

Australia and France sign deal to build 12 submarines

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French Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, right, and Australian Defense Minister Marise Payne listen to national anthems on the Australian Navy ship HMAS Adelaide in Sydney, Monday, Dec. 19, 2016. The Australian and French defense ministers say they are giving top priority to concealing design details of a new Australian submarine after data was leaked from French shipbuilder DCNS about a submarine built for India. (Jason Reed/Pool Photo via AP)

Australia and France signed an agreement Tuesday to build the world's

largest diesel-electric submarines in the Australian industrial town of Adelaide.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and French Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian signed the agreement in Adelaide, where they officially opened the Australian headquarters of DCNS, a French state majority-owned company that will design the Shortfin Barracuda subs.

Turnbull described the 56 billion Australian dollar (\$41 billion) contract to build 12 subs as the largest capital project in Australia's history. The contract is also DCNS's largest outside France.

A workforce of 2,800 people will begin building the first sub in an Adelaide shipyard in 2022.

"Security is uncertain around the world and that is why we are re-equipping our navy and our defense forces," Turnbull told reporters.

France beat German and Japanese rivals to secure the Australian contract in April.

France offered the Australians a diesel-electric version of the Barracuda-class nuclear submarine under construction for the French navy. Japan proposed a longer version of its Soryu-class diesel-powered propulsion system with advanced stealth capabilities.



An Australian Army helicopter flies French Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, right, over Sydney Harbour before his bilateral meeting with Australian Defense Minister Marise Payne on the Australian Navy ship HMAS Adelaide in Sydney, Monday, Dec.19, 2016. The Australian and French defense ministers say they are giving top priority to concealing design details of a new Australian submarine after data was leaked from French shipbuilder DCNS about a submarine built for India. (Jason Reed/Pool Photo via AP)

Germany, which had publicly offered to build the entire fleet in Adelaide for AU\$20 billion—less than half the navy's expected cost—offered a larger variation of its Type 214 submarine made for Australian specifications called a Type 216. It promoted as its edge over competitors its partnership with German engineering firm Siemens which would have provided the [submarines](#) software and promised to create a digital shipbuilding center in Adelaide.

The French bid offered the same pump jet propulsion that gave its nuclear submarines their advanced stealth capacity. Other diesel-electric submarines are too small to be fitted with the same stern-heavy

technology.

Australia's Shortfin Barracuda Block1A will be 97 meters (318 feet) long and weight 4,500 metric tons (5,000 U.S. tons)—2.5 meters (8 feet) shorter and 200 metric tons (220 U.S. tons) lighter than its French nuclear cousin.

Australia already has one of the world's largest conventional submarines, the Australia-built Collins class, and the navy insisted that its replacement at least match its range of 12,000 nautical miles (22,000 kilometers). At 3,100 metric tons (3,400 U.S. tons) and 77 meters (253 feet long), the Collins will be dwarfed by the next-generation Shortfin Barracuda.

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