

Will AUKUS keep us safe — at what cost?

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to this independent review.

I have been following the developments regarding the acquisition of nuclear submarines since the AUKUS pact was first announced.

Since 2001 I have maintained a web page titled "Carl Sagan's Warning about the Reptile Within Us" (<https://www.vdrsyt.com/planet/rcomplex.html>). This has links to articles and research papers related to global aggression. It includes several quotes related to potential erosion of the stealth ability of nuclear submarines, as included below:

- 6 Aug 22 (Hiroshima Day) The Saturday Paper: "Does Australia actually need nuclear submarines?" <https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/news/politics/2022/08/06/does-australia-actually-need-nuclear-submarines>
- Feb 24 Japan Today: Japan, Australia to conduct study on underwater drones [*comment: given the dramatic increase in drone use by the military, it make you wonder whether the stealth advantage of nuclear submarines will soon be negated by deployment of numerous, relatively cheap underwater drones?*]
- 30 Aug 24 The Conversation: The AUKUS submarine deal has been exposed as a monumental folly – is it time to abandon ship? <https://theconversation.com/the-aukus-submarine-deal-has-been-exposed-as-a-monumental-folly-is-it-time-to-abandon-ship-236873>
- 21 Apr 25 The Conversation: Security without submarines: the military strategy Australia should pursue instead of AUKUS <https://theconversation.com/security-without-submarines-the-military-strategy-australia-should-pursue-instead-of-aukus-253107>
- 21 Apr 25 The Guardian: An alternative to Aukus: why a strategic defensive approach best suits Australia. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/apr/21/an-alternative-to-aukus-australia-strategic-defensive-approach>
- 18 May 25 ABC: Australian-made underwater glider drones equipped with artificial intelligence could soon bolster UK naval surveillance. *Comment: In March I speculated... I was just reading an article in The Conversation about a new search for MH370 in the Indian Ocean. The article describes the brilliant commercial technologies that have been developed in the last few years that increase the chances of detecting the wreckage. This made me wonder about the development of similar military technology to detect submarines. Nuclear submarines, in particular, are intended to attack by stealth. They offer no clear advantage if they can be detected by new technologies and techniques, such as a swarm of relatively cheap underwater drones... Now it seems that technology is closer to reality.* <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-05-15/australian-underwater-ai-drones-could-bolster-uk-surveillance/105293204>
- 2 Dec 25 Quote from a new book by Paul Davies - Quantum 2.0: "Quantum sensor technology is also advancing in leaps and bounds. It is making conventional military detection and navigation systems obsolete, and raising the stakes for smart surveillance of submarines, missiles and stealth bombers..."

- 2 Dec 25 The Guardian: Technology could make oceans transparent and Aukus submarines vulnerable. <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2025/sep/14/aucus-australian-submarines-vulnerable-new-technology>
- 29 Jun 26 Japan Today: Japan weighs deploying unmanned submarines in Pacific defense buildup - see comments about drones detecting (manned) submarines. <https://japantoday.com/category/national/japan-weighs-deploying-unmanned-submarines-in-pacific-defense-buildup>

It is evident that reliable detection of "stealth" submarines by adversaries is just a few years away. Certainly the technology will be available well before any AUKUS submarines are delivered to Australia.

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