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Japan to Build Australian Warships at Record Pace Amid Tensions

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The Australian government has tapped Japan's Mitsubishi Heavy Industries to deliver 11 advanced warships by 2030, accelerating naval upgrades to counter Indo-Pacific security challenges.

The Australian government, under the Australian Labor Party, has awarded a A\$10 billion (\$6.5 billion USD) contract to Japan's Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (MHI) to supply 11 Mogami-class frigates for the Royal Australian Navy (RAN), as announced by the Department of Defence on August 5, 2025. The deal, part of the SEA 3000 program, aims to replace the aging Anzac-class frigates with delivery of the first ship by 2029, a record pace driven by rising Indo-Pacific tensions, particularly China's naval expansion. Three frigates will be built in Japan, with eight constructed by Austal Limited in Western

Australia, supporting 3,000 local jobs, per a Reuters report. The accelerated timeline reflects urgency outlined in the 2023 Defence Strategic Review, which prioritizes long-range strike capabilities.

The Mogami-class frigates, designed for anti-submarine warfare, surface strikes, and air defense, feature a 10,000-nautical-mile range and 32 vertical launch system cells, quadrupling the firepower of current RAN vessels, according to Defence Minister Richard Marles in a Canberra briefing. Marles emphasized the ships' role in securing maritime trade routes, citing a February 2025 incident where Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) warships conducted unannounced exercises in Australia's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), per the Lowy Institute. However, the Australian Labor Party government's refusal to disclose the full program cost, estimated at A\$15–20 billion by analyst Marcus Hellyer, has sparked criticism. Shadow Defence Minister Andrew Hastie, speaking on Sky News, accused the government of obscuring costs, risking budget overruns similar to past naval projects.

Maritime expert Jennifer Parker, quoted in The Sydney Morning Herald, praised the Mogami's advanced design but warned of risks due to Japan's limited experience in overseas warship construction. Japan's commitment to prioritize Australia's delivery, even over its own navy, was confirmed by General Yoshihide Yoshida in a January 2025 ABC News interview, signaling deepened Australia-Japan ties. The deal, backed by the United States, enhances trilateral cooperation to deter regional threats, aligning with the 2024 USSC Strategy Simulation outcomes.