

# AUKUS Plan Looks to Shore up Deterrence, Promote Stability

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The leaders of Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States announced a pathway that will increase the ability of the nations to deter aggression and contribute to stability in the Indo-Pacific, and globally.

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The move is a part of the Australia-United Kingdom-United States security partnership agreed to in September 2021. The so-called AUKUS agreement is built upon acquiring conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarine capabilities for Australia.

*Spotlight: AUKUS: The Trilateral Security Partnership Between Australia, U.K. and U.S.*

President Joe Biden, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced the way forward at Point Loma Naval Base, California, yesterday.



President Biden said he was pleased with the progress the three countries had made in the process. "Australia and the United Kingdom are two of America's most stalwart and capable allies," he said. "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 spur greater opportunity in all our countries."

Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III attended the ceremony calling the agreement the next step forward in the "transformational partnership."



"In September 2021, the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom laid out an ambitious vision for our countries that will strengthen our combined military capabilities, boost our defense industrial capacity, enhance our ability to deter aggression and promote our shared goal of a free and open Indo-Pacific," the secretary said. "AUKUS is a shared, long-term investment that will allow us to build defense advantages that endure for decades to come."

The three announced a three-phase program that will ensure a safer region.

Phase one is already underway, said administration officials speaking on background. Part of this is that U.S. and British submarines will visit ports in Australia and those visits will increase. "In fact, the USS Asheville is in Perth, Australia, now for combined training exercises," the official said. The Asheville is a Los Angeles-class attack submarine.





Another aspect of this phase is Australian sailors will increasingly embed aboard American and British attack submarines and attend nuclear power schools. This portion of the plan also calls for Australian workers in U.S. shipyards.

Australia is building facilities and infrastructure that will accommodate vessels from all three countries. These improvements could be finished by 2027, and the nations intend to establish a rotational force of U.S. and U.K. submarines in Australia. The Submarine Rotational Forces West, as it will be known, will bolster deterrence, with more submarines forward-deployed in the Indo-Pacific, the official said.

Phase two should start in the early 2030s. Once the Australians are trained and ready, the nation will buy three Virginia-class conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines with an option to buy two more if needed. This will help systematically grow Australia's capabilities and stewardship for nuclear-powered submarines, and it will help ensure that Australia does not experience a capability gap when its current Collins-class diesel electric subs retire in the 2030s, U.S. officials said.



This means that Australia will have a potent nuclear powered submarine force in 2030s, much earlier than many had expected.

Australia's future SSN – which officials call the "SSN-AUKUS" – will be a state-of-the-art platform designed to leverage the best of submarine technology from all three nations.

SSN-AUKUS will be based upon the United Kingdom's next-generation SSN design while incorporating cutting edge U.S. submarine technologies, and will be built and deployed by both Australia and the United Kingdom, officials said.



According to the pathway, Australia and the United Kingdom intend to start building SSN-AUKUS in their domestic shipyards before the end of this decade. The United Kingdom intends to deliver its first SSN-AUKUS to the Royal Navy in the late 2030s. Australia plans to deliver the first Australian-built SSN-AUKUS to the Royal Australian Navy in the early 2040s.

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