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AUKUS Defense Ministerial Joint Statement

Dec. 7, 2022

Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III hosted the Honourable Richard Marles MP, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence, Australia, and the Right Honourable Ben Wallace, Secretary of State for Defence, United Kingdom, at the Pentagon today to discuss the Australia-United Kingdom-United States Security Partnership (AUKUS).

The Secretary of Defense, Deputy Prime Minister, and Secretary of State for Defence reviewed the significant progress to date on the trilateral effort to support Australia's acquisition of conventionally-armed, nuclear powered submarines and the trilateral development of advanced capabilities. They emphasized that AUKUS will make a positive contribution to peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region by enhancing deterrence. The Secretaries and Deputy Prime Minister expressed their confidence in continued progress ahead of the end of the 18-month consultation period regarding naval nuclear propulsion and announcement on the optimal pathway by the President and Prime Ministers in early 2023.

The Secretaries and Deputy Prime Minister highlighted the exceptional progress that has been made on trilateral efforts to identify the optimal path for Australia to acquire conventionally-armed, nuclear powered submarine capability at the earliest possible date. They reiterated their shared commitment to set and uphold the highest standards for nuclear nonproliferation, and welcomed the ongoing, extensive and productive engagement that has been carried out with the International Atomic Energy Agency to date.

The Secretaries and Deputy Prime Minister endorsed efforts to orient capability development to accelerate near-term delivery of technologies that will meet our militaries' requirements to enhance capability and increase interoperability. These include initiatives for advanced trilateral maritime undersea intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities and use of each country's autonomous systems to enhance maritime domain awareness. They further noted the role recent exercises have played in demonstrating and testing advanced capabilities, and approved plans to pursue additional demonstrations of several collaborative initiatives — including hypersonic and autonomous systems — in the 2023-2024 timeframe and beyond.

Trilateral capability development will benefit from targeted engagement with defense industry and academic communities within and across our national ecosystems. The three countries intend to intensify engagement with these communities beginning in calendar year 2023. Deeper government, academic, and defense industrial base cooperation on advanced systems will require sustained efforts to continue to improve information and technology sharing. The Secretaries and Deputy Prime Minister reaffirmed their commitment to ongoing work within national systems to enable more robust sharing in these areas.

The Secretaries and Deputy Prime Minister committed to continued openness and transparency with international partners on AUKUS. They further emphasized that AUKUS is a strategic partnership focused on enhancing regional stability and safeguarding a free and open Indo-Pacific where conflicts are resolved peacefully and without coercion. They confirmed that AUKUS will complement AUKUS partners' engagement with existing regional architecture, including ASEAN and the Pacific Islands Forum.

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