

MARCH 13, 2023

Remarks by President Biden, Prime Minister Albanese of Australia, and Prime Minister Sunak of the United Kingdom on the AUKUS Partnership

Point Loma Naval Base
San Diego, California

1:44 P.M. PDT

PRESIDENT BIDEN: Well, please — if you have a seat, please take it.

It's an honor — honor to be here to welcome Prime Minister Albanese and Prime Minister Sunak. And it's my honor to welcome you both to the United States as we take the next critical step in advancing the Australia, U.S., UK partnership — AUKUS. It's an unusual name, "AUKUS," but it's a powerful entity.

You know, when our countries first announced AUKUS 18 months ago, I'm not at all sure that anyone would have believed that — how much progress we'd be able to make together and how quickly we'd accomplish it.

And I want to thank the members of all our teams who helped bring us to this pivotal moment sitting here in front of us. Thank you all very much.

Secretary Austin; Secretary of the Navy Del Toro — (applause) — thanks for letting us come to your house; Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Gilday — where are you, Admiral? There you are. And thank you for hosting us at Naval Base of Point Loma.

And I also want to thank Representative Joe Courtney, founder of the bipartisan AUKUS working group, and all the members of the Congress who

are here today. Thank you for being here.

You are — (applause) — a testament to the strong and — and deep support for this partnership across the United States.

Australia and the United Kingdom are two of America's most stalwart and capable allies. Our common values and our shared vision for a more peaceful and prosperous future unite us all across the Atlantic and Pacific.

For more than a century, we've stood together to defend freedom and strengthen democracy and to your — and to spur greater opportunity in all our countries.

I've always said, when asked, the United States is a Pacific power, because we're on the Pacific Ocean. We are a Pacific power. The United States has safeguarded stability in the Indo-Pacific for decades to the enormous benefits of nations throughout the region, from ASEAN to Pacific Islanders to the People's Republic of China.

In fact, our leadership in the Pacific has been a benefit to the entire world. We've kept the sea lanes and skies open and navigable for all. We've upheld basic rules of the road that fueled international commerce. And our partnerships have helped underwrite incredible growth and innovation.

So, today, as we stand at the inflection point in history where the hard work of enhancing deterrence and promoting stability is going to affect the prospect of peace for decades to come, the United States can ask for no better partners in the Indo-Pacific, where so much of our shared future will be written.

In forging this new partnership, we're showing again how democracies can deliver our own security and prosperity — and not just for us but for the entire world.

Today, we're announcing the steps to carry out our first project under AUKUS: developing Australia's conventionally armed nuclear-powered submarine capacity.

And I want to be clear — I want to be clear to everyone from the outset, right off the bat, so there's no confusion or misunderstanding on this critical point: These subs are powered — not nuclear-armed subs. They're nuclear-powered, not nuclear-armed.

Australia is a proud non-nuclear weapons state and has committed to stay that way. These boats will not have any nuclear weapons of any kind on them.

Each of us standing here today representing the United States, Australia, and Great Britain is deeply committed to strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

We've undertaken this project working hand-in-glove with the International Atomic Energy Agency and with Director General Grossi.

Australia will not produce the nuclear fuel needed for these submarines. We have set the highest standards with the IAEA for verification and transparency, and we will honor each of our countries' international obligations.

Working together these past 18 months, we've developed a phased approach that's going to make sure Australian sailors are fully trained and prepared to safely operate this fleet so they can deliver this critical new capacity on the fastest — fastest possible timetable.

Each of our nations is making concrete commitments to one another. We're backing it up with significant investments to strengthen the industrial bases in each of our countries in order to build and support these boats.

By the way, this partnership is going to mean an awful lot for good-paying jobs for all workers in our countries, including a lot of union jobs.

There's a reason why not everyone has nuclear-powered submarines: Nuclear propulsion is highly complicated technology that requires years of training to master.

So we're starting right away. Beginning this year, Australian personnel will

embed with U.S. and UK crews on boats and at bases in our schools and our shipyards.

We'll also begin to increase our port visits to Australia. In fact, as we speak, the nuclear-powered sub the USS Asheville is making a port call in Perth as we speak.

And later this decade, we will also be establishing a rotational presence of U.S. and UK nuclear-powered subs in Australia to help develop the work force Australia is going to need to build and maintain its fleet.

One of the vessels you see behind me is a Virginia-class nuclear-powered submarine, the USS Missouri. Top-of-the-line submarines are the vanguard of U.S. naval power.

And excuse me for a point of personal privilege — as they say in the United States Senate, where I've spent a lot of time — these submarines hold a special place for the Bidens. My wife, Dr. Jill Biden, is the sponsor of the USS Delaware, a Virginia-class submarine, and she never lets me forget it.
(Laughter.)

They feature cutting-edge propulsion technology, provide unmatched stealth and maneuverability. And with the support and approval of Congress, beginning in the early 2030s, the United States will sell three Virginia-class submarines to Australia with the potential to sell up to two more if needed, jumpstarting their undersea capability a decade earlier than many predicted.

But the ultimate goal isn't just selling subs to Australia, it's developing something new together. We're calling it the SSN-AUKUS. This new state-of-the-art conventionally armed nuclear-powered submarine that will work — that will combine U.S. submarine — UK submarine technology and design with American technology.

And I want to reiterate again: The SSN-AUKUS will not have nuclear weapons.

It will become a future standard for both the UK Royal Navy and the Royal Australian Navy. It will meet Australia's defense needs while bringing our

militaries, our scientists, our engineers, our shipbuilders, our industrial workforce, our countries closer together — closer than ever.

Let me emphasize again: Nuclear propulsion is tested and safe. The United States and the UK have used it for nearly 70 years from — with a spotless record — a spotless record. Combined between the U.S. and UK, all of our nuclear-powered ships have traveled the entire globe — around the entire globe, more than 150 million miles. That's going to the moon 300 times.

Now, we can't figure out how to get this sub to the moon, but we're le- — working on it. (Laughter.)

No, I've got to admit, our stewardship of naval nuclear propulsion technology is a point of honor, pride, and deep tradition currently helmed by Admiral Frank Caldwell, who is here today. Where are you, Admiral? Thank you. (Applause.)

And the years of training we're undertaking, starting now, will ensure that Australia is fully prepared to carry on this tradition and meet the highest possible standards of safety throughout the life of these boats.

Our unprecedented trilateral cooperation, I believe, is testament to the strength of the longstanding ties that unite us and to our shared commitment of ensuring the Indo-Pacific remains free and open, prosperous and secure, defined by opportunity for all — a shared commitment to create a future rooted in our common values.

That's the objective the United States shares not only with the UK and Australia. It's shared by our friends in the region; by our friends in ASEAN, the Pacific Islands Forum, and the Quad; and our other treaty and close partners in the Indo-Pacific and Europe.

AUKUS has one overriding objective: to enhance stability in the Indo-Pacific amid rapidly shifting global dynamics.

And this first project — this first project is only the beginning. More partnerships and more potential, more peace and security in the region lies ahead.

Simply stated, we're putting ourselves in the strongest possible position to navigate the challenges of today and tomorrow together. Together.

So, I thank you again, Prime Minister Albanese, Mi- — Prime Minister Sunak. And the United States could not ask for two better friends or partners to stand with as we work to create a safer, more peaceful future for the people everywhere.

I'm proud to be your shipmates. Thank you. (Applause.)

PRIME MINISTER ALBANESE: Well, President Biden, Prime Minister Sunak, I am so honored to stand alongside you both here overlooking the Pacific Ocean as leaders of true and trusted friends of my country of Australia.

Today, a new chapter in the relationship between our nation, the United States, and the United Kingdom begins — a friendship built on our shared values, our commitment to democracy, and our common vision for a peaceful and a prosperous future.

The AUKUS agreement we confirm here in San Diego represents the biggest single investment in Australia's defense capability in all of our history, strengthening Australia's national security and stability in our region; building a future made in Australia with record investments in skills, jobs, and infrastructure; and delivering a superior defense capability into the future.

My government is determined to invest in our defense capability. But we're also determined to promote security by investing in our relationships across our region.

From early in the next decade, Australia will take delivery of three U.S. Virginia-class nuclear-powered submarines. This is the first time in 65 years and only the second time in history that the United States has shared its nuclear propulsion technology. And we thank you for it.

We are also proud to partner with the United Kingdom to construct the next

generation submarine to be called SSN-AUKUS, a new conventionally armed nuclear-powered submarine, based on a British design and incorporating cutting-edge Australian, UK, and U.S. technologies. This will be an Australian sovereign capability, built by Australians, commanded by the Royal Australian Navy, and sustained by Australian workers in Australian shipyards with construction to begin this decade.

Australia's proud record of leadership in the international nuclear non-proliferation regime will of course continue. We will continue to adhere to all of our obligations under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Treaty of Rarotonga.

Our agreement unlocks a set of transformative opportunities for jobs and skills and research and innovation in Adelaide and in Barrow-in-Furness, in Western Australia, and here in the United States.

Opportunities that will shape and strengthen and grow Australia's economy for decades, and create around 20,000 direct jobs for Australians from many trades and specializations: engineers, scientists, technicians, submariners, administrators, and tradespeople. Good jobs with good wages, working to ensure the stability and prosperity of our nations, our region, and, indeed, our world.

Our future security will be built and maintained not just by the courage and professionalism of our defense forces, but by the hard work and know-how of our scientists and engineers, our technicians and programmers, our electricians and welders.

For Australia, this whole-of-nation effort also presents a whole-of-nation opportunity. We will work with the state governments of South Australia and Western Australia to develop training programs that equip Australians with the skills they need to fill these jobs.

Working together, our universities and research institutes will collaborate to train more Australians in nuclear engineering. We're already sharing skills and knowledge and expertise across our borders, lifting the capability and capacity of all three countries.

Already, today, Australians are upskilling on nuclear technology and stewardship alongside their British and American counterparts.

Already, today, there are Australian submariners undergoing nuclear power training in the United States. And I'm proud to confirm, Mr. President, that they are all in the top 30 percent of their class. (Laughter.)

Built by innovation and extraordinary and emerging technologies, these boats will present a unique opportunity for Australian companies to contribute not only to the construction and sustainment of Australia's new submarines, but to supply chains in America and in Britain.

The scale, complexity, and economic significance of this investment is akin to the creation of the Australian automotive industry in the post-World War Two period.

And just as a vision of my predecessors, Curtin and Chifley, in creating our automotive industry lifted up our entire manufacturing sector, this investment will be a catalyst for innovation and research breakthroughs that will reverberate right throughout the Australian economy and across every state and territory, not just in one design element, not just in one field, but right across our advanced manufacturing and technology sectors, creating jobs and growing businesses right around Australia, inspiring and rewarding innovation, and educating young Australians today for the opportunities of tomorrow.

Our AUKUS partnership is not just about the U.S. and UK sharing their most advanced submarine capability with Australia, although we do appreciate that. It's also about building on the expertise within our three nations so that we can achieve things greater than the sum of our parts.

This is a genuine trilateral undertaking. All three nations stand ready to contribute, and all three nations stand ready to benefit. I look out from here today, and I see new frontiers in innovation to cross, new breakthroughs in technology to achieve, a new course for us to chart together.

Mr. President, Prime Minister, for more than a century, our brave citizens from our three countries have been part of a shared tradition of service in the

cause of peace and sacrifice in the name of freedom. We honor their memory today. We always will.

While we respect and honor the past, through AUKUS, we turn ourselves to face the future. Because what the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia hold in common is more fundamental and more universal than our shared histories. We are bound, above all, by our belief in a world where the sovereignty of every nation is respected and the inherent dignity of every individual is upheld; where peace, stability, and security ensure greater prosperity and a greater measure of fairness for all; and where all countries are able to act in their sovereign interests, free from coercion.

Our historic AUKUS partnership speaks to our collective and ongoing determination to defend those values and secure that future today, in the years ahead, and for generations to come — a journey that will strengthen the bonds between our nations as friends, as peers, as leaders.

We embark with great confidence in the capacity and creativity of our people, with optimism in the power of what our partnership can achieve, and with an unwavering conviction that whatever the challenges ahead, the cause of peace and freedom that we share will prevail.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

PRIME MINISTER SUNAK: Sixty years ago, here in San Diego, President Kennedy spoke of a higher purpose: the maintenance of freedom, peace, and security. Today, we stand together united by that same purpose. And recognizing that to fulfill it, we must forge new kinds of relationships to meet new kinds of challenge, just as we have always done.

In the last 18 months, the challenges we face have only grown. Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, China's growing assertiveness, the destabilizing behavior of Iran and North Korea all threaten to create a world defined by danger, disorder, and division.

Faced with this new reality, it is more important than ever that we strengthen the resilience of our own countries. That's why the UK is today announcing a significant uplift in our defense budget. We're providing an

extra £5 billion over the next two years, immediately increasing our defense budget to around 2.25 percent of GDP. This will allow us to replenish our war stocks and modernize our nuclear enterprise, delivering AUKUS and strengthening our deterrent. And our highest priority is to continue providing military aid to Ukraine, because their security is our security.

And we will go further to strengthen our resilience. For the first time, the United Kingdom will move away from our baseline commitment to spend 2 percent of GDP on defense to a new ambition of 2.5 percent, putting beyond doubt that the United Kingdom is and will remain one of the world's leading defense powers.

But ultimately, the defense of our values depends, as it always has, on the quality of our relationships with others. And those alliances will be strengthened through AUKUS, the most significant multilateral defense partnership in generations.

AUKUS matches our enduring commitment to freedom and democracy with the most advanced military, scientific, and technological capability. Nowhere is that clearer than in the plans we're unveiling today for the new AUKUS submarine, one of the most advanced nuclear-powered subs the world has ever known.

And those plans could not happen without cutting-edge American technology and expertise. So I pay tribute to you, Mr. President, for your leadership, and to you, Prime Minister, for your vision of what AUKUS can achieve.

And for our part, the UK comes to this with over 60 years' experience of running our own fleet. We'll provide the world-leading design and build the first of these new boats, creating thousands of good, well-paid jobs in places like Barrow and Derby. And we will share our knowledge and experience with Australian engineers so that they can build their own fleet.

Now, our partnership is significant because not just are we building the submarines together, they will also be truly interoperable. The Royal Navy will operate the same submarines as the Australian Navy, and we will both share components and parts with the U.S. Navy. Our submarine crews will

train together, patrol together, and maintain their boats together. They will communicate using the same terminology and the same equipment.

And through AUKUS, we will raise our standards of nuclear non-proliferation. This is a powerful partnership. For the first time ever, it will mean three fleets of submarines working together across both the Atlantic and Pacific, keeping our oceans free, open, and prosperous for decades to come.

Joe, Anthony, we represent three allies who have stood shoulder-to-shoulder together for more than a century, three peoples who have shed blood together in defense of our shared values, and three democracies that are coming together again to fulfill that higher purpose of maintaining freedom, peace, and security now and for generations to come.

Thank you. (Applause.)

PRESIDENT BIDEN: With the permission of my colleagues — I don't know that our friends can hear — but, the USS Missouri, can you hear us?

AUDIENCE MEMBERS: Hooyah, Mighty Mo'!

PRESIDENT BIDEN: I see them all over there. They're standing at attention. Can I tell them "At ease"? I'm their Commander-in-Chief, right? I mean, they're — (laughter) —

Anyway, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you. You all are the best. You're the best. And we're going to be the best in the world, the three of us.

Thank you all very, very much. (Applause.)

2:09 P.M. PDT