

# **United States-Japan-Australia Trilateral Defense Ministers' Meeting (TDMM) 2024 Joint Statement**

**May 2, 2024**

Australian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Richard Marles, Japanese Minister of Defense Kihara Minoru, and U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin III convened a Trilateral Defense Ministerial Meeting in Hawaii on May 2, 2024. This was the thirteenth meeting among the defense leaders of the three nations and highlighted the landmark achievements made in implementing activities and practical areas of cooperation set forth in the 2023 Joint Statement.

The Ministers are united by our shared values and determination to deepen cooperation to promote the security, stability, and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific and beyond.

The Ministers welcomed and acknowledged the significance of each country's recently implemented strategic documents, underscoring their deep strategic alignment and shared values. They affirmed the important role that the trilateral partnership contributes to realizing a free and open Indo-Pacific and the significant progress over the past year demonstrating their growing trilateral coordination at all levels and across all domains.

The Ministers reiterated their strong opposition to any attempts by the People's Republic of China (PRC) to unilaterally change the status quo by force or coercion in the South and East China Seas. This includes concerning and destabilizing actions in the South China Sea, such as unsafe encounters at sea and in the air, the militarization of disputed features, and the dangerous use of coast guard vessels and maritime militia, including interference with routine maritime operations, and efforts to disrupt other countries' offshore resource exploration. They strongly objected to China's claims and actions that are inconsistent with international law including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and which undermine international rules, standards, and norms. They resolved to work together to support states being able to exercise their rights and freedoms in the maritime domain, including the freedoms of navigation and overflight, consistent with UNCLOS.

The Ministers emphasized the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. They called for the peaceful resolution of cross-Strait issues.

The Ministers reaffirmed their enduring commitment to a peaceful, secure, and prosperous Southeast Asia, where sovereignty is respected, international law is followed, and nations can make decisions free from coercion. They reaffirmed their commitment to ASEAN centrality and unity as well as ASEAN-led regional architecture. They recognized the importance of strengthening cooperation with Southeast Asian partners including the Philippines and welcomed the second meeting of Australia, Japan, Philippines, and United States Defense Ministers and Secretary also being held in Hawaii.

The Ministers committed to deepening cooperation with Pacific island countries, by supporting their needs and efforts in the implementation of the Pacific Islands Forum's 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. The Ministers affirmed they will continue expanding regional engagement with Pacific counterparts, particularly through the Pacific Islands Forum of which Australia is a member, and other inclusive Pacific architectures.

The Ministers welcomed the U.S. Coast Guard's deployment of the Harriet Lane Cutter in its inaugural Operation Blue Pacific patrol in Oceania in early 2024. This deployment offered opportunities for the U.S. Coast Guard to work alongside Pacific island countries to share best practices on maritime domain awareness and support efforts led regionally by the Forum Fisheries Agency to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing activities.

The Ministers are deeply concerned about North Korea's nuclear and missile development. They strongly condemn North Korea's repeated launches of missiles, including intercontinental ballistic missiles and other launches using ballistic missile technology, which are serious violations of United Nations Security Council resolutions. The Ministers strongly condemn the increasing military cooperation between North Korea and Russia, including North Korea's export and Russia's procurement of North Korean ballistic missiles in violation of UNSC resolutions, as well as Russia's use of these missiles against Ukraine. The Ministers remain committed to working with the international community to address North Korea's serious threat to the region. They reiterate their call on North Korea to immediately resolve the abductions issue and cease its human rights violations.

The Ministers noted the progress on the introduction of counterstrike capabilities by Japan and investment in long-range strike capabilities by Australia. They confirmed that Australia and Japan would work closely together, and with the United States as these capabilities are introduced.

The Ministers acknowledge the significant progress made by Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States over the past year to implement AUKUS, and noted the positive contribution the AUKUS partnership has on the security and stability in the region. Recognizing Japan's strengths and its close bilateral defense partnerships with all three AUKUS countries, the Ministers acknowledged that AUKUS partners are considering cooperation with Japan on AUKUS Pillar II advanced capability projects.

The Ministers welcomed the August 2023 entry into force of the Japan-Australia Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA), which will enable deeper trilateral cooperation and enhance interoperability by facilitating Australian Defence Force presence alongside the United States Forces in Japan and Japanese Self-Defense Forces alongside the United States Forces in Australia. They marked the inaugural reciprocal deployments of Japan's F-35A aircraft to Australia and Australia's F-35A aircraft to Japan in 2023 as the first cooperative activities under the RAA. Additionally, Ministers welcomed upcoming activities planned for trilateral F-35 joint training in 2025 and 2026. They noted progress on trilateral training using ranges in Australia and the successful conduct of Japan's first anti-air and anti-ship missile launch in Australia in 2023. The Ministers commit to leveraging the RAA to enable Japan's participation, alongside the United States Armed Forces, in force posture activities in Australia over the coming year.

The Ministers welcomed the historic inaugural achievements and activities in trilateral work over the past year and reaffirmed their intent to increase the complexity and scope of their work together. Since 2022, the three militaries have conducted multiple coordinated Asset Protection Missions, undertaken trilateral transits in the South China Sea, and increased the complexity of trilateral Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) cooperation including actual operations in the maritime and air domains. They committed to expanding trilateral ISR cooperation.

The Ministers welcomed Australia's valuable inaugural participation in the U.S.-Japan command post exercise, KEEN EDGE, in February, and the work underway to advance closer operational collaboration.

The Ministers reaffirmed their vision toward a networked air defense architecture among the United States, Japan, and Australia to counter growing air and missile threats in the Indo-Pacific region, including broadening missile defense information sharing and incorporating future capabilities. They announced their intent for the U.S. Armed Forces, Australian Defence Force, and Japan Self-Defense Forces to conduct an inaugural regional air and missile defense live fire exercise in 2027 at Exercise TALISMAN SABRE.

Today Ministers signed the trilateral Research, Development, Test, and Evaluation (RDT&E) Projects Arrangement. Science and technology cooperation is vital to maintain their collective edge and deepen their defense cooperation. This landmark arrangement allows the respective defense organizations to pursue areas of interest for operationally-relevant advanced collaboration. Through this arrangement the ministries will further discuss cooperative opportunities in the areas of collaborative combat aircraft and autonomous systems and composite aerospace materials.

Reflecting the critical role the trilateral partnership plays in upholding regional stability, the Ministers committed to enhance our defense cooperation across the following areas:

**Trilateral Activities and Exercises:**

- Conduct trilateral F-35 Joint Strike Fighter trainings in all three countries in the next two years, including exercises such as:
  - Exercise COPE NORTH 2025 – United States
  - Exercise BUSHIDO GUARDIAN 2025 – Japan
  - Exercise PITCH BLACK 2026 – Australia
- Continue increasing the frequency and complexity of high-end trilateral exercises in northern Australia such as Exercise SOUTHERN JACKAROO.
- Increase opportunities and enhance the complexity of ISR cooperation.
- Regularize Asset Protection Missions for the U.S. Forces and the Australian Defence Force by Japan Self-Defense Forces and transits by Australia, Japan, the United States, and other partners.
- Accelerate and deepen trilateral information-sharing cooperation.
- Continue trilateral policy and strategy dialogues on regional issues.

### **Expanded Cooperation:**

- Pursue trilateral Research Development Test and Evaluation (RDT&E) Arrangement cooperative opportunities in operationally-relevant advanced technologies.
- Boost strategic capabilities cooperation across multiple domains, including the conduct of an inaugural joint and combined live fire air and missile defense exercise in 2027 at Exercise TALISMAN SABRE.
- Increase Japan's participation in Australia-U.S. force posture cooperation activities.

### **Inclusive Partnerships:**

- Deepen engagement with ASEAN Member States (including through the ADMM-Plus framework), Pacific island countries, India, the Republic of Korea, and like-minded partners and allies to uphold and reinforce free and open international order.
- Coordinate capacity building engagements with regional partners.

The Ministers affirmed that trilateral defense cooperation is essential to maintain regional stability, transparency, and respect for international rules and norms. They reiterated their firm determination to keep the Indo-Pacific free, open, secure, and prosperous while continuing to expand the scope of defense cooperation.