

U.S. Navy submarine arrives in Western Australia for Scheduled Maintenance



HMAS STIRLING, Australia – The Virginia-class fast-attack submarine USS Colorado (SSN 788) arrived at HMAS Stirling today to begin a scheduled, monthlong maintenance period. The visit marks the fourth submarine maintenance period in Western Australia since the establishment of the AUKUS security partnership and highlights ongoing progress under AUKUS Pillar I.

USS Colorado (SSN 788) is the sixth nuclear-powered attack submarine to visit HMAS Stirling following the announcement of the Optimal Pathway and the third to undergo maintenance in Australia in the last 12 months under AUKUS Pillar I. The port

visits and maintenance periods are part of the AUKUS Pillar I plan to help Australia acquire, operate, and maintain its own conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarine fleet.

On October 26, 2026, Secretary of War Pete Hegseth and his Australian and U.K. counterparts issued [a joint statement](#) naming USS Colorado (SSN 788) as the first U.S. Navy Virginia-class fast-attack submarine assigned to Submarine Squadron 3. The boat will help formally establish Submarine Rotational Force – West (SRF-West) upon its planned return in late 2027.

Over the coming weeks, more than 30 trained and certified Australian civilian maintenance technicians from ASC Pty Ltd. will perform routine maintenance on a Virginia-class submarine in Western Australia for the first time, working alongside specialists from Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard and Intermediate Maintenance Facility (PHNSY&IMF).

Under SRF-West, up to four U.S. and one U.K. submarines will rotationally operate out of HMAS Stirling. For Australia, SRF-West accelerates its readiness to maintain, operate and sustain conventionally armed, nuclear-powered, submarines while affording greater access to the Indo-Pacific region, the Indian Ocean and adjacent areas which enhances regional deterrence and operational flexibility for allied submarines.

“This maintenance period brings us closer to establishing SRF-West,” said U.S. Navy Rear Adm. Doug Adams, director of AUKUS, International & Systems. “Our Lead Maintenance Activity, Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard and Intermediate Maintenance Facility, is doing a great job ensuring the Australian personnel trained in Hawaii are ready and able to support our submarines.”

The maintenance period will demonstrate several new pieces of Australian-built infrastructure. Technicians will use a custom-made metal safety walkway, known as a sail “racetrack.” The team will also leverage recent nuclear-powered submarine-specific upgrades made to HMAS Stirling’s Diamantina Pier and

other local solutions, such as a pure water plant, high-pressure air compressor and dehumidifier.

“With each visit, Australia demonstrates new organic capabilities,” said U.S. Navy Capt. Jason Pittman, commander of Submarine Squadron 3. “During last year’s maintenance period, we successfully delivered pure water from an Australian-designed and built plant and validated the sail racetrack was fit for purpose. During the U.K.’s maintenance period in February, we validated the high-pressure air compressor and dehumidifier systems. Now, with the racetrack, we’re using it to conduct maintenance, utilizing the pier upgrades, and leveraging a workforce of about three dozen fully qualified and certified Australian civilian nuclear-powered submarine maintenance workers.”

“Through these historic port visits Australia has continued to progress our ability to not just host SSNs for longer periods but also deliver maintenance to schedule and get the boats back to sea,” said Royal Australian Navy Rear Adm. David Mann CSC, the Australian Submarine Agency’s head of Virginia Division.

The United Kingdom’s Royal Navy will be an active participant in the SMP.

“We don’t get many opportunities like this,” said Sir Stephen Lovegrove, the U.K. Prime Minister’s Special Representative for AUKUS. “The more the three nations work together to maintain submarines – whether American or British – the faster we’ll be able to uplift our Australian partner’s knowledge and skills and increase commonality across our submarine forces.”

“This maintenance activity represents the ultimate integration of a U.K., U.S., and Australian workforce,” said Mann. “Operating as a single team, we are testing our infrastructure, validating our nuclear stewardship processes, and substantially upskilling our naval and civilian

workforces. These maintenance periods have been critical to Australia being on track to start SRF-West in 2027.”

“As we approach the establishment of SRF-West, we must remember that our trilateral efforts are being driven by the challenging strategic environment in the Pacific and our collective desire to deter aggression and ensure peace through strength,” said U.S. Navy Rear Adm. Chris Cavanaugh, commander, Submarine Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet. “For decades, the United States, Australian, and British submarine forces have operated together. Through AUKUS, we’re building enhanced integration and increasing interoperability to ensure we collectively preserve the advantage in the undersea battlespace.”

For the crew of Colorado, the success of this port visit relies heavily on the close partnership between the boat, the ASC team and personnel from PHNSY & IMF. This joint workforce ensures the submarine remains fully mission-ready for its forward-deployed operations.

“The success of any maintenance period comes down to the people on the deckplates, and the Australian personnel stepping aboard our ship are true professionals,” said U.S. Navy Capt. Justin Reeves, commanding officer of USS Colorado. “Their technical skill and dedication are exactly what we need to keep this ship in the fight, and it gives us absolute confidence in Australia’s ability to support the fleet.”

About AUKUS Integration & Acquisition (I&A) AUKUS Integration & Acquisition is the central U.S. Navy program office coordinating the delivery of the U.S. contribution to AUKUS Pillar I. The office integrates critical technical, industrial, and programmatic efforts across the Department of the Navy and with international partners. The office serves as the central hub for synchronizing submarine operations, workforce development, hands-on training pipelines, nuclear stewardship protocols, and trilateral industrial base

expansion. By supporting Australia in acquiring a conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarine capability at the earliest possible date, AUKUS I&A actively strengthens our collective undersea advantage, expands the industrial base to meet future defense demands, and upholds the highest global standards of nuclear safety, security, and nonproliferation.

From Rory O' Connor, Oct. 27, 2026