

# Australian Sailors Graduate Sub Officer Course: Next, Assignment to U.S. Nuclear Attack Submarines



*U.S. Navy*

By U.S. Naval Submarine School Public Affairs and AUKUS Integration and Acquisition Program Office

GROTON, Connecticut – In a first for the U.S. Navy and Royal Australian Navy, three RAN officers graduated from the U.S. Navy's Submarine Officer Basic Course (SOBC) on April 18, 2024, at the Naval Submarine School in Groton, Connecticut.

The RAN officers' graduation represents a significant step toward realizing Pillar 1 of the trilateral AUKUS partnership, a strategic endeavor aimed at strengthening the security and defense capabilities of Australia, the United Kingdom, and the

United States. Pillar 1 aims to create a sovereign conventionally armed, nuclear-powered attack submarine fleet for the Royal Australian Navy.

“Collectively, we would like to thank our instructors here in Groton and also in Goose Creek, South Carolina, for getting us to this point,” said Lieutenant William Hall. Hall, Lieutenant Commander James Heydon and Lieutenant Commander Adam Klyne are the first RAN officers to complete Naval Nuclear Power School and Nuclear Power Training Unit, located in South Carolina, and now SOBC. “Now, we’re looking to join our boats and continuing our careers as part of Australia’s conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarine force.”

The Submarine Officer Basic Course is the last step in the U.S. Navy’s 15-month nuclear submarine training pipeline before assignment to the fleet. The three RAN officer graduates will be assigned to Virginia-class attack submarines based out of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Upon assignment, the graduates serve as division officers, leading a team of highly trained enlisted submariners. In this capacity, they will be tested and qualified on the ship’s systems and in various warfighting and leadership roles.

“Over the last two months, these three officers have trained alongside our Sailors, learning the fundamentals of operating and tactically employing SSNs,” said Naval Submarine School Commanding Officer Captain Matthew Fanning. “At SOBC, they applied both their previous experience and the new skills they developed through our nuclear training schools, to learn how we operate the ocean’s apex predator, the nuclear-powered attack submarine.”

“These officers are the future leaders of Australia’s sovereign conventionally armed nuclear-powered submarine fleet,” said the U.S. Navy’s AUKUS Integration and Acquisition Program Manager Rear Admiral Lincoln Reifsteck. “Their time in

Groton bridged the operational gap between the Collins-class SSKs and the Virginia-class SSN. These tours on U.S. Virginia-class submarines are the key professional development step toward earning the privilege to become submarine executive officers and the first commanding officers of Australian SSNs.”

Nearly 100 RAN officers and enlisted personnel will enter the submarine and Naval Nuclear Propulsion training pipelines in 2024.

“These three officers are trailblazers for the Royal Australian Navy,” said Rear Admiral Matt Buckley, Head of Nuclear Submarine Capability within the Australia Submarine Agency. They are not only the first Australians to be fully trained within the U.S. system but will also gain real-world experience aboard Virginia-class SSNs, which will be foundational to Australia’s ability to sovereignly operate, maintain, and steward these world-class platforms.”

AUKUS is a strategic partnership that will promote a safe, free, and open Indo-Pacific, enhance national security, and uplift the three industrial bases. AUKUS Pillar 1 is delivering a conventionally armed SSN capability to the Royal Australian Navy by the early 2030s. The AUKUS I&A Program Office is responsible for executing the trilateral partnership to deliver conventionally armed, nuclear-powered attack submarines to the RAN at the earliest possible date while setting the highest nuclear stewardship standards and continuing to maintain the highest nonproliferation standard.