



## Australia and UK sign defense and security treaty to meet 'contemporary challenges'

### Description

**WORLD : Australia and the United Kingdom signed a new defense and security cooperation agreement with the defense ministers of both countries saying it was required to meet “contemporary challenges” to maintain a global rules-based order.**

The treaty was signed by Australian Defense Minister Richard Marles and his U.K. counterpart Grant Shapps following annual bilateral ministerial defense talks at Parliament House in Canberra on Thursday, as part of the Australia-UK Ministerial (AUKMIN) meeting, which was first held in 2006.

“Australia’s relationship with the UK is dynamic and enduring,” Marles said in a written statement Thursday. “From the UK’s leadership of support for Ukraine and efforts to address the Houthi threat, to increasing contributions in the Pacific and the Indo-Pacific, we continue to work closely together to support a global rules-based order.”

“As the world becomes more complex and uncertain, we must modernize our most important partnerships,” the statement said.

The treaty also includes provisions to make it easier for the respective forces to operate together in each other’s countries, such as the joint training of Ukrainian troops in the U.K.

Shapps said the treaty formalizes how the two country’s will consult on issues that affect each other’s sovereignty and regional security.

“I think one of the most important elements is it describes a mechanism by which we consult when either of our countries are under threat and we have those discussions more formalized than it is at the moment,” Shapps said at a joint press conference with Marles at Parliament House in Canberra on Thursday.

“We do already cooperate very significantly on defense matters, it should be said. So we’ll

always be looking to deepen that cooperation between our countries.”

Other areas within the agreement included continued cooperation on capability development, including through the AUKUS alliance, as well as closer collaboration on undersea warfare, intelligence and military exercises.

Refreshing the bilateral defense treaty was a commitment made at the AUKMIN conference held last year in the U.K, and is unlikely to have come as a surprise to others powers in the region, namely China.

Beijing has been a frequent and strong critic of defense partnerships between nations it perceives as having the aim of containing its aspirations in the South East Asian and South Pacific.

Coincidentally, Australia received the most senior Chinese leader visit in seven years earlier this week, where security and stability across the region had been high on the agenda between the respective foreign ministers.

In his opening remarks before the bilateral meeting on Tuesday, China’s Wang Yi said Australia should maintain an “independent” foreign policy and not allow ‘third parties’ to disrupt ties between the two countries.

The comments were widely regarded as a thinly veiled reference to the United States, which Beijing has often claimed is building a new military bloc, AUKUS — which also includes the U.K. — to contain China’s aspirations in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Australian government’s plan to develop nuclear powered submarines under the AUKUS pact also continues to be a particular sticking point for China-Australia relations, which are thawing after some recent frosty years.

**BY KEIRAN SMITH**

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