

The Honorable Pete Hegseth

Secretary of Defense

1400 Defense Pentagon

Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Hegseth,

As Chairman and Ranking Member of the Select Committee on the Strategic Competition between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), we write to express our strong support for AUKUS—the vital strategic partnership between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

The People’s Republic of China’s (PRC) rapid expansion of its nuclear, conventional, cyber, and space capabilities pose a grave concern for the United States and our like-minded allies and partners. The expansion of PRC military capabilities—many of which are specifically designed to target the armed forces of the United States and our allies and partners—threatens U.S. interests in the Indo-Pacific, jeopardizes the security of our allies and partners, and advances Beijing’s illegitimate territorial claims. Taken together, the PRC’s expanded capabilities, combined with its coercive actions against its neighbors, demonstrate that the PRC is “credibly preparing to use military force to alter the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

The modernization and expansion of the PLA Navy (PLAN) has allowed Beijing to project blue-water capabilities at increasing distances from its shores. In June, the PLAN deployed its two active aircraft carriers simultaneously to the western Pacific for the first time.[[2]](#footnote-2) In an equally unprecedented move last February, the PLA conducted naval live-fire exercises in the Tasman Sea between Australia and New Zealand.[[3]](#footnote-3) This attempt to project power as far south as New Zealand’s front door highlights the importance of AUKUS in cementing ties to longstanding allies like Australia, as well as advancing vital undersea capabilities that will be central to deterrence.

At the Shangri-La Dialogue in May, you emphasized both the imminency of the CCP threat and as well as our commitments to our allies. As you expressed, “Our goal is to prevent war, to make the costs too high, and peace the only option. And we will do this with a strong shield of deterrence, forged together with…America’s great allies and defense partners.”[[4]](#footnote-4) We agree that robust alliances and security partnerships—like AUKUS—are crucial now more than ever. Both Pillars I and II of the AUKUS framework are a key step to dramatically enhance the collective defense of the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom in the face of the CCP’s ongoing aggression.

To be sure, both the United States and Australia must continue to make generational investments within and outside the AUKUS framework to expand our respective submarine industrial bases, workforces, and force structure. Australia’s $3 billion commitment to support these efforts, the first tranche of which was delivered earlier this year, marks a vital step toward ensuring that we can meet our commitment to Australia while also strengthening our own industrial capacity.

AUKUS has received strong bipartisan support from Congress for a reason. Alongside our colleagues, we understand the agreement promises to strengthen our national security alongside that of two of our closest allies. We are stronger together under the AUKUS framework. With an “all hands on deck” approach, appropriate resourcing, and relentless problem solving, we can deliver on the mission of the agreement, strengthen our partnerships, and enhance our shared security interests.

Thank you, and we stand ready to work together to advance this important effort.

Sincerely,

CC –

DSD Feinberg

USD Colby

1. Matthew Olay, "Hegseth Outlines US Vision for Indo-Pacific, Addresses China Threat,” U.S. Department of Defense, May 1, 2024, <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/4202504/hegseth-outlines-us-vision-for-indo-pacific-addresses-china-threat/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Clark, Colin, and Colin Clark. 2025. “Sending Two Carrier Groups Through First Island Chain Shows China’s ‘Growing Capability’: Analysts.” Breaking Defense. June 12, 2025. <https://breakingdefense.com/2025/06/two-plan-carrier-groups-break-through-first-island-chain-shows-chinas-growing-capability-analysts/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. “How Should Australia Respond to Chinese Warships’ Live Fire?” n.d. Lowy Institute. <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/how-should-australia-respond-chinese-warships-live-fire>. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Pete Hegseth, “Remarks by Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth at the 2025 Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore (As Delivered),” U.S. Department of Defense, May 31, 2025, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Speeches/Speech/article/4202494/remarks-by-secretary-of-defense-pete-hegseth-at-the-2025-shangri-la-dialogue-in/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)