

# Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard and Intermediate Maintenance Facility Welcomes First Contingent of AUKUS Personnel



The Official Publication of the Navy League of the United States

Release from [Naval Sea Systems Command](#)

\*\*\*\*\*

16 August 2023

PEARL HARBOR, Hawaii (Aug. 15, 2023) – Personnel from participating nations reported to Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard and Intermediate Maintenance Facility (PHNSY&IMF) in support of the Australia, United Kingdom, and United States (AUKUS) security partnership's Pillar One initiative Aug. 14, 2023.

The Pillar One initiative is delivering a conventionally armed nuclear powered attack submarine (SSN) capability to Australia. The uniformed and civilian submarine maintenance subject matter experts from Australia, the United Kingdom, and

the United States comprise the Advance Verification Team (AVT) that, over the coming weeks, will work directly with shipyard personnel to gain a full understanding of the maintenance and industrial skills required to establish Submarine Rotational Force-West (SRF-W) in Australia as early as 2027.

At its height, SRF-W will host up to four Virginia class and one Royal Navy Astute class SSN. Initially, a combined Australian and U.S. team will execute maintenance on the U.S. flagged SSNs. Over time, as Australia grows its workforce and expertise, the U.S. will reduce its presence in Australia. The AVT is working to build a detailed understanding of the types of specialized skills and trades required to establish the SRF-W repair workforce.

AUKUS Pillar One has three distinct phases. Phase One involves establishing SRF-W through increased Virginia class visits to Australia designed to expand Australia's knowledge of SSNs and the development of an Intermediate Level Maintenance capability. Phase Two begins in the early 2030s, pending approval from the U.S. Congress, with the United States selling Australia between three and five Virginia class submarines. Phase Three sees the combination of United Kingdom submarine design and advanced United States technology in the delivery of SSN-AUKUS, the future attack submarine for both Australia and the United Kingdom. Australia plans to deliver the first sovereign-built SSN-AUKUS in the early 2040s.

"Each phase builds on the previous one and SRF-W is the foundation upon which the Australian maintenance, sustainment and new construction workforce is built," said Capt. Lincoln Reifsteck, the U.S. Navy's AUKUS Integration and Acquisition Program Manager, who emphasizes the importance of the AVT's role in the establishment of SRF-W .

"Australians are superior submariners," said Capt. Richard A. Jones, PHNSY & IMF's commanding officer. "They operate one of the best diesel-electric boat classes in the world in a highly

complex area of operations. That said, there is a big step between the Australian Collins Class SSK [diesel-electric attack submarine] and Virginia class SSN. We are honored to host the AVT over the next several weeks to share as much as we can, answer their questions, and set them on the right course to building out a holistic sustainment plan.”

Once the AVT determines the skillsets and number of personnel required to execute intermediate-level maintenance, they will build an embedment plan to upskill and train Australian personnel within U.S. public naval shipyards.

“With an informed and specific plan, we will control costs by ensuring we send the right people, to the right places, to get the right training, at the right time to meet our requirements,” said Rear Adm. Matthew Buckley, the Australian Submarine Agency’s Head of Submarine Capability.

“Everything the AVT is doing works to grow Australia’s organic capabilities needed to keep our spear point, our attack submarines, sharp,” added Royal Australian Navy Capt. William McDougall, Director Submarine Rotational Force – West. “We are focused on ensuring the work taking place at [Australian base] HMAS Stirling fully supports SRF-West and we have been nothing but impressed by the dedication of our trilateral partners in setting us up for success.”

The AVT will remain in Pearl Harbor for several weeks, return home, and then travel to the United Kingdom to tour British shipyards to refine its plans. “In the UK we have fewer SSNs than the US. We are going to show the AVT how we maintain and modernize a smaller number of submarines, while still operating at the highest possible standards. Given the projected size of the RAN SSN force, Australia will not require facilities akin to the United States Naval Shipyards, but instead infrastructure comparable to those present in the UK. This experience will be enormously beneficial for both the AVT and our personnel, as we look to strengthen our mutual

knowledge, and ongoing partnership,” said Rear Adm. Chris Shepherd, the Royal Navy’s Defence Nuclear Organisation AUKUS Director and Senior Responsible Owner for the Replacement Nuclear Submarine Programme.

The AUKUS partnership is a strategic endeavor that strengthens the three nations’ national security and promotes peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. Australia will acquire conventionally armed SSNs for the Royal Australian Navy under AUKUS Pillar One via the Optimal Pathway announced by leaders of the three partner nations on March 13, 2023. The AUKUS Integration and Acquisition (I&A) Program Office is responsible for executing the trilateral partnership to deliver conventionally-armed, nuclear-powered attack submarines to the Royal Australian Navy at the earliest possible date while setting the highest nuclear stewardship standards.

To read more about AUKUS click [here](#).