



Ministry
of Defence

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
FLOOR 5 ZONE B MAIN BUILDING
WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB

Telephone: 020 7218 9000 (Switchboard)

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

MSU/4/8/1/1/is

20th March 2024

Dear Jim,

During the AUKUS debate on Thursday 29th February, you raised issues about Australia's defence relationship with Indonesia, the UK's submarine-building programme, and the potential transfer of UK skills to Australia.

Taking first your point about Australia's bilateral relationship with Indonesia, I am aware of discussions between the two countries to deepen their existing defence cooperation pact, announced during Deputy Prime Minister Marles' visit to Jakarta in February. The specific details of their bilateral defence agreement are naturally issues for Australia and Indonesia.

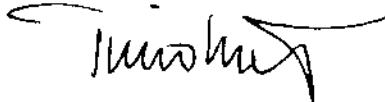
On our submarine-building programme, there continues to be a very close partnership with the US on our submarine programmes and our SSN-AUKUS programme is working closely with US counterparts to draw lessons from their submarine build programmes. The Royal Navy (RN) is experiencing personnel challenges, like many large employers in the maritime sector, however the RN has sufficient personnel to meet all operational demands and work is underway to enhance recruitment and retention as a top priority. Currently, there are around 4,000 submariners in the Royal Navy (RN), both qualified and those under training. This will increase over the next decade to support the introduction of the Dreadnought and SSN-AUKUS submarines. Action has already been taken to ensure we can support this personnel growth, which included the establishment of a new recruiting process in August 2023. This has seen the average time from application to entry for RN Other Ranks (ratings) fall from 271 to 119 days.

On your final point, regarding the potential transfer of skills, AUKUS will create thousands of jobs in all three countries. The UK has world-leading facilities, and we are confident that we will continue to attract the very best personnel. Along with our AUKUS partners we stress the joint nature of the programme, and the fact that we will need to strengthen and bolster the submarine workforce in each of our countries

The Lord Lee of Trafford
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

in order to deliver it. The Government has already committed to £5 million to support a long-term Delivery Board for Barrow and is working closely with Westmorland and Furness Council and BAE Systems to develop a community with the infrastructure to make it a thriving place to live and work.

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

Yours sincerely


THE EARL OF MINTO