

DEFENCE NEWS

AUKUS Security Partnership

On 16 September 2021, the Prime Ministers of Australia (A) and the United Kingdom (UK) and the President of the United States of America (US), announced an enhanced trilateral security partnership – AUKUS. The security challenges in the Indo-Pacific region have grown significantly. Capabilities are rapidly advancing and their reach expanding. The technological edge enjoyed by Australia and our partners is narrowing. AUKUS will build on the three nations' longstanding bilateral ties, and will enable the partners to deepen co-operation on emerging security and defence capabilities.

Initial efforts under AUKUS will focus on cyber, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, and under-sea capabilities. Throughout the decade, Australia will acquire long-range strike capabilities. These include:

- Tomahawk Cruise Missiles for our Hobart-class destroyers, enabling them to strike land targets at greater distances, with better precision;
- Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missiles (Extended Range) to enable our F/A-18 A/B Hornets and, in future, our F-35A Lightning II, to hit targets at a range of 900km;
- Long-Range Anti-Ship Missiles (Extended Range) for the F/A-18F Super Hornet;
- collaboration with the United States to develop hypersonic missiles for our air assets;
- precision-strike guided missiles for our land forces, which are capable of destroying, neutralising and suppressing diverse targets from over 400km; and
- \$1 billion for a sovereign guided-weapons manufacturing enterprise.

These capabilities, coupled with the planned life-of-type extension of Australia's Collins-class submarine fleet, will enhance Australia's ability to deter and respond to potential security challenges.

The first major initiative under AUKUS is Australia's proposed acquisition of at least eight nuclear-powered submarines. The government intends to build these submarines in Adelaide. Hence, it will no longer be proceeding with the Attack-class submarine programme.

Australia, the UK and the US have committed to a comprehensive programme of work over the next 18 months to examine the full suite of requirements that underpin nuclear stewardship, with a specific focus on safety, design, construction, operation, maintenance, disposal, regulation, training, environmental protection, installations and infrastructure, basing, workforce and force structure. The government has established a Nuclear-Powered Submarine Task Force led by VADM Jonathan Mead AO to facilitate Australia's role in AUKUS.

Nuclear-powered submarines have superior characteristics of stealth, speed, manoeuvrability, survivability, and almost limitless endurance, when compared to conventional submarines. They can deploy unmanned underwater vehicles and can also carry more advanced and a greater number of weapons. These abilities allow nuclear-powered submarines to operate in contested areas with a lower risk of detection. These advantages mean that the transition to nuclear-powered submarines represents a substantial capability leap for the Royal Australian Navy. The Government is committed to maximising Australian industry participation in this programme.

Department of Defence
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