Electric Boat Focusing on Current Navy Sub Programs While Australian Sub Plan Shakes Out

Shown here in September 2021, Quonset Point employee Steven Tavares, an X-ray welder, welds ship sponsor Kate Mabus' initials into the keel plate that will be installed on the Virginia-class submarine Utah. The Virginia-class is the second priority for General Dynamics, after the Columbia-class sub program. *GENERAL DYNAMICS ELECTRIC BOAT*

ARLINGTON, Va. — The General Dynamics Electric Boat shipbuilder is focusing on its own nuclear-powered submarine construction programs while standing ready to assist in any plan to build a fleet of nuclear-powered submarines for the Royal Australian Navy.

Last week, the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia announced the formation of a partnership, AUKUS, with its first project being the construction of a fleet of nuclear-powered submarines for the Australian navy, instead of procuring French-designed diesel-electric submarines.

"My message to my team is absolutely clear and that is: We stay focused at the mission at hand," said Kevin Graney, president of Electric Boat, speaking Sept. 23 in a Defense One webinar. "The mission at hand is two Virginia [-class attack] submarines a year and Columbia [-class ballistic-missile submarine or SSBN]. Those are our No. 1 and No. 2 priorities, Columbia first and Virginia second. From that perspective there's just an awful lot of work that we've got to do to get right and make sure we are supporting the U.S. Navy."

Graney said he saw opportunities for Electric Boat going

forward but that with the 18-month consultation phase for the Australian navy there currently is no task yet on the program.

“We stand ready,” he said. “The Naval Reactors team and the Navy knows we stand ready to support when tasked and, in the meantime, we’ve got plenty of work to do.”

Graney said that six of the super modules of the first Columbia SSBN are under construction. It will be 2040 before the 12th and last planned Columbia SSBN is completed, he noted, and that the program would be the defining project for many of Electric Boat’s shipbuilders.

Electric Boat has added more than 18,000 workers to the company over the last decade and has invested more than $250 million in workforce development. The company’s suppliers have increased from 3,000 to 5,000, located in all 50 states. The company is the largest employer in Connecticut and Rhode Island.

Graney praised the efforts of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition during the COVID-19 pandemic for its response to the pandemic by accelerating funding forward to shore up suppliers and, thus, keeping them in business producing the materials and supplies needed to build submarines.