

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Biden to announce joint deal with U.K. and Australia on advanced defense-tech sharing

One source said there is a nuclear-defense infrastructure to the three-way pact known as AUUKUS.



The Australian flag flies. | Darrian Traynor/Getty Images

By **ALEXANDER WARD** and **PAUL MCLEARY**

09/15/2021 08:55 AM EDT

Updated: 09/15/2021 12:04 PM EDT

President Joe Biden will announce a new working group with Britain and Australia to share advanced technologies in a thinly veiled bid to counter China, a White House official and a congressional staffer told POLITICO.



technological areas like artificial intelligence, cyber, underwater systems and long-range strike capabilities.

One of the people said there will be a nuclear element to the pact in which the U.S. and U.K. share their knowledge of how to maintain nuclear-defense infrastructure.

There's nothing explicitly mentioning China in the three-way deal, the people said, but both noted that the subtext of the announcement is that this is another move by Western allies to push back on China's rise in the military and technology arenas.

“This is a surprising and extremely welcome sign of the Biden administration's willingness to empower close allies like Australia through the provision of highly advanced defense technology assistance — something that Washington has rarely been willing to do,” said Ashley Townsend, director of foreign policy and defense programming at the United States Center in Sydney. “It suggests a new and more strategic approach to working collectively with allies on Indo-Pacific defence priorities.”

[Australia's Financial Review newspaper](#) reported Canberra will abandon a \$90 billion submarine deal with France and will now acquire an American-made nuclear-powered submarine. The French deal had long been in trouble, with the Naval Group, the French shipbuilder tasked with constructing the 12 submarines, and the Australian government sparring over design changes and cost increases.

A new class of nuclear-powered submarines would give Washington and its allies in the Pacific a powerful new tool to attempt to contain Chinese military expansion and would follow on the current deployment of a



German warships to the South China Sea.

The U.S. and U.K. have long partnered on their nuclear-powered submarine programs, sharing technology across their various classes of ships. Bringing Australia into the fold would be a major step in increasing the ability of the three countries to operate together undersea across the Pacific, as well as adding a powerful allied punch in the region that is currently lacking.

Beijing has a [growing missile arsenal](#) at its disposal and its forces are increasingly aggressive, sailing naval ships near [Japanese](#) and [American waters](#) in recent days. It's part of China's effort to assert its primacy in the Indo-Pacific and lay claim to disputed territories. Chinese officials say territory that falls within the country's "nine-dash line" in the South China Sea belongs to Beijing.

In response, the U.S. continues to build partnerships with other nations that serve as a bulwark against China. One such group is known as "[the Quad](#)" and has the U.S., Japan, Australia and India as members. Formed in its current iteration in 2017, the four-nation team never says that its economic, technological and military cooperation is about thwarting Beijing's aims, but analysts say the Quad wouldn't be as robust today if it weren't for China's continued aggressions.

On Sept. 24, all four Quad-nation heads will meet at the White House for the first-ever in-person, leader-level gathering of the group.

A trade war between China and Australia has also worsened relations between the countries. The dispute, which began in April 2020 after Prime Minister Scott Morrison asked for an inquiry into the origins of Covid-19, cost the two nations roughly \$4 billion. [Josh Frydenberg](#), Australia's



with penalties on Australian products.

And China-India relations have also been tense, with recent [fatal standoffs at their long-disputed border](#) high in the Himalayas.

FILED UNDER: TECHNOLOGY, CHINA, JOE BIDEN, JOE BIDEN 2020, UNITED KINGDOM, AUSTRALIA

National Security Daily



From the SitRoom to the E-Ring, the inside scoop on defense, national security and foreign policy.

EMAIL

Your Email

INDUSTRY

Select Industry

* All fields must be completed to subscribe.

SIGN UP

By signing up you agree to allow POLITICO to collect your user information and use it to better recommend content to you, send you email newsletters or updates from POLITICO, and share insights based on aggregated user information. You further agree to our [privacy policy](#) and [terms of service](#). You can unsubscribe at any time and can contact us [here](#). This site is protected by reCAPTCHA and the Google Privacy Policy and Terms of Service apply.

About Us

Advertising

Breaking News Alerts

Careers

Credit Card Payments

Digital Edition

FAQ

Feedback





POWERJobs

Press

Print Subscriptions

Write For Us

RSS

Site Map

Terms of Service

Privacy Policy

Do not sell my info

Notice to California Residents

© 2021 POLITICO LLC

