

Karlin Says U.S. Can Support AUKUS Submarine Builds

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The trilateral defense agreement among Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States is historic and is part of generational change that is occurring in the Indo-Pacific, said Mara Karlin who is performing the duties of the deputy undersecretary of defense for policy.

Karlin testified before the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces today.



She said the AUKUS agreement is a priority for the region as nations look to strengthen deterrence in the face of Chinese efforts to undermine the rules-based international order that has done so much for peace in the Indo-Pacific.

"What is so historic and so generational about this AUKUS effort, is that we are bringing together a very close ally from the Indo-Pacific, a very close ally from Europe, [and] we're making sure all three have the most capable on undersea capabilities and are going to be able to operate together to help ensure a secure and safe Indo-Pacific," she said.

Spotlight: Focus on Indo-Pacific

China demonstrates often its desire to push the United States and other nations around in the region. Karlin noted the Chinese military often engages in unsafe and unprofessional air and sea intercepts of vessels and aircraft operating in international space. "That's really problematic," she said. "And knitting together these three countries to really show how much we care about security and stability in the region is crucial."

The AUKUS agreement centers on nuclear-powered submarines, but it also includes other transformational technologies. Implementing the agreement is tough. "It requires a whole lot of effort by the executive branch and a whole lot of support by the Congress, but we can do big and bold things," she said.

Karlin says the agreement is a direct outgrowth of the National Defense Strategy. AUKUS helps all nations build more robust defense industrial base "ecosystems." That alone contributes to the concept of integrated deterrence, she said.

Spotlight: National Defense Strategy

Karlin also made the point that the U.S. submarine industrial base "can and will" support AUKUS.

This defense ecosystem includes the Department of Defense, the defense industrial base and the array of private sector and academic enterprises that spur innovation and support the systems on which the military depends.

"AUKUS provides an important means to build a more robust, resilient and dynamic defense industrial base that contributes to our nation's integrated deterrence," she said in written testimony to the subcommittee. "Directly supporting the National Defense Strategy, the AUKUS security partnership enshrines one of the key competitive advantages of the United States, the ability to build enduring partnerships. Deeper ties with the United Kingdom and Australia serve to expand collective defense production and bolster supply chain resilience, essential elements of integrated deterrence."

"AUKUS is a call to action to strengthen our trilateral defense ecosystem," she said. "What is needed now, more than ever before, is an approach that enhances our AUKUS partners' conventional military capabilities, enables a more integrated defense industrial base, increases information sharing and implements cooperative policies that reflect the concepts laid out in the National Security Strategy."

The United States, United Kingdom and Australia have committed to conduct naval nuclear propulsion cooperation, and Congress must approve legislation to transfer two Virginia-class submarines to the Royal Australian Navy.



The Optimal Pathway, announced in March, is a blueprint for how to achieve this effort. "Since the announcement, three Australian officers graduated from U.S. Nuclear Power School, [and] eight Australian sailors started nuclear-power training," Karlin said.

In addition, members of the newly formed Australian Submarine Agency have observed submarine maintenance operations at Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard, and trilateral working groups are actively collaborating on critical issues supporting industrial base readiness.

She said the USS North Carolina conducted the first Virginia-class submarine port visit to HMAS Stirling in Australia. "These milestones mark our commitment to this effort, but we know there is still much to be done and we look forward to collaborating with Congress to ensure we have the legislative authorities in place to execute this important work," she said.

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