

“FAR FROM A ZERO-SUM GAME”: ROGERS JOINS COURTNEY AND BIPARTISAN COALITION TO REITERATE STRONG SUPPORT FOR AUKUS

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Washington, D.C. – U.S. Representative Mike Rogers (R-AL), Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, joined U.S. Representative Joe Courtney (D-CT) and a bipartisan coalition of U.S. Representatives in writing a letter to President Joe Biden reiterating their strong support for the AUKUS security pact — particularly for its commitment to developing an Australian nuclear-powered submarine capability. In writing to the President, Rogers and Courtney were joined by Reps. Mike Gallagher (R-WI), Adam Smith (D-WA), Trent Kelly (R-MS), Donald Norcross (D-NJ), Rob Wittman (R-VA), Derek Kilmer (D-WA), and Blake Moore (R-UT). [Click here](#) to read the full letter.

In their letter, the coalition state that the potential for America to help supply Australia with a new submarine fleet under AUKUS is far from the “zero-sum game” some have portrayed it as. Instead, the legislators describe it as an achievable goal and a potential force multiplier in the Indo-Pacific region:

“Far from a zero-sum game, the potential for the United States to provide or build new submarines under AUKUS [...] could very well be a ‘rising tide that lifts all boats,’” the members of Congress wrote. “As strong supporters of our domestic submarine industrial base and members who understand the unmatched value of our undersea platforms, we are committed to meeting our domestic undersea requirements in the near and long-term, as well as providing our closest ally with an undersea capability to better posture itself in the region. There is no doubt that our domestic submarine industrial base – like the larger defense industry, domestic manufacturing sector, and nearly every other sector of our national and global economy – has been strained by COVID-19 pandemic. However, this need not be a static picture in the coming decades over which AUKUS will be carried out. While the present challenges in delivering new Virginia class submarines need to be fully considered in any discussion about the way

ahead, so too must be the potential value and benefit of a fully integrated industrial base that could come as a result.”

The coalition also note that Congress has recently provided multiple rounds of investment through the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA)—including \$768 million in the 2023 NDAA—to expand domestic industrial base capacity, and to grow America’s submarine workforce in preparation for increased U.S. Navy submarine production. As the 18-month consultation period on the implementation of AUKUS nears its conclusion this Spring, Courtney and the coalition insist that now is the time to leverage the resources possible under AUKUS, and to grow the U.S.’s industrial base even further to support both increased U.S. production and an Australian nuclear-powered submarine:

“We note that your administration requested, and the Congress approved, \$768 million in FY 2023 to support a broad range of undersea workforce development, industrial base expansion, and supplier development efforts to strengthen our domestic submarine construction capabilities,” the coalition wrote. “Furthermore, we support the administration’s plans to invest an additional \$1.6 billion in the submarine industrial base [...] to improve production efforts in the following years. These resources, coupled with the December 21, 2021 Defense Production Act Title III Presidential determination and prior industrial base investments aimed at addressing pre-COVID production challenges, are directed at improving and strengthening our domestic industrial base in support of sustained two a year production rate of Virginia class submarines while also ramping up on Columbia. Even then, the United States Navy’s force structure drops from 50 attack submarines today to 46 in 2028 and only begins to meet the 66-attack submarine requirement in the late 2040s at the earliest.”

“While it is essential to maintain a minimum of two submarines a year for the United States to meet our national security requirements, we are supportive of expanding the industrial base to meet AUKUS expectations. We particularly believe that an expansion of our industrial base beyond two submarines would support the early provisioning of existing Virginia class submarines to be made available concurrent with the retirement of the Collins class attack submarines. These realities should not be viewed as a reason not to pursue US build submarine options in AUKUS but rather as a unique opportunity to leverage the support and resources possible under AUKUS to grow our industrial base to support both US and Australian submarine construction, recognizing that the full fruition of AUKUS over many decades will result in Australia’s ability to domestically produce nuclear-powered submarines. This could create a strong and long-term demand signal that this and successive administrations, the Navy and industry can prepare for, should that be the outcome of this process.”

In closing, the coalition note that any proposal emanating from the trilateral consultation process for AUKUS will require close scrutiny by Congress as it balances the priorities of America's undersea priorities and the health of our domestic industrial base with the strategic security goals of AUKUS—and they reiterate that they do not see those priorities as mutually exclusive. To read their full letter to President Biden, [click here](#).