

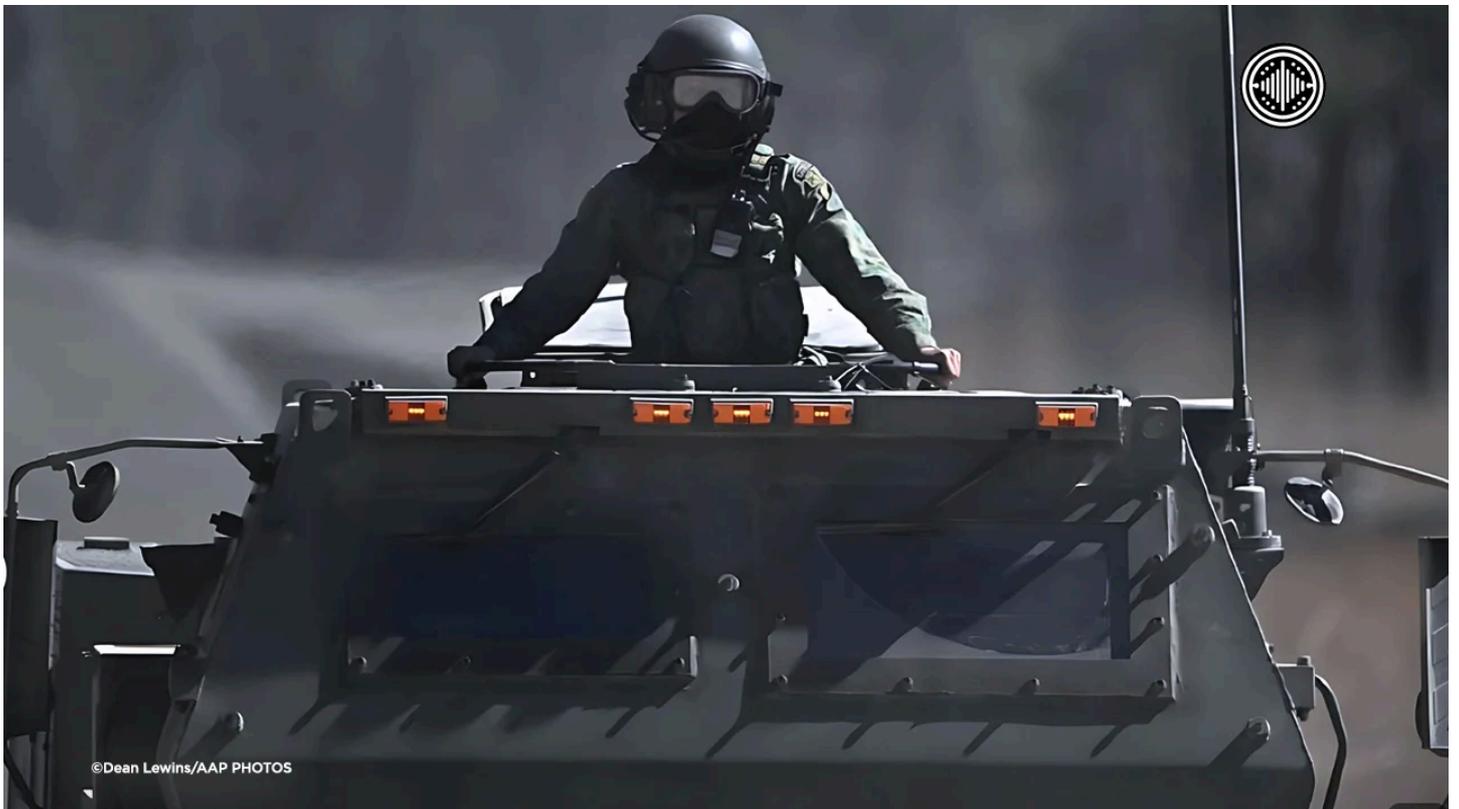
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Top End War Games Highlight AUKUS Treaty Signing

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Following the signing of a 50-year Australia-United Kingdom (UK) treaty for the AUKUS (Australia, United Kingdom, United States) submarine program, UK ministers joined Australian officials to observe war games in the Northern Territory (NT). This article delves into the treaty's strategic weight, the significance of Exercise Talisman Sabre, and public concerns over Labour's defence priorities.

On July 26, 2025, Australian Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Richard Marles and UK Defence Secretary John Healey signed the Nuclear-Powered Submarine Partnership and Collaboration Treaty in Geelong, per The Examiner. The \$560 billion AUKUS pact, formed in 2021 to counter China's military rise, aims to deliver nuclear-powered submarines by the 2040s. Marles, alongside UK Foreign Secretary David

Lammy, then attended Exercise Talisman Sabre in Darwin on July 27, a three-week operation involving 35,000 personnel from 19 nations, including Canada and Japan, per Michael West Media. The UK's Carrier Strike Group, led by HMS Prince of Wales, its first Australian visit since 1997, underscored the alliance's strength. Marles emphasized the treaty's role in supporting infrastructure and a UK Astute-class submarine rotation at HMAS Stirling, stating, "It builds a strong foundation for AUKUS," per The Border Mail.

The visit coincides with a US review of AUKUS under Trump's "America First" policy, raising doubts about delivering three Virginia-class submarines by the 2030s. Critics argue Labour's heavy reliance on the \$5 billion UK reactor investment and US cooperation risks Australia's sovereignty. On X, sentiments reflect frustration, with one user noting, "Labour's banking on AUKUS while the US wavers." The war games, showcasing advanced capabilities, signal deterrence but highlight Labour's failure to secure firm US commitments.

As regional tensions grow, Talisman Sabre demonstrates allied unity, but Labour's approach raises questions about self-reliance. Australians demand a defence strategy that prioritizes national interests over uncertain foreign partnerships, ensuring security in an unstable Indo-Pacific.