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Australian Government
Department of Defence

Background Brief

For information

PDMS Number: MS22-000644

To: Office of the Minister for Defence

Subject: Visit to Australia by USS Springfield 23 - 29 April 22

Purpose

The Los Angeles Class nuclear powered attack submarine USS *Springfield* will visit HMAS *Stirling* from 23-29 April 2022. The purpose of the visit is to provide respite for the crew who s33(a)(i) s33(a)(i)

Background

1. On 17 March 2022 the US Navy via the US Embassy in Canberra submitted a formal request for Diplomatic clearance to Defence. The visit was approved by the Director General Maritime Operations in consultation with the Visiting Ships Panel (Nuclear), as part of his Instrument of Delegation.
2. s22
3. The visit is also a tangible demonstration of US support to the AUKUS agreement. It gives an opportunity for both navies to better understand infrastructure requirements for more frequent and longer duration nuclear-powered submarine visits.

Key Issues

4. People may draw links between this visit and the Prime Minister's announcement of nuclear-powered submarine cooperation under the AUKUS agreement from September 2021. It will be important to emphasise that:
 - This is a routine port visit taking place in the context of the USA's Indo-Pacific presence activities and not a part of the 18-month consultation period between Australia, the US and the UK to determine the optimal pathway to deliver a nuclear-powered submarine capability for Australia; and
 - Defence is not expressing a preference for a US-built capability option.

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Consultation

5. The RAN is in regular contact with the US Embassy and WA Government health authorities to ensure appropriate arrangements are made to support the visits.
6. s47E(c) Director US-Indo Pacific Policy, International Policy Division.

Sensitivities

7. The visit is likely to attract domestic and international media attention especially as this would be the first visit to Australia by a US Navy nuclear-powered submarine since the AUKUS announcement in September 2021. The US may seek to hold a media engagement while in WA but this has not yet been requested.

Authorising Officer
<p>Cleared by:</p> <p>Vice Admiral MJ Noonan, AO, RAN Chief of Navy</p> <p>Date: 12 April 2022 Mob: s22</p>

Contact Officer: Commodore Ray Leggatt, RAN, Chief of Staff Navy Headquarters, Ph: s22

CC:

Secretary, CDF, Assoc Sec, VCDF, FASMECC, DEPSEC SP&I, FC

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USS SPRINGFIELD VISIT TO STIRLING

- We welcome the *USS Springfield* to Stirling.

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- Australia's long-standing alliance with the US is our most important defence relationship.
- It stands as a pillar of security and stability in the Indo-Pacific and it's a testament to our shared values and our commitment to a secure, prosperous, and resilient Indo-Pacific.
- The *USS Springfield* crew have been approved to take shore leave through the relevant diplomatic clearances and are following the Australian Government entry requirements, the same as for any other international visit.
- The visit has been coordinated with the support of the relevant state governments and Australian Border Force.

If asked - how long is the visit, what is USS Springfield doing here, what they have been doing in the region?

- Defence does not provide information about the operations of visiting ships or Navies. Please redirect your question to the US embassy.

If asked, what kind of vessel is the USS Springfield?

- The *USS Springfield* is a United States Navy Los Angeles-class fast-attack submarine

If asked, is the ship visiting other Australian locations?

Defence does not provide information about the operations of visiting ships or Navies.

What COVID-19 mitigation measures are in place?

- The crew are required to meet all of the Australian Government entry requirements

Have the personnel on the visiting ship been vaccinated?

- It's not appropriate to comment on the behalf of another Navy. Please redirect your question to the US embassy.

What will happen if there is a case of COVID-19 from the crew?

- In the event of a positive case with severe complications beyond the medical capabilities on board, support would be provided by Australian health services in accordance with their standard procedures for managing COVID-19 positive patients.

If asked about whether the US Navy's visit to Western Australia is an indication of a platform decision by the Nuclear-Powered Submarine Taskforce, or future forward basing:

- The USS s22 /Springfield are in Western Australia for a routine visit.
- The Nuclear-Powered Submarine Taskforce is working closely with the United Kingdom and United States over the 18 month period to identify the optimal pathway to deliver at least eight nuclear-powered submarines for Australia.
- Australia will leverage the technology, capability and design expertise from the UK and US and will intensively examine the full suite of requirements that underpin nuclear stewardship.
- With the AUKUS partnership, we expect a higher number of visits from UK and US vessels.
- There have been no discussions regarding UK and US submarine basing or forward deployment.

Clearance	Name	Appointment	Date
Drafted by	s47E(c)	IP DIV SCA	22/4/22
Group/ Service B1	Rob McGregor, AS Major Powers	IP DIV	23/4/22
Navy NIE	s47E(c)	Navy	23/4/22