

AUKUS: UK and Australia's Nuclear-Powered Submarine Deal

written by Ezba Walayat | April 1, 2024



In order to forward the AUKUS nuclear-powered submarines, Australia is committed to further collaborate with the US and the UK. In recent development, Australia pledged \$3 billion to help British industry build nuclear-powered submarines, in order to ensure the timely delivery of the country's new fleet, as announced by the two countries on March 22, 2024. The nuclear-powered submarines will be developed under the historic agreement between the two nations, despite growing concerns about prices, capabilities, and other challenges. The two nations, together with the US have promised to bolster their military might in an effort to thwart China's rise. As a major component of the AUKUS agreement, defense chiefs disclosed ambitious plans to arm Australia with a fleet of nuclear-powered submarines. By the 2050s, Australia intends to have eight nuclear-powered vessels in the water; these will be a combination of Virginia-class vessels acquired from the US and new AUKUS-class submarines constructed domestically and in the UK. The new nuclear-powered Australian submarines will be able to deploy over great distances without coming to the surface, and they will be quiet and stealth than the country's current diesel fleet.

The Australian Defense Minister Richard Marles said, "The three governments involved here are working at pace to make this happen. This is going to happen and we need it to happen." However, the defense minister of the United Kingdom, Grant Shapps, stated that the submarine program was both costly and necessary. After decades of relative peace, Shapps asserted the world is gradually transitioning from a post-war to a pre-war state. He said, "Nuclear-powered submarines are not cheap, but we live in a much

more dangerous world where we are seeing a much more assertive region with China, a much more dangerous world all-around with what is happening in the Middle East and Europe.” He added, “Countries need to invest in making sure that adversaries see we are serious about our security, defending freedom of navigation, for example.”



The news of nuclear-powered submarines was made one day after Australia and the United Kingdom signed a defense and security agreement. The defense ministers of both countries stated that in order to tackle contemporary challenges and uphold a global rules-based system, this defense and security cooperation pact was necessary. Following yearly bilateral ministerial defense talks, the treaty was signed by Australian Defense Minister Richard Marles and his U.K. counterpart Grant Shapps.

In response, China has warned that AUKUS and the new nuclear-powered submarines, can result in a dangerous escalation that might trigger an arms race in Asia Pacific while threatening the regional stability. Additionally, China has also increased its military growth, which includes a modernized fleet and greater assertiveness in disputed areas such as Taiwan and the South China Sea. As AUKUS proceeds, tensions between China and the alliance of Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States are likely to rise.