

Senior US diplomat links AUKUS submarine pact to Taiwan

WASHINGTON, April 3 (Reuters) - The State Department's No. 2 diplomat suggested on Wednesday that the AUKUS submarine project between Australia, Britain and the U.S. could help deter any Chinese move against Taiwan.

The project, unveiled by the three countries in 2023, involves Australia acquiring nuclear-powered attack submarines as part of the allies' efforts to push back against China's growing power in the Indo-Pacific region.

But the three countries have been reluctant to publicly tie AUKUS to growing tensions over Taiwan, the democratically governed island claimed by China as its territory, with Australia saying it did not promise to support the U.S. in any Taiwan military conflict.

U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell made a rare linkage between Taiwan and AUKUS, telling Washington's Center for a New American Security think tank that new submarine capabilities would enhance peace and stability, including in the strait that separates China and Taiwan.

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