

AUKUS nuclear subs & Tomahawk cruise missiles in a 'Defence Federal Election':

A Briefer by David Noonan, Independent Campaigner, 27 Sept 2021

AUKUS nuclear subs are an opener in a broader 'Khaki Defence Federal Election' to purport a 'security crisis' rather than face a climate crisis. The Liberal gov will set tests for the ALP and Civil Society and are clearly not going to await 10+ yr lead-times to any assembly of nuclear subs here.

Ministers have said they will invite visits by US Nuclear Subs - expect these visits before the election. At present only Brisbane and Perth / Stirling Naval Base are open ports to nuclear powered vessels. Expect Port Adelaide, Darwin and Sydney to be added to such arrangements.

Ministers have stated they want to lease existing US nuclear subs. Expect a Liberal federal election commitment to do so ASAP and to test Labor to agree - or to refute and risk election backlash.

A re-elected Morrison gov will expedite nuclear subs: **a key Question** is how soon can an option to lease existing US nuclear subs be acted on and how soon can preparations to base and operate leased nuclear subs at Perth's Stirling Naval Base be put in place?

Expect the Liberals to bait and test Labor on the US Alliance over Labor's commitment to support the Ban Treaty in a lead up to the election. Labor's minimum ready response is their National Platform commitment to hold a Canberra Commission of Inquiry on nuclear disarmament. And to announce they will do so before Signing or at least before Ratifying the Ban Treaty - if elected. PM Morrison and the Murdoch press et al are unlikely to be headed off by an 'Inquiry' level of response.

Question: How much further ground could be given up on the US Alliance, US Bases & US nuclear umbrella linked war fighting capabilities, on militarising Australia and introducing Tomahawk cruise missiles as a latent nuclear weapon capable delivery system (that is not limited to nuclear subs) - to try and stay a small target in a khaki defence election?

Tomahawk cruise missiles are a core part of AUKUS, as a new long-range (up to 2,000 km) conventional strike capability for Australia, that can be fitted to a range of platforms.

The Tomahawks are due here in a next term of federal office with Labor's agreement and are ahead of and do not depend on any outcome to nuclear sub issues.

Tomahawks are first to be fitted to the RAN's four Hobart Class Destroyers, "giving them the ability to strike land targets at greater distances, with better precision" [Australia buying Tomahawk missiles for air warfare destroyers - Defense Brief \(defbrief.com\)](#) (16 Sept).

Tomahawks raise a latent nuclear weapon delivery capability for Australia as an adaptable air, ship, sub or ground launched delivery system for specific US design miniaturised nuclear warheads. Tomahawk cruise missiles could require monitoring under the Ban Treaty and complicate Signing.

The US Navy has long canvassed to [Bring Back the Nuclear Tomahawks | Proceedings - May 2017 Vol. 143/5/1,371 \(usni.org\)](#) "as a sea-based nuclear-armed cruise missile. This would require restoration of the Navy's nuclear capability on Tomahawk cruise missiles."

The US Navy claims: "Bringing back the TLAM-N into the U.S. arsenal would not violate any treaty." The Navy states: "The U.S. TLAM-N capability carries a number of inherent advantages: The capability is essentially invulnerable, as the missiles likely would be placed only on board submarines. Any attack submarine can carry these missiles."

***This nuclear armed capability can also be applied to Australia's leased nuclear attack submarines.**

Q: Will conventional armed Tomahawk cruise missiles now be fitted to Collins-class submarines?

This could act as a force multiplier interim to availability of the first leased US nuclear subs. The RAN did consider [buying Tomahawks for the Collins](#) but no orders were placed – perhaps due to costs.

The US Marines are also re-introducing four-tube ground launched Tomahawks following the collapse of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, [or INF](#), with Russia, as anti-ship missiles:

A "potentially game-changing capability for not a lot of cost. It's a 1,000-mile anti-ship cruise missile. It can be used from practically our entire surface and submarine fleet." [Marines Set To Be The First To Bring Back Land-Based Tomahawk Missiles Post-INF Treaty \(thedrive.com\)](#) (March 2020).

Buying Tomahawks are in addition to extensive existing A\$100 billion bi-partisan missile plans:

"Broadly speaking, the 2020 FSP outlines around \$100 billion in investment in guided weapons over the coming two decades" ([Cracking the missile matrix | ASPI](#) April 2021), with an array of missile types to be produced in Australia. Tomahawks are now only made by **Raytheon** (the types used in attacks on Syria cost approx. US\$3 million each).

China has said Australia will be a target because of AUKUS, [Nuke sub deal could make Australia 'potential nuclear war target'](#) - Global Times (16 Sept 2021) as it:

"will potentially make Australia a target of a nuclear strike if a nuclear war breaks out ... because it's easy for the US to equip Australia with nuclear weapons and submarine-launched ballistic missiles when Australia has the submarines. ... intensifies the arms race, and undermines the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons."

China will treat Australia as "a US ally which could be armed with nuclear weapons anytime" and "China will also be forced to make changes in its military deployment and countermeasures following Australia's latest move." China says "...the AUKUS partnership confirms that Australia is going all the way with the US in what many have labelled a new 'cold war' with China."

"US bases in Australia are nuclear targets in event of a war between China & the US" see p.6 of David Noonan 's input (13 August) to the [IPAN People's Inquiry](#) into the US Alliance:

["Re: To end Australia's roles in nuclear war, along with an end to the sale of uranium to nuclear weapons states in breach of NPT nuclear disarmament obligations & Human Rights laws"](#)

- see **Recommendations** at p.5, Overview p.1-3, Contents at p.4 (a 20-page doc).

In civil society engaging verses AUKUS one should also engage on uranium responsibilities:

Including to disqualify China as a recipient of Australian uranium over routine substitution of uranium supplies and breaches of NPT disarmament obligations and Human Rights.

Uranium mining & sales responsibilities should be public interest issues in Federal & SA Elections:

- see a 2 p Briefer [Aust-U-sales-fuel-insecurity-Noonan-2021.pdf \(foe.org.au\)](#) (Feb 2021);
- see the latest 2 page [Briefer](#) on **BHP Olympic Dam uranium issues** (06 Sept 2021)

"Repeal of BHP's over-ride of Aboriginal Heritage, as BHP tries to retain 1982 Indenture Act impacts on GAB waters & Springs and privileges to a major new Oak Dam copper-uranium mine"