities here in Australia.

We intend to build these submarines in Adelaide, Australia, in close cooperation with the United Kingdom and the United States.

But let me be clear: Australia is not seeking to acquire nuclear weapons or establish a civil nuclear capability. And we will continue to meet all our nuclear non-proliferation obligations.

Australia has a long history of defense cooperation with the United States and the United Kingdom. For more than a century, we have stood together for the course of peace and freedom, motivated by the beliefs we share, sustained by the bonds of friendship we have forged, enabled

by the sacrifice of those who have gone before us, and inspired by our shared hope for those who will follow us.

And so, today, friends, we recommit ourselves to this cause and a new AUKUS vision.

PRIME MINISTER JOHNSON: I'm delighted to join President Biden and Prime Minister Morrison to announce that the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States are creating a new trilateral defense partnership, known as AUKUS, with the aim of working hand in glove to preserve security and stability in the Indo-Pacific.

We're opening a new chapter in our friendship, and the first task of this partnership will be to help Australia acquire a fleet of nuclear-powered submarines, emphasizing, of course, that the submarines in question will be powered by nuclear reactors, not armed with nuclear weapons. And our work will be fully in line with our non-proliferation obligations.

This will be one of the most complex and technically demanding projects in the world, lasting for decades and requiring the most advanced technology. It will draw on the expertise that the UK has acquired over generations, dating back to the launch of the Royal Navy's first nuclear submarine over 60 years ago; and together, with the other opportunities from AUKUS, creating hundreds of highly skilled jobs across the United Kingdom, including in Scotland, the north of England, and the Midlands, taking forward this government's driving purpose of leveling up across the whole country.

We will have a new opportunity to reinforce Britain's place at the leading edge of science and technology, strengthening our national expertise. And perhaps most significantly, the UK, Australia, and the U.S. will be joined even more closely together, reflecting the measure of trust between us, the depth of our friendship, and the enduring strength of our shared values of freedom and democracy.

Only a handful of countries possess nuclear-powered submarines, and it is a momentous decision

for any nation to acquire this formidable capability and, perhaps, equally momentous, for any other state to come to its aid. But Australia is one of our oldest friends, a kindred nation and a fellow democracy, and a natural partner in this enterprise.

Now, the UK will embark on this project alongside our allies, making the world safer and generating jobs across our United Kingdom.

Thank you. Over to you, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT BIDEN: Thank you, Boris. And I want to thank that fellow down under. Thank you very much, pal. Appreciate it, Mr. Prime Minister.

I'm honored today to be joined by two of America's closest allies — Australia and the United Kingdom — to launch a new phase of the trilateral security cooperation among our countries.

As Prime Minister Morrison and Prime Minister Johnson said, I want to thank you for this partnership, your vision as we embark together on this strategic mission.

Although Australia, the UK, and U.S. partnership — AUKUS — it sounds strange with all these acronyms, but it's a good one, AUKUS — our nations will update and enhance our shared ability to take on the threats of the 21st century just as we did in the 20th century: together.

Our nations and our brave fighting forces have stood shoulder-to-shoulder for literally more than 100 years: through the trench fighting in World War I, the island hopping of World War II, during the frigid winters in Korea, and the scorching heat of the Persian Gulf. The United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom have long been faithful and capable partners, and we're even closer today.

Today, we're taking another historic step to deepen and formalize cooperation among all three of

our nations because we all recognize the imperative of ensuring peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific over the long term.

We need to be able to address both the current strategic environment in the region and how it may evolve. Because the future of each of our nations — and indeed the world — depends on a free and open Indo-Pacific enduring and flourishing in the decades ahead — ahead.

This is about investing in our greatest source of strength — our alliances — and updating them to better meet the threats of today and tomorrow.

It's about connecting America's existing allies and partners in new ways and amplifying our ability to collaborate, recognizing that there is no regional divide separating the interests of our Atlantic and Pacific partners.

Indeed, this effort reflects a broader trend of key European countries playing an extremely important role in the Indo-Pacific.

France, in particular, already has a substantial Indo-Pacific presence and is a key partner and ally in strengthening the security and prosperity of the region.

The United States looks forward to working closely with France and other key countries as we go forward.

And finally, this initiative is about making sure that each of us has a modern capability — the most modern capabilities we need — to maneuver and defend against rapidly evolving threats.

AUKUS will bring together our sailors, our scientists, and our industries to maintain and expand our edge in military capabilities and critical technologies, such as cyber, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, and undersea domains.

You know, as a key project under AUKUS, we are launching consultations with Australia's acquisition of conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines for its navy — conventionally armed.

I want to be exceedingly clear about this: We're not talking about nuclear-armed submarines. These are conventionally armed submarines that are powered by nuclear reactors. This technology is proven. It's safe. And the United States and the UK have been operating nuclear-powered submarines for decades.

I have asked Secretary Austin and the Department of Defense to lead this effort for the U.S. government in close collaboration with the Department of Energy and Department of State.

Our governments will now launch an 18-month consultation period to determine every element of this program — from workforce, to training requirements, to production timelines, to safeguards and nonproliferation measures, and to nuclear stewardship and safety — to ensure full compliance with each of our nation's commitments under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

We'll all undertake this effort in a way that reflects the longstanding leadership in global nonproliferation and rigorous verification standards, in partnership and consultation with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

So, I want to thank the Prime Minister — Prime Minister Morrison and Prime Minister Johnson for their friendship, but mostly important for their leadership and partnership as we undertake this new phase of our security cooperation.

And the United States will also continue to work with ASEAN and the Quad, as was stated earlier; our five treaty allies and other close partners in the Indo-Pacific; as well as allies and partners in Europe and around the world to maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific, and build a

future of peace, opportunity
for all the people of the region.

We're joining together. Partnerships are getting stronger. This is what we're about.

I want to thank you all. And I look forward to seeing both of you in person very soon, I hope.

Thank you. Thank you.

5:12 P.M. EDT