



Ministry
of Defence

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
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THE EARL OF MINTO
MINISTER OF STATE IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS

MSU/4/8/1/1/is

23rd March 2024

Dear Des,

During the AUKUS debate on Thursday 29th February, you raised the issue of whether SSN-AUKUS would remain relevant with technology-driven advances in submarine design.

In your statement you referred to various nuclear-armed submarines, though I must reiterate that SSN-AUKUS will be a conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarine. A core tenant of the AUKUS Pillar One programme is that it will be fully in line with our nuclear non-proliferation obligations, including those under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Taking your point around new submarine technologies, we are confident that manned submarines will not be rendered obsolete by new technologies such as underwater drones. SSN-AUKUS is based upon the UK's design for its next generation nuclear-powered submarine and is expected to incorporate critical US technologies that underpin the performance of the US SSN programme. We envisage it operating in conjunction with unmanned underwater vehicles; indeed, as announced in the communique from the December AUKUS Defence Ministerial Meeting, we are already integrating the ability to launch and recover undersea vehicles from torpedo tubes on current classes of submarines, to deliver effects such as strike and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, and this capability will also be part of SSN-AUKUS.

I will place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Yours sincerely

THE EARL OF MINTO

The Lord Browne of Ladyton
House of Lords
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