U.S. Trains First Australian Radiological Control Technicians to Support AUKUS Submarine Force



In a milestone for the AUKUS (Australia, United Kingdom, United States) enhanced trilateral security partnership, four Australian civilian maintenance technicians, pictured with Norfolk Naval Shipyard commander Capt. James Mosman, graduated from the U.S. Navy's Radiological Controls Technician Qualifying School (RCTQS) at the Norfolk Naval Shipyard March 26, 2025.

By Norfolk Naval Shipyard, Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard & Intermediate Maintenance Facility, and AUKUS Integration and Acquisition Public Affairs, March 27, 2025

PORTSMOUTH, Va. – In a milestone for the AUKUS (Australia, United Kingdom, United States) enhanced trilateral security

partnership, four Australian civilian maintenance technicians from the Australian government's submarine company, ASC, graduated from the U.S. Navy's Radiological Controls Technician Qualifying School (RCTQS) at the Norfolk Naval Shipyard March 26, 2025. The group's successful completion of this specialized training marks a key step in supporting Australia's acquisition of sovereign conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines under AUKUS Pillar I Optimal Pathway.

The RCTQS provides the specialized training required to uphold the U.S. Navy's nuclear and radiological safety standards and ensure compliance with U.S. regulatory requirements. The rigorous six-month program provides detailed theoretical and practical-skills training with participants demonstrating their knowledge and abilities through comprehensive assessments and examinations. Upon qualification, these technicians are responsible for ensuring adherence to U.S. radiological controls requirements and standards during the operation and maintenance of naval nuclear propulsion plants at nuclear shipyards and maintenance activities. Since its inception, RCTQS has been instrumental in developing personnel with the knowledge and skills necessary to protect Sailors, workers, the public and the environment.

"This is an intense, demanding school that teaches complex theory and application of radiological controls," said RCTQS instructor Donald Sweeney. "The Australian students were well prepared, focused, and committed from day one. They continue to exceed expectations at every step and are well positioned to perform their roles on conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines in their home country. I look forward to hearing about their future success."

The ASC technicians started their training in the fall of 2024 after spending three months training at the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard and Intermediate Maintenance Facility (PHNSY & IMF) in Hawaii. Over the next three years, approximately ten ASC

technicians will enter the RCTQS program.

“Having the Australian maintenance personnel training and working side-by-side with our American trainees builds Australia’s technical expertise and readiness to keep the U.S. submarines assigned to Submarine Rotational Force – West ready to operate,” said Meganne Atkins, acting director of the AUKUS Integration and Acquisition Office.

Norfolk Naval Shipyard (NNSY) Commander Capt. James “Jip” Mosman emphasized the benefits of the collaboration: “Incorporating the Australian technicians into our training facility has been a great opportunity to build a positive and productive partnership. The intensive training they received lays the groundwork for them to effectively lead and execute radiological operations.”

Participating in the training has been an invaluable experience for the Australian cohort.

“The skills and knowledge we have gained as well as the professional relationships we have forged are essential for us to safely and securely steward Australia’s conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines,” said ASC trainee Steve*. “We are more confident than ever in our ability to meet Australia’s regulation requirements and to uphold the responsibility imposed upon us in our duties to maintain the integrity and viability of the program.”

More than 130 Australian civilian submarine maintainers are currently training at PHNSY & IMF to maintain nuclear-powered fast-attack submarines. “As the lead maintenance activity for Submarine Rotational Force – West, we are charged with ensuring the Australian personnel are ready to conduct maintenance on U.S. submarines,” said Capt. Ryan McCrillis, PHNSY & IMF’s commander. “Being able to send RCTQS trainees to Norfolk, Virginia, where the Navy has established this centralized high-quality training facility, ensures that when

our submarines start rotating to Western Australia, the right people with the right training are ready to keep them fit to fight.”

The AUKUS trilateral security partnership strengthens the participating nations’ lethality and warfighting capabilities, enhances readiness by adding capacity and resilience to the submarine industrial base and is essential to securing a free and open Indo-Pacific region through operating more interoperable high-end allied warships to deter aggression.

The AUKUS I&A Program Office is the U.S. Navy office responsible for executing the trilateral partnership to assist Australia in acquiring conventionally armed, nuclear-powered attack submarines at the earliest possible date while setting the highest nuclear stewardship standards and continuing to maintain the highest nonproliferation standard.

Norfolk Naval Shipyard, one of the nation’s four public shipyards, focuses on generating fleet readiness and putting more combat-ready platforms at sea. As part of a broader effort to standardize radiological training across the service, the U.S. Navy established the RCTQS at the shipyard in 1996. Developed with input from multiple naval shipyards, the program has continuously evolved to incorporate the latest safety protocols and technological advancements. To date, RCTQS has trained nearly 7,000 radiological control technicians, playing a vital role in supporting the Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program.

Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard & Intermediate Maintenance Facility is a field activity of Naval Sea Systems Command and a one-stop regional maintenance center for the U.S. Navy’s surface ships and submarines. It is the largest industrial employer in the state of Hawaii, with a combined civilian and military workforce of approximately 6,400. It is the most comprehensive fleet repair and maintenance facility between the U.S. West Coast and the Far East, strategically located in

the heart of the Pacific, being about a week’s steaming time closer to potential regional contingencies in the Indo-Pacific.

*Per ASC protocols, employee last names are not publicly released