

OpenVoiceNews Australia

Transparent. Unbiased. Yours.

France and Australia Renew Defense Ties After Submarine Deal Fallout

July 13, 2025

— Categories: Defence & Security



France and Australia are back on solid footing when it comes to defense cooperation, following a sharp diplomatic rift in 2021 over a scrapped submarine deal. The French ambassador to Australia confirmed that the relationship, once strained, is now focused on mutual security interests, though the shadow of the abandoned agreement still lingers.

In 2021, Australia abruptly canceled a multibillion-dollar contract with France for a fleet of diesel-powered submarines, sparking outrage in Paris. French Ambassador Pierre-André Imbert described the decision at the time as deeply regrettable, reflecting the diplomatic strain that followed. Australia instead chose to pursue nuclear-powered submarines through

a new trilateral agreement with the United States and the United Kingdom, known as AUKUS, short for Australia, United Kingdom, and United States.

The election of Prime Minister Anthony Albanese in 2022 marked a shift in tone, with France and Australia reestablishing military cooperation. Ambassador Imbert stated that defense and security are once again the foundation of their bilateral partnership. He made his remarks as French troops participated in the Talisman Sabre exercises, a major multinational military drill taking place in Australia and Papua New Guinea. This year's drills involve over 30,000 personnel from 19 different countries.

Despite improved ties, France remains an observer in Australia's AUKUS commitment. Under this agreement, Australia is set to receive at least three U.S.-built Virginia-class nuclear submarines over the next 15 years, with plans to develop its capabilities domestically. However, recent reports suggest the United States is reassessing the AUKUS pact to ensure alignment with the "America First" policy and to address concerns over its defense industrial capacity.

Commenting on the strategic direction of the AUKUS alliance, Ambassador Imbert stated, "For the moment, they have chosen AUKUS... If this changes and they ask, we'll see." His comments reflect France's openness to future cooperation, but also underline that Australia made its decision, at least for now.

While diplomatic bridges have been mended, the situation highlights how national interests can override long-standing partnerships. France, though sidelined, appears to be playing the long game, staying engaged in regional security efforts and maintaining dialogue, even as Canberra leans further into its Anglosphere alliances.

As geopolitical tensions continue to rise in the Indo-Pacific, particularly with China's growing assertiveness, strong military cooperation among democratic nations remains essential. Yet the question remains: Will Australia's current leadership continue to prioritize long-term strategic autonomy, or remain bound to partnerships that may not always put its interests first?