



China Says AUKUS Countries are Going Down a 'Dangerous Path'

Description

The Chinese Foreign Ministry warned Tuesday that the US, Britain, and Australia are going down a “dangerous path” with the AUKUS military pact after the three nations unveiled their nuclear-powered submarine plans.

“The latest joint statement issued by the US, the UK and Australia shows that the three countries, for their own geopolitical interests, have totally disregarded the concerns of the international community and gone further down the wrong and dangerous path,” said Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin.

Wang suggested the deal could violate the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), although there is a major loophole in the treaty that applies to submarines. Under AUKUS, Australia will acquire US-made nuclear-powered submarines with the goal of Canberra eventually being able to produce its own.

US nuclear-powered submarines use highly-enriched weapons-grade uranium, but under the NPT's loophole, naval reactors are not subject to inspections under the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The AUKUS deal will be the first time that the loophole will be used to transfer fissile material and nuclear technology to a non-nuclear weapons state.

While not technically a violation of the NPT, AUKUS does test some articles of the treaty that say non-nuclear weapons states should use “nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.” Wang warned that the deal was a proliferation risk.

“Nuclear submarine cooperation between the US, the UK and Australia involves the transfer of large amounts of weapons-grade highly enriched uranium from nuclear weapon states to a non-nuclear weapon state, which poses a serious nuclear proliferation risk and violates the purpose and object of the NPT,” he said.

Australian officials expect to spend up to \$245 billion on the Submarine initiative by 2055. The US Navy envisions Australia becoming a full-service submarine hub for all underwater craft activity in the Asia Pacific, cementing Canberra's role as a US ally in a potential future conflict with China, although plans under AUKUS won't be completed for decades.

by Dave DeCamp

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