

UK and Australia Unite to Deter China's Influence, Defence Secretary Affirms

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UK Defence Secretary John Healey has confirmed that Britain and Australia will work together to deter increasing Chinese military assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific. Speaking during joint military exercises in Darwin, Healey described the deepening alliance as vital to regional stability and shared strategic interests.

As part of Exercise Talisman Sabre 2025, a large-scale multinational drill involving over 35,000 personnel from 19 countries, the UK has deployed its flagship aircraft carrier, HMS *Prince of Wales*, to Australian waters. Healey emphasised that nearly 20% of UK trade passes through the Indo-Pacific, underscoring the UK's strong economic and security interests in the region.

While in Sydney, Healey and Australian Defence Minister Richard Marles signed a landmark AUKUS treaty, designed to formalise collaboration between the UK and Australia on nuclear-powered submarine development. Known as the Geelong Treaty, the fifty-year agreement will facilitate joint design, construction, and operation of submarines under the SSN-AUKUS programme. It is expected to deliver up to £20 billion in UK defence exports over the next 25 years, offering significant opportunities for the British defence industry.

The agreement follows the UK's latest Strategic Defence Review, which commits to raising defence spending to 2.5% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), to reach 3% over the next parliamentary term. The review also includes ambitious plans to boost shipbuilding capacity, particularly for submarines at Barrow-in-Furness and Raynesway.

Beyond naval capability, the UK, Australia, and the United States are deepening their cooperation in advanced technology through Pillar II of the AUKUS agreement. Shared projects include quantum computing, autonomous undersea vehicles, artificial intelligence, and advanced radar systems, technologies designed to safeguard Western strategic superiority in the Indo-Pacific theatre.

Australian political figures have been vocal in recent months about rising regional tensions. Former Deputy Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce warned of vulnerabilities around Taiwan and called for increased national defence spending. Cybersecurity experts have also raised alarms over the threat of underwater infrastructure attacks, prompting renewed focus on maritime defences.

Although questions remain around the US timeline for submarine delivery and pressure on Australia's defence budget, both UK and Australian leaders reaffirmed their commitment to long-term cooperation. Healey described the current moment as an opportunity for the US to reconfirm its leadership and partnership within the AUKUS framework.

This strengthened alliance between the UK and Australia reflects a clear and assertive posture in a changing geopolitical environment. It marks a key step in deterring Chinese ambitions and ensuring that the Indo-Pacific remains a region governed by rules, security, and mutual respect.