# US, UK Australia Form Trilateral Partnership, Start Australian Nuclear Submarine Project



The Virginia-class fast-attack submarine USS New Mexico (SSN 779) returns to its homeport of Naval Station Norfolk, Sept. 15, 2021. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Alfred Coffield*

ARLINGTON, Va. — The United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia have formed a tri-lateral defense partnership, which soon will launch a project to develop and build nuclear-powered submarines for the Royal Australian Navy.

Australia operates Collins-class diesel-electric submarines and was in the process of procuring 10 submarines in a partnership with France, a deal that is likely to be torpedoed by the new AUKUS partnership.

At the White House Sept. 15, the presidents of the three nations spoke at the news conference announcing the AUKUS partnership.

"The first major initiative of AUKUS will be to deliver a nuclear-powered submarine fleet for Australia," said Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison. "Over the next 18 months, we will work together to seek to determine the best way forward to achieve this.  This will include an intense examination of what we need to do to exercise our nuclear stewardship responsibilities here in Australia. We intend to build these submarines in Adelaide, Australia, in close cooperation with the United Kingdom and the United States.

The project would represent a major industrial enterprise in a

nation with no experience in building and operating nuclear submarines. Australia has built modern surface warships, including high-end anti-air warfare destroyers.

U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson seconded the partnership.

“I’m delighted to join President Biden and Prime Minister Morrison to announce that the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States are creating a new trilateral defense partnership, known as AUKUS, with the aim of working hand in glove to preserve security and stability in the Indo-Pacific,” Johnson said. “We’re opening a new chapter in our friendship, and the first task of this partnership will be to help Australia acquire a fleet of nuclear-powered submarines, emphasizing, of course, that the submarines in question will be powered by nuclear reactors, not armed with nuclear weapons. And our work will be fully in line with our non-proliferation obligations.”

“This will be one of the most complex and technically demanding projects in the world, lasting for decades and requiring the most advanced technology,” Johnson said. “It will draw on the expertise that the U.K. has acquired over generations, dating back to the launch of the Royal Navy’s first nuclear submarine over 60 years ago; and together, with the other opportunities from AUKUS, creating hundreds of highly skilled jobs across the United Kingdom, including in Scotland, the north of England, and the Midlands, taking forward this government’s driving purpose of leveling up across the whole country.”

“Our governments will now launch an 18-month consultation period to determine every element of this program — from workforce, to training requirements, to production timelines, to safeguards and nonproliferation measures, and to nuclear stewardship and safety — to ensure full compliance with each of our nation’s commitments under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty,” said President Joseph Biden.