

Army Vision: By 2028, a world-class Army that is a source of national pride



ARMY

Serving the people. Securing the land.

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OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS NEWS CLIPPINGS

16 April 2016

Saturday

Army Core Purpose: Serving the people. Securing the land.

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






























Republic of the Philippines
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






24-Hour Weather Forecast and Extended Weather Outlook for Selected Cities

ISSUED AT : 5:00 AM 16 APRIL 2016

VALID BEGINNING : 5:00 AM TODAY UNTIL 5:00 AM TOMORROW

CITIES	24-Hr Weather, Winds and Sea Condition Forecast <small>from 5AM today until 5AM tomorrow</small>		Extended Weather Outlook <small>Outlook: 5AM until 5AM of the following day</small>			
	16 APR		17 APR	18 APR	19 APR	20 APR
Metro Manila	 26°C 35°C	Light to Moderate East - Southeast Manila Bay: Slight to Moderate	 26°C 35°C	 25°C 35°C	 25°C 35°C	 25°C 35°C
Tuguegarao City	 26°C 38°C	Light to Moderate Southeast	 25°C 38°C	 25°C 38°C	 25°C 38°C	 24°C 38°C
Laoag City	 23°C 33°C	Light to Moderate Southeast Coastal Waters: Slight to Moderate	 23°C 33°C	 24°C 33°C	 24°C 33°C	 23°C 34°C
Baguio City	 17°C 27°C	Light to Moderate Southeast	 16°C 27°C	 16°C 28°C	 16°C 28°C	 16°C 27°C
SBMA (Olongapo) / Clark Zone (Angeles City)	 26°C 35°C	Light to Moderate Southeast Subic Bay: Slight to Moderate	 26°C 35°C	 26°C 35°C	 25°C 35°C	 25°C 35°C
Tagaytay City	 23°C 33°C	Light to Moderate East - Southeast	 23°C 33°C	 23°C 33°C	 23°C 33°C	 23°C 33°C
Lipa City	 24°C 34°C	Light to Moderate East - Southeast	 24°C 35°C	 24°C 34°C	 24°C 34°C	 24°C 34°C
Legazpi City	 26°C 33°C	Moderate East - Southeast Coastal Waters: Moderate	 26°C 33°C	 27°C 33°C	 26°C 33°C	 26°C 32°C
Puerto Princesa City	 26°C 34°C	Light to Moderate East Coastal Waters: Slight to Moderate	 26°C 34°C	 26°C 34°C	 26°C 34°C	 26°C 33°C
Iloilo City / Bacolod City	 25°C 34°C	Light to Moderate East Coastal Waters: Slight to Moderate	 25°C 33°C	 25°C 33°C	 25°C 33°C	 25°C 34°C
Metro Cebu	 26°C 34°C	Light to Moderate East Coastal Waters: Slight to Moderate	 26°C 34°C	 26°C 34°C	 26°C 33°C	 25°C 34°C
Tacloban City	 26°C 32°C	Moderate East Coastal Waters: Moderate	 26°C 32°C	 26°C 32°C	 26°C 33°C	 26°C 32°C
Cagayan de Oro City	 24°C 33°C	Light to Moderate East Coastal Waters: Slight to Moderate	 23°C 33°C	 23°C 33°C	 24°C 33°C	 23°C 33°C
Valencia City	 22°C 32°C	Light to Moderate Northeast	 22°C 32°C	 22°C 33°C	 22°C 33°C	 22°C 32°C
Metro Davao	 26°C 36°C	Light to Moderate East - Northeast Coastal Waters: Slight to Moderate	 26°C 35°C	 25°C 35°C	 25°C 35°C	 26°C 35°C
Zamboanga City	 25°C 35°C	Light to Moderate East - Northeast Coastal Waters: Slight to Moderate	 25°C 35°C	 25°C 34°C	 25°C 35°C	 25°C 35°C

LEGEND:

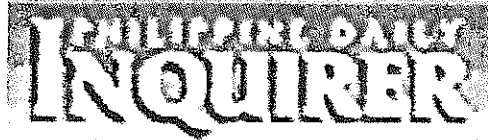
	Clear skies		Partly Cloudy to at times Cloudy with Rainshowers and/or Thunderstorms		Occasional Rains		Rains with Gusty Winds
	Partly Cloudy Skies		Cloudy skies with Rainshowers and/or Thunderstorms		Monsoon Rains / Rains		Stormy
	Partly Cloudy to at times Cloudy with Rainshowers		Light Rains				

END OF FORECAST

PREPARED BY: SJM

CHECKED BY: MPM

16 April 2016



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Abu Sayyaf sets ransom deadline

THE ABU Sayyaf group has given the families of the three foreigners and Filipino woman seized from Samal island last year until April 25 to pay a much lower ransom in exchange for the victims' freedom.

In a new video uploaded on YouTube on Friday, the hostages appealed to the victims' families and their governments to pay P300 million for each of the victims. The abductors had earlier demanded P1 billion each.

A man who introduced himself as John Ridsdel, a Canadian, said they were told it was the "final, absolute warning."

"This is an urgent appeal to our governments and families, if P300 million is not paid for me by 3 p.m. of April 25, they will behead me," said the gaunt-looking Ridsdel.

The other men, who introduced themselves as Robert Hall of Canada and Kjartan Sekkingstad of Norway, made similar appeals while a long knife was held to their neck.

Julie M. Aurelio

6 April 2016



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Sayyaf men post photos of seized Malaysian boat crew

A picture of the four crewmembers of a Malaysian boat kidnapped by suspected Abu Sayyaf gunmen off Sabah has been posted on Facebook, Malaysian newspaper *The Star Online* reported yesterday.

The crewmembers were shown squatting and one of them was holding a piece of paper with "Victor Troy" and "April 8, 2016" written on it.

The captives, who were identified as Wong Teck Kang, 31; Wong Hung Sing, 34; Wong Teck Chii, 29, and Johnny Lau Jung Hien, 21 – all from Sarawak – were among the nine crewmembers of *M/V Masfive 6* seized off Pulau Ligitan around 6 p.m. on April 1.

The report said the kidnappers contacted the families of the hostages "with demands for their release" on Tuesday.

The families met Sarawak Chief Minister Tan Sri Adenan Satem on Thursday to ask for help, the report added.

Star Online said the Facebook page was most likely fictitious, but it could be an attempt at opening a means of communication with the families of the victims.

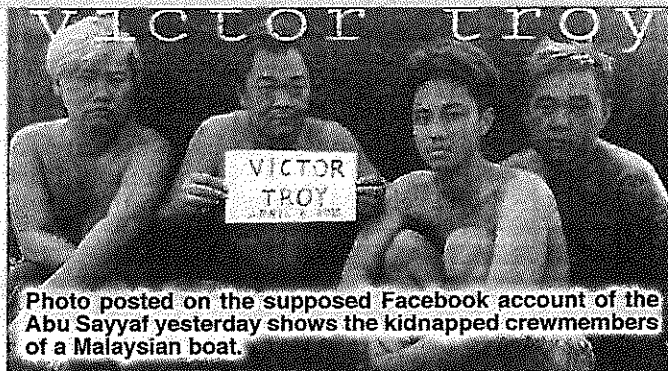
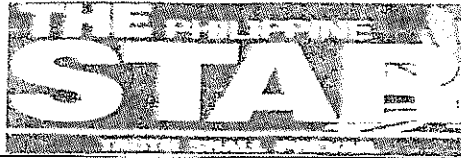


Photo posted on the supposed Facebook account of the Abu Sayyaf yesterday shows the kidnapped crewmembers of a Malaysian boat.

16 April 2016



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Sayyaf issues final ultimatum on four Samal hostages

The Abu Sayyaf has issued what it claims to be a final ultimatum regarding four hostages taken last September from Samal Island as the ransom demand has been lowered.

In video footage released yesterday, the kidnappers set a new deadline on April 25 for Canadians John Ridsdel, Robert Hall and Norwegian Kjartan Sekkingstad to settle their ransom.

The Abu Sayyaf demanded

P300 million for each hostage, down from P1 billion.

The gunmen, however, did not elaborate on the fourth hostage, a Filipina identified as Maritess Flor.

"Notice to the family, to the Canadian government and Philippine government, now the deadline of warning was over last April 8... So now this is really an ultimatum, once you don't meet the demand, we will certainly behead one

By JAIME LAUDE

among these four on April 27 at exactly 3 p.m.," one of the kidnappers said in the video.

All three foreigners, surrounded by 10 of their kidnappers, appealed for the payment of the P300 million for each of them or they will be executed.

The bandits initially demanded P1 billion ransom for each of the four kidnapped victims and issued an ultimatum from March 8 to April 8

with a warning that something terrible would happen to the hostages.

Unidentified gunmen snatched the four from the island resort of Samal in Davao del Norte in September last year. The four subsequently ended up in the hands of the bandits in Sulu.

The military, while acknowledging the safety of the four hostages is its main con-

cern, has been launching a series of operations to rescue the hostages in Sulu and Basilan.

"That's their deadline. Not our deadline. If something happens to the hostages it will be their own responsibility," said Col. Noel Detoyato, Armed Forces of the Philippines Public Affairs Office chief.

The military continued its offensive against the Abu Sayyaf since last week, leaving

several bandits dead and some government troops wounded.

The military said several Abu Sayyaf were killed in clashes Thursday night, while four soldiers were wounded.

Maj. Filemon Tan Jr., designated spokesman for the ground operation, said their forces engaged with some from the bandit group led by Isnilon Hapilon and Furuji Indama. – With Roel Pareño, Jose Rodel Clapano

16 April 2016

The Manila Times

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Soldiers kill ASG man in Basilan clashes

ZAMBOANGA CITY: Army soldiers killed an Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) rebel in fresh clashes that also left four infantrymen wounded in Basilan province.

The fighting erupted late Thursday in the village of Umalon in Ungkaya Pukan town after troops pursuing the rebels caught up with them, resulting in a firefight.

Soldiers from the 18th Infantry Battalion (18thIB) also recovered the body of the slain rebel.

The clashes coincided

with the ASG bombing in Lamitan City, also in Basilan, that injured Senior Insp. Gean Gallardo, chief of police. The improvised explosive device (IED), planted near a gasoline station, went off while policemen were preparing to disarm the bomb.

It was the second bombing in Lamitan this week, after the Abu Sayyaf also detonated an IED outside a nightclub, but no casualty was reported.

AL JACINTO

16 April 2016



Page: 2

Basilan clash erupts anew; 1 slain, 4 hurt

By Mario J. Mallari

Firefight erupted anew on the outskirts of Basilan province yesterday night, resulting in four government troops wounded while at least one Abu Sayyaf bandit killed, the military said yesterday.

Maj. Filemon Tan Jr., spokesman for the military's Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom), said that the latest encounter happened along Barangay Amoloy in Tipo Tipo town at around 9:30 p.m.

Tan said that four members of the Army's 104th Brigade were wounded during the clash while at least one Abu Sayyaf was killed and his body was recovered.

"Troops are still conducting clearing and pursuit operations," Tan said.

This brought to 32 the number of slain terrorists, including Moroccan Mohammad Khattab, since intense clashes started last Saturday in the outskirts of Sitio Bayoko, Barangay Baguindan in Tipo Tipo.

Tan said that the government fatalities remained at 18.

According to Tan, government troops are not affected by allegations of torture against the military by two suspected Abu Sayyaf members who were earlier apprehended.

Tan said that Westmincom

already sent a probe team to look into the allegation.

"Our operations are continuing. Our troops remained focus and are not affected by this," said Tan.

"We know that the public is aware of the sacrifices of our soldiers for our country and flag and to win the peace and address threats of bombings," he added.

On Tuesday, government forces seized an Abu Sayyaf lair in Barangay Baguindan which has 25 bunkers that accommodate about 100 persons.

Recovered from the encampment were 59 sacks of rice, bomb-making materials, medical equipment and various dried and canned goods.

The camp was believed to have been the lair of Khattab, tagged as an expert in bomb making and out to consolidate terrorists groups in southern Philippines.

The military has intensified combat operations against the Abu Sayyaf groups on Isnilon Hapilon in Basilan and Radullan Sahiron in Sulu since November last year upon the order of President Aquino.

Government troops had been scoring heavily against the ASG in both Sulu and Basilan provinces prior to the 10-hour clash in Tipo Tipo that ended in the killing of 18 troops while 53 others were wounded last April 9 when the country was observing Valor Day.

6 April 2016



Pahina. 6

3 ASG bulagta sa militar

Sa pagpapatuloy na operasyon ng militar laban sa mga bandidong Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), iniulat na tatlo-pang ASG members ang napatay sa Brgy. Baguindan, Tipo-Tipo, Basilan.

Ang impormasyon ay inilabas ni Major Filemon Tan, spokesman ng Western Mindanao Command (WestMinCom), base sa report ng kanilang tropa sa Basilan.

Saika-anim na araw na intense operation ng militar, sinabi ni Tan na umaabot na sa 31 bandido ang napatay sa bakbakan na nagsimula pa nitong Sabado.

“May mga pangalan po sila sa amin pero hindi pa po panahon para ilabas,” pahayag pa ni Tan.

Matatandaan na nasa 18 sundalo ang nasawi at 56 iba pa sa unang araw ng sagupaan nitong Sabado.

Napag-alaman na binawian na ng buhay ang isa sa tatlong hinihinalang miyembro ng ASG na nahuli kamakalawa ng militar sa kasagsagan ng engkuwentro.

Kampo ng ASG nakubkob ng militar

Ipinagmalaki ngayon ng Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) na nakubkob na nila ang kampo ng bandidong ASG sa Tipo-Tipo, Basilan.

Ayon kay Tan, narekober ng militar ang 200 bunkers at mga detonating cord sa nakubkob na kuta ng bandidong grupo. (Betchai Julian/Ai Jacinto)

16 April 2016

POLICE FILES

Page. 3

Kuta ng ASG sa Basilan, nakubkob ng militar

IPINAGMALAKI ngayon ng Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) na nakubkob na nila ang kampo ng bandidong Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) sa Tipo-Tipo, Basilan.

Ayon kay Major Felimon Tan Jr., tagapagsalita ng AFP-Western Mindanao Command, narekober ng militar ang 200 bunkers at mga detonating cord sa nakubkob na kuta ng bandidong grupo.

Naniniwala ang opisyal na ginagamit ang kampo bilang training ground ng mga rebelde at pagawaan ng improvised explosive device (IED).

Nagpapatuloy pa rin ang operasyon ng militar para tugisin ang mga kumander ng grupo na sina Ubaida Hapilon at Furiji Indama.

Sinabi ni Tan na kabilang si Indama sa tatlong kritikal ang kalagayan matapos na masugatan sa engkwentro.

16 April 2016

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER

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China slams new US-PH military cooperation

Joint patrols reflect 'Cold War mentality'

BEIJING—Responding to what it called provocative plans for stepped-up US-Philippine military cooperation, China on Thursday said it would “resolutely defend” its interests and accused the two longstanding allies of militarizing the South China Sea and harboring a “Cold War mentality.”

The comments of China's defense ministry came shortly after Thursday's announcement that the United States would send troops and planes to the Philippines for more frequent rotations and would increase joint sea and air patrols with Philippine forces in the hotly disputed South China Sea.

In a move likely to further anger Beijing, US Defense Secretary Ashton Carter on Friday

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CHINA/A6

China slams new US-PH military cooperation

From page A1

visited an aircraft carrier—a potent symbol of US military might—in the South China Sea as part of his current visit to the region, which does not include a stop in China (*See related story on this page*).

“The joint patrols between the United States and the Philippines in the South China Sea are militarizing the region and are nonbeneficial to regional peace and stability,” said a statement posted to the ministry’s website late Thursday.

“The Chinese military will pay close attention to the situation, and resolutely defend China’s territorial sovereignty and maritime interests,” the statement said.

China claims virtually the entire South China Sea as its territory and is building artificial islands there topped with airstrips and other infrastructure.

The Philippines, Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia and Taiwan also claim territory controlled or claimed by China and increased military and coast guard deployments by all sides could increase the potential for conflict.

China has constructed artificial islands on reefs in the Spratly archipelago, close to the Philippines, Malaysia and Vietnam, in waters that are home to some of the world’s most important shipping lanes and where islets, reefs and atolls are believed to be sitting atop vast oil and natural gas reserves.

US military alliances

The Chinese defense ministry’s statement also referenced China’s longstanding opposition to US military alliances in the region. It regards those as a form of unwelcome interference that stymies its desired status as the preeminent military power in the Asia-Pacific region.

“Strengthening the US-Philippine military alliance ... is a sign of a Cold War mentality that is unbeneficial to peace and stability in the South China Sea,” the statement said.

Carter announced the joint patrols in Manila on Thursday, the last day of annual war games between the US and the Philippine militaries, which saw the participation of 9,000 US and Filipino troops and live-fire exercises with an advanced US long-range missile system that may be deployed to defend Philippine territory under a new security deal between the longtime allies.

The South China Sea dispute also featured in talks between Chinese Premier Li Ke-qiang and Malcolm Turnbull, the prime minister of close US ally Australia, which is trying to balance security needs with its economy’s reliance on the Chinese market.

Settle disputes peacefully

“We’ve always had good and constructive discussions but our position is that all claimants, all claimants, should settle disputes peacefully and in accordance with international law,” Turnbull told reporters in Beijing on Friday, a day after his meeting with Li.

Beijing and Washington have repeatedly traded accusations over who is responsible for raising tensions in the South China Sea, with the United States citing China’s island-building project and efforts to block other disputants from parts of the crucial waterway, through which passes more than \$5 trillion in global trade passes each year.

Threat to China security

China says its island developments are mainly for civilian purposes and says US naval activities—especially the sailing of ships close to its newly built islands—threatens China’s security.

“The US has been taking all kinds of actions to provoke China, forcing it to take counteractions that will result in an escalation of the situation,” Su Hao, an international relations expert at Beijing’s China Foreign Affairs University, told The Associated Press.

“The joint patrols are part of the US plan and now the plan is being implemented,” Su said.

Su said Beijing anticipated the United States would eventually launch joint patrols with other nations to further challenge China’s position in the South China Sea.

Chinese media speculate that could involve Japan, China’s historical nemesis with which it is feuding over ownership of a string of uninhabited Japanese-controlled islands in the East China Sea.

“The continuous escalation of the situation will offer the US better excuses and more opportunities to strengthen its military presence in the South China Sea, so as to turn the South China Sea into a region of military confrontation,” Su said. *Reports from AP and AFP*

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WAR GAMES END Philippine Navy Vice Adm. Alexander Lopez and Lt. Gen. John Toolan of the US Marine Forces in the Pacific, the joint directors of Balikatan 2016, shake hands at the conclusion of the war games at Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, on Friday. Behind are Pentagon chief Ashton Carter (left), Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin and AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Hernando Iriberrri.

RICHARD REYES

US vows support for allies in Asia

By Julie M. Aurelio

THE UNITED STATES yesterday vowed to support the Philippines and other allies in Asia amid China's increasingly aggressive behavior in the hotly disputed South China Sea.

"At a time of change in this dynamic region, and democrat-

ic transitions in the Philippines and the United States, we will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder," US Defense Secretary Ashton Carter said at the closing ceremony for this year's Balikatan (shoulder-to-shoulder) war games between US and Philippine troops.

"We will continue to stand up

for our safety and freedoms, for those of our friends and allies, and for the values, principles, and rules-based order that has benefited so many for so long," Carter said.

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US defense chief visits US warship in South China Sea / A6

US vows support for allies in Asia

From page A1

The Pentagon chief arrived in Manila on Wednesday to observe the war games, which involved about 9,000 US and Philippine troops.

Carter was the first American defense chief to observe the annual joint maneuvers, and his visit to Manila was seen as reflecting the United States' commitment to its defense alliance with the Philippines.

Carter also highlighted the presence of soldiers from Australia and Japan as observers in the Balikatan this year, emphasizing that the two key regional players had also expressed concerns over China's expansion in the South China Sea.

"I am pleased to see so many nations interested in working together to promote stability and security in the Asia-Pacific [region]," he said.

China claims almost the whole South China Sea, including waters close to the shores of Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Taiwan, all of which also have overlapping claims to territory in the strategic waterway.

To bolster its sweeping claims, China has built artificial islands in the Spratly archipelago and topped some of them with airstrips that could be used

by military aircraft.

The United States had criticized China for its aggressive moves, challenging Beijing's claims by sending warships and aircraft near the artificial islands in so-called freedom-of-navigation operations.

On Thursday, Carter announced that the United States and the Philippines had begun joint patrols in the South China Sea and that Washington would send troops and military equipment on regular rotations in the Philippines under a new defense deal with Manila.

The announcement angered China, which said it would "resolutely defend" its interests in the South China Sea.

Best practices

In his remarks at the closing ceremony, Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin also welcomed the participation of Australian and Japanese soldiers and military personnel from other countries in the region in the joint exercises as observers.

"[Inviting] observers from other countries contributes to our thrust of enhancing multilateral security cooperation and engaging our other partners. We should continue to use this opportunity to exchange best practices and learn from each other's experiences," Gazmin said.

Armed Forces of the Philippines Chief of Staff Gen. Hernando Iriberry praised the continuing success and achievements of the annual war games.

He cited the expansion of ties with the observer countries, noting that it projects the message that it is better to be inclusive for cooperative security rather than exclusivity.

Iriberry also pointed out the enhanced security cooperation between the United States and the Philippines.

"I think we are poised to become best friends for a long time, and this should bode well for all, for best friends do more together. This is who we are, and this is what we do," he said.

It's more fun in PH

Foreign Secretary Jose Rene Almendras thanked the US soldiers who took part in this year's joint maneuvers, saying he hoped the Americans enjoyed their brief stay in the Philippines.

"We are grateful for your visit, and we hope that as you leave the Philippines, you will agree that it is more fun in the Philippines," Almendras said, using the slogan for the Department of Tourism's 2012 marketing campaign to attract more tourists to the country.

Some 5,000 US troops participated in this year's Balikatan which began on April 4 and ended yesterday.

Around 3,500 Filipino soldiers took part in the joint exercises.

The highlight of the two week joint maneuvers was Thursday's live-fire exercises in Crow Valley, Capas, Tarlac province, during which US troops demonstrated the capability of an advanced US long range missile system.

The exercises also involve territorial defense, mobilization and humanitarian assistance and disaster response.

Summer heat

Almendras noted that the American servicemen participated in the Balikatan exercises in the summer, which he said was "the hottest period of the year."

"May the heat of the summer in the Philippines kindle and enhance the warmth of the friendship from the shared experience that you had with our soldiers and with the Filipino people whose lives you have touched," he said. *With a report from AFP*

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US defense chief visits US warship in South China Sea

By Julie M. Aurelio

US DEFENSE Secretary Ashton Carter visited a warship close to flash-point waters of the South China Sea yesterday in a show of American commitment to maintaining stability in the hotly contested waterway amid China's increasingly aggressive behavior in the region.

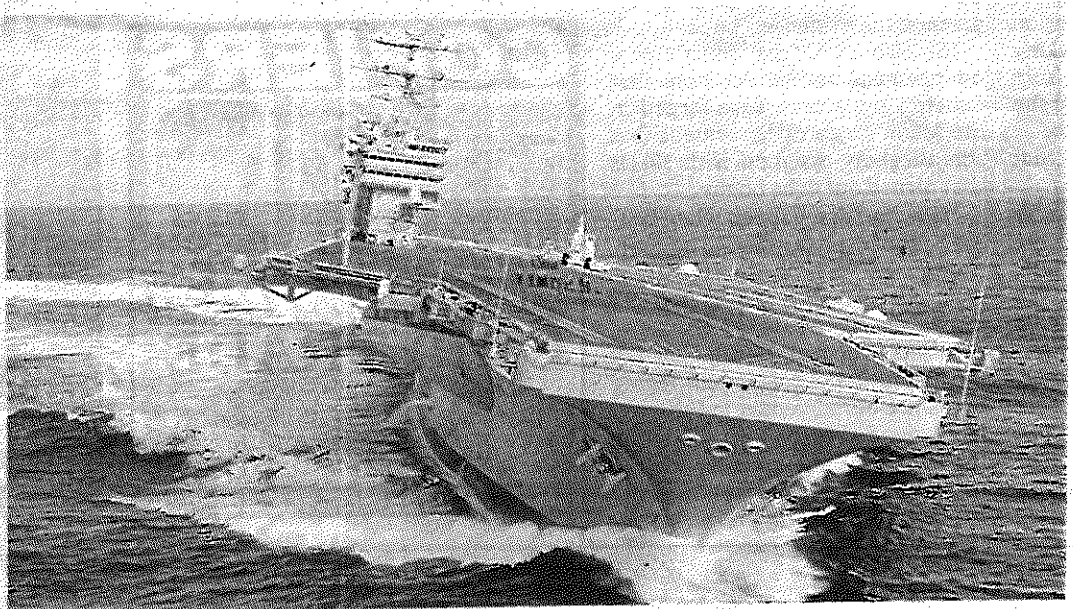
"It is a message to the region that the US intends to continue to play a role in keeping peace and stability in this region," Carter told reporters aboard the USS John C. Stennis, a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier that can carry about 75 planes and helicopter.

Carter took a short flight on a Bell Boeing V-22 Osprey military aircraft to the aircraft carrier from Palawan.

Palawan is the closest Philippine landmass to the Spratly archipelago, where China has constructed artificial islands on seven reefs and built airstrips on some of them that could be used by military aircraft to assert its claim to almost all of the resource-rich South China Sea.

Carter was accompanied by Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin, Armed Forces of the Philippines Chief of Staff Gen. Hernando Iriberri and Defense Undersecretary Emmanuel Bautista.

From the closing ceremony for the annual Balikatan (shoulder-to-shoulder) joint exercises



US MIGHT The USS John C. Stennis has transited the South China Sea six times, according to Pentagon chief Ashton Carter, who visited the aircraft carrier on Friday to show US commitment to maintaining security in the hotly contested waterway.

STENNIS.NAVY.MIL

der-to-shoulder) joint exercises between the US and the Philippine armies at Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City, Carter and the Filipino defense officials rode to Villamor Air Base in Pasay City, where a Boeing C-17 Globemaster aircraft flew them to Palawan.

Philippine and American officials would not disclose exactly where the Stennis was sailing yesterday.

A US official traveling with

Carter told Agence France-Presse (AFP) the Stennis was in Philippine-claimed waters.

During his time aboard the Stennis, Carter saw the launching and landing of F/A 18 "Hornet" fighter jets.

Rear Adm. Ron Boxall, commander of the carrier group with responsibility for the Stennis, said one or two Chinese vessels had been following the carrier but there had been no tensions.

"They have been operating very professionally," Boxall said.

"The Stennis has sailed in these waters many times before, not just here in the South China Sea but all around the vast Asia-Pacific [region], six times in the last several years," Carter said.

From the aircraft carrier, Carter and the Philippine defense officials flew back to Manila in the afternoon.

With a report from AFP

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'US to support Phl vs coercion, intimidation'

US From Page 1

Ash Carter visits warship in Spratlys

ABOARD THE USS JOHN C. STENNIS – The United States is committed to back the Philippines against coercion and intimidation, Defense Secretary Ashton Carter said yesterday.

The US official issued the pronouncement before visiting the *John C. Stennis* as the warship sailed close to flashpoint waters of the South China Sea and West Philippine Sea yesterday.

Beijing has reacted defiantly to an American military build-up in the area.

Carter's trip to the *Stennis* was the latest effort by the US to show its commitment to maintaining security in the hotly contested waters, where China has rattled nerves by building artificial islands on islets and reefs claimed by some of its Southeast Asian neighbors.

Before flying from Manila to

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visit the warship, Carter emphasized the US would support the Philippines and other allies as they faced "coercion and intimidation."

"We will continue to stand up for our safety and freedoms, for those of our friends and allies, and for the values, principles and rules-based order that has benefited so many for so long," Carter said at a closing ceremony for the annual US-Philippine Balikatan war games.

The roughly two-hour visit to the *Stennis* came after Carter announced on Thursday that the US had launched joint naval patrols with the Philippines in the sea, as he spoke of growing concern about China's "land reclamation" and "militarization" of the region.

He also said the US would deploy hundreds of troops, as well as warplanes, to the Philippines.

China claims nearly all of the strategically vital sea, even waters close to its Southeast Asian neighbors, and has in recent years built the islands in an effort to assert what it insists are its sovereign rights.

The Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan also have overlapping claims to parts of the sea, which is home to some of the world's most important shipping lanes and is believed to sit atop vast oil and natural gas reserves.

China built the islands on

pelago, which are close to the Philippines and Malaysia, as well as airstrips capable of accommodating military aircraft.

China in 2012 also took control of Panatag (Scarborough) Shoal just 220 kilometers from Zambales. The shoal is 650 kilometers from China's nearest major land mass.

Carter visited the *Stennis*, along with journalists, after making a short flight to the carrier from Antonio Bautista Air Base in Palawan.

"With each Balikatan and each cruise by the *Stennis*, with each new multilateral exercise and each new defense agreement, we add a stitch to the fabric of the region's security network," Carter said in prepared remarks earlier. "This is the network – peaceful, principled and inclusive – America continues to stand for, and stand with."

"Together you rehearsed maritime interdiction operations so we can respond more quickly to threats at sea and together you simulated the recovery of oil and gas platform for possible forces in the South China (Sea)," Carter said in a speech addressed to troops at the closing ceremonies for Balikatan.

"Through it all, you made our strong alliance even stronger. You helped prepare our nations for this important alliance so we can confront very real challenges," he added.

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dynamic region and democratic transitions in the Philippines and the US, we will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder and we will continue to stand up for our safety and freedom, for those of our friends and allies and for the values, principles and rules-based order that has benefited so many for so long," Carter declared.

The US has already conducted what it calls "freedom of navigation" patrols in the area, sailing within 12-nautical mile territorial limits around disputed islands controlled by China to underscore its right to navigate the seas.

Carter said the US strategy was aimed at maintaining peace and lawful settlement of disputes, not provoking a conflict with a major world power.

"Countries that don't stand for those things, or don't stand with those things, are going to end up isolating themselves. But that will be self-isolation, not isolation by us," Carter said.

The carrier stop caps off a trip to Asia designed to highlight the expanding partnerships the US is building with countries in the region, which Carter said had been asking for a greater US role.

Hundreds of US troops and some aircraft will stay behind in the Philippines temporarily, and on Thursday, the two countries revealed they had begun conducting joint patrols in the South China Sea and West Philippine Sea.

Defiant reaction

China reacted defiantly to

Thursday's announcement of the joint patrols and US deployments to the Philippines, with its defense ministry warning the military would protect the nation's territory.

"US-Philippine joint patrols in the South China Sea promote regional militarization and undermine regional peace and stability," said a Chinese defense ministry statement released late Thursday.

"The Chinese military will pay very close attention to related developments and firmly safeguard China's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests," the statement read.

The 275 US troops and nine aircraft that Carter said would stay in the Philippines following the Balikatan war games are the first major deployments under the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement finalized in January.

The pact allows US forces to rotate soldiers and military hardware through the Philippines, an important part of American efforts to expand its military presence throughout the Asia-Pacific.

US forces will initially have access to five Philippine military bases, including two close to the hotspot areas of the South China Sea and West Philippine Sea.

Philippine Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin on Thursday said he hoped the US efforts would "deter uncalled-for action by the Chinese."

The heightened US military presence in the Philippines is

an important plank of the US so-called pivot to Asia under President Barack Obama.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang yesterday blamed the US deploying extra forces to the Asia-Pacific for any rise in tensions in the region. "Peaceful settlement of the disputes is what regional countries, including China and parties directly concerned by the South China Sea, aspire to," Lu told reporters in Beijing.

"Before the US rebalance to Asia, the relevant disputes had already existed for several decades."

Still, more fun in Phi

At the conclusion of the Balikatan, Foreign Affairs Secretary Jose Rene Almendras told US and other foreign troops "despite the heat of summer, you will agree that it is more fun in the Philippines."

Thousands of US troops and other military personnel prepared to leave yesterday after their joint military drills with Filipino soldiers, airmen and sailors.

"For our American friends and other foreigners who are here with us, thank you for coming to the Philippines during the hottest period of our year. Thank you for sacrificing the sweat shared with our Filipino soldiers," Almendras said in his speech at Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City.

The Philippines, in the past days, has been experiencing extraordinarily hot summer weather due to El Niño weath-

er phenomenon.

More than 10,000 US and Filipino soldiers, and some Australian and Japanese troops, participated in this year's joint war drill. Officials said the tensions in the South China Sea have nothing to do with the launching of the joint exercises.

Almendras pointed out the bilateral security cooperation between the Philippines and the US has always been a model for other security arrangements, especially for tackling terrorism and improving disaster preparedness and response.

He commended Vice Admiral Alexander Lopez, Balikatan exercise director for the Philippines; and Lt. Gen. John Toolan, exercise director for the US, for the successful conduct of the Balikatan.

He also stressed Carter's visit to personally observe Balikatan was the first by a US defense chief.

"Secretary Carter, we appreciate your personal commitment to the US engagement in Asia, and the defense alliance of the Philippines in particular," Almendras said.

"We cannot over-emphasize our appreciation for the principled position by the US government to the territorial and maritime disputes in the South China Sea by upholding the freedom of navigation and unimpeded lawful commerce, non-use of force and threat of force and the peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with international law," Almendras added.

– Jaime Laude, Reuters, AFP

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Vice Admiral Alexander Lopez (left), the Philippines' director for Balikatan, and his counterpart Lt. Gen. John Toofan (right), commander of the US Marine Forces in the Pacific, link arms with (from left) Foreign Secretary Jose Almendras, US Defense Secretary Ashton Carter, Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin and military chief Gen. Hernando Iriberri during the ceremony marking the end of the annual joint military exercise at Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City yesterday.

MICHAEL VARGAS

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Sea situation ripe for miscalculation

By JOSE KATIGBAK

STAR Washington bureau

WASHINGTON – Chinese coercion, artificial island construction and militarization in the South China Sea have placed the region's stability and security at risk, the head of the US Pacific Command Admiral Harry Harris Jr. said.

Testifying before a US House appropriations defense committee on Thursday, he said the lack of transparency in China's overall strategic intent behind its military investments and activities created instability and anxiety and forced its South China

Sea neighbors to expand their own military capabilities and seek stronger relationships with the US and with one another.

"The result is a situation that is ripe for miscalculation that could escalate to conflicts that no one wants, in an area vital to global prosperity," Harris said.

Chinese leaders seem to believe that through coercion, intimidation and force they can bypass accepted methods of dispute resolution, he said.

They have demonstrated

this through aggressive artificial island building and by growing a fleet of "white hull" ships and fishing vessels whose purpose is to dominate the area without the appearance of overt military force.

Harris said China was now turning its artificial island projects into operating bases for forward-staging military capabilities – under the rubric of being civilian facilities.

"China views the South China Sea as a strategic front-

line in their quest to dominate East Asia out to the Second Island Chain. I view their thinking as approaching a new 'Great Game,'" he said.

Although the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and Taiwan have also conducted land reclamation in the South China Sea, their total – about 46.5 hectares (115 acres) over 45 years – is dwarfed by the size, scope, speed and scale of China's massive buildup, he said.

In a little over two years China has constructed more than 1,214 hectares (3,000 acres) of artificial land.

Equally disturbing is Beijing's repeated pronouncements that it will not accept any decision issued by the arbitral tribunal in the case filed by the Philippines under the Law of the Sea Convention challenging China's claim to almost all of the South China Sea, Harris said.

"China's actions undermine the international rules-based order," he said.

"My goal is to convince China that the best way ahead is through peaceful cooperation, participation and conformance in a rules-based order, and by honoring agreements made in good faith," Harris said.

He said a third US Coast Guard cutter to be given to the Philippines would significantly enhance its navy's maritime security capabilities.

"We are exploring ways to ensure that this vessel is delivered fully mission capable," he said.

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China: Enhanced US-Phil ties invoke Cold War mindset

SHANGHAI – Plans to deepen US-Philippine military ties, including joint patrols in the South China Sea, reflect a “Cold War mentality,” China’s defense ministry said, pledging to resolutely oppose any infringement on the country’s sovereignty.

The comments, published on the defense ministry’s website late on Thursday, come after the United States said it would ramp up its military presence in the Philippines and announced that the two countries had started the joint patrols in the disputed waters.

“A strengthening of the US-Philippine military alliance... is a manifestation of the Cold War mentality and is not conducive to peace and

stability in the South China Sea,” the defense ministry said.

China claims most of the energy-rich waters of the South China Sea, through which about \$5 trillion in ship-borne trade passes every year. But the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia, Taiwan and Vietnam also have claims.

Countries across the region have expressed concern over China’s growing assertiveness in the South China Sea, which has intensified with a rapid buildup of man-made islands in the Spratly archipelago, to which the Philippines and Vietnam lay claim.

Joint US-Philippine naval patrols “promote the militarization of the region,” the Chinese defense ministry said, urging that the bilateral military coop-

eration avoid prejudicing the interests of third parties.

“The Chinese army will monitor this trend closely, and will resolutely safeguard China’s territorial sovereignty as well as maritime rights and interests,” it said.

Visiting the Philippines, US Defense Secretary Ash Carter said on Thursday the broader American military presence was not meant to provoke conflict with the Chinese.

In a move likely to further anger Beijing, Carter said he will be visiting an aircraft carrier – a potent symbol of US military might – in the South China Sea during his current visit to the region, which does not include a stop in China.

The ministry’s statement also referenced China’s longstanding opposition to US

military alliances in the region. It regards those as a form of unwelcome interference that stymies its desired status as the pre-eminent military power in the Asia-Pacific.

The South China Sea dispute also featured in talks between Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and Malcolm Turnbull, the prime minister of close US ally Australia, which is trying to balance security needs with its economy’s reliance on the Chinese market.

“We’ve always had good and constructive discussions but our position is that all claimants, all claimants, should settle disputes peacefully and in accordance with international law,” Turnbull told reporters in Beijing on Friday, a day after his meeting with Li.

Beijing and Washington have repeatedly traded accusations over who is responsible for raising tensions in the South China Sea, with the US citing China’s island-building project and efforts to block other disputants from parts of the crucial waterway.

China says its island developments are mainly for civilian purposes and says US naval activities – especially the sailing of ships close to its newly built islands – threaten China’s security.

“The US has been taking all kinds of actions to provoke China, forcing it to take counter-actions that will result in an escalation of the situation,” Su Hao, an international relations expert at Beijing’s China Foreign Affairs University, told *The Associated Press*.

“The joint patrols are part of the US plan and now the plan is being implemented,” Su said.

Su said Beijing anticipates the US will eventually launch joint patrols with other nations to further challenge China’s position in the South China Sea. Chinese media speculate that could involve Japan, China’s historical nemesis with which it is feuding over ownership of a string of uninhabited Japanese-controlled islands in the East China Sea.

“The continuous escalation of the situation will offer the US better excuses and more opportunities to strengthen its military presence in the South China Sea, so as to turn the South China Sea into a region of military confrontation,” Su said.

– Reuters, AP | 5285, 5295

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BusinessMirror

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CHINA ACCUSES U.S., PHL OF HARBORING 'COLD WAR MENTALITY'



A FILIPINO worker drives his tricycle past a US-made Himars (High-Mobility Advanced Rocket System) on a static display, after taking part in the 11-day joint US-Philippines military exercise, dubbed Balikatan 2016 (Shoulder-to-Shoulder 2016), on Thursday in Crow Valley, Tarlac. US Defense Secretary Ash Carter arrived in the country on Wednesday for talks with President Aquino and other top defense and military officials and to visit two military camps, which are being utilized for the exercise under the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement. AP

RESPONDING to what it says are provocative plans for stepped-up US-Philippines military cooperation, China says it will "resolutely defend" its interests and accuses the two long-standing allies of militarizing the region and harboring a "Cold War mentality."

The ministry's comments came shortly after Thursday's announcement that the United States would send troops and planes to the Philippines for more frequent rotations and will increase joint sea and air patrols with Philippine forces in the South China Sea.

In a move likely to further anger Beijing, US Defense Secretary Ash Carter says he will be visiting an aircraft carrier—a potent symbol of US military might—in the South China Sea during his current visit to the region, which does not include a stop in China.

"The joint patrols between the United States and the Philippines in the South China Sea are militarizing the region and are nonbeneficial to regional peace and stability," said a statement posted on the ministry's web site late Thursday.

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“The Chinese military will pay close attention to the situation, and resolutely defend China’s territorial sovereignty and maritime interests,” the statement said.

China claims virtually the entire South China Sea as its territory and is building manmade islands there topped with airstrips and other infrastructure. The Philippines, Vietnam and others also claim territory controlled or claimed by China, and increased military and coast-guard deployments by all sides could increase the potential for conflict.

The ministry’s statement also referenced China’s long-standing opposition to US military alliances in the region. It regards those as a form of unwelcome interference that stymies its desired status as the preeminent military power in Asia Pacific.

“Strengthening the US-Philippines military alliance... is a sign of a Cold War mentality that is unbeneficial to peace and stability in the South China Sea,” the statement said. The South China Sea dispute also featured in talks between Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and Malcolm Turnbull, the prime minister

CONTINUED ON A2

China accuses US, PHL of harboring ‘Cold War mentality’

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of close US ally Australia which is trying to balance security needs with its economy’s reliance on the Chinese market.

“We’ve always had good and constructive discussions but our position is that all claimants should settle disputes peacefully and in accordance with international law,” Turnbull told reporters in Beijing on Friday, a day after his meeting with Li.

Beijing and Washington have repeatedly traded accusations over who is responsible for raising tensions in the South China Sea, with the US citing China’s island-building project and efforts to block other disputants from parts of the crucial waterway, through which passes more than \$5

trillion in global trade passes each year.

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“The joint patrols are part of the US plan and now the plan is being implemented,” Su said.

Su added that Beijing anticipates the US will eventually launch joint patrols with other nations to further challenge China’s position in the South China Sea. Chinese media speculate that could involve Japan, China’s historical nemesis with which it is feuding over ownership of a string of uninhabited Japanese-controlled islands in the East China Sea.

“The continuous escalation of the situation will offer the US better excuses and more opportunities to strengthen its military presence in the South China Sea, so as to turn the South China Sea into a region of military confrontation,” Su said. AP

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The Manila Times

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US Defense chief ensures PH security

BY FERNAN MARASIGAN
REPORTER

"WE will continue to ensure the Philippines remains secure and the Asia Pacific remains a region where everyone can rise and prosper for generations to come."

Shortly after making this assurance, US Defense Secretary Ashton Carter, together with top Philippine military and defense officials, flew to the West Philippine Sea (South China Sea) to visit a nuclear-powered supercarrier of the US Navy that is sailing the disputed waterway.

In his speech at the closing ceremony of Exercise Balikatan (Shoulder-to-Shoulder) held at Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City (Metro Manila), Carter mentioned his plan to visit the USS John C. Stennis later Friday afternoon, but did not say if he will be tagging

along top officials of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Defense Department.

"Later today I will visit the aircraft carrier USS John C. Stennis sailing in the South China Sea and after so, sailors and marines, that is after some of its sailors and Marines participated with you in Balikatan, just as this year is the 32nd Balikatan extending back to the early 1980s. The Stennis has sailed in these waters many times before, and sailed not just here in the South China Sea but all around the vast Asia Pacific, six times in the last several years, so far of this

deployment it has operated near the republic of Korea, through the Sea of Japan, in Guam and now the South China Sea," said Carter.

But sources said Carter was joined by Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin, Gen. Hernando Iriberri and AFP Chief of Staff left Palawan at about 1 p.m. aboard a V-22 Osprey.

The visit came amid increasing concern over China's saber-rattling in the region.

During the closing ceremony at Camp Aguinaldo, Carter said Balikatan is another demonstration of the long-standing and now rapidly growing network of security in the Asia Pacific.

For the nth time, Carter echoed US President Barack Obama's pronouncement that the US' commitment to the Philippines "remains ironclad."

"For 65 years our two nations have been standing together and America's commitment to the Philippines remains ironclad,"

said Carter in his speech at the ceremony held at Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City (Metro Manila).

The US defense chief thanked all the US and Filipino soldiers who he said made the two countries' alliance even stronger in the face of real challenges.

"Through it all you made our strong alliance even stronger, you helped prepare our nations of this important alliance to confront very real challenges to face, and you've demonstrated to the region and to the world that United States and the Philippines are standing together to defend the rules and principles that have benefited so many in the region," he pointed out.

Meanwhile, Carter announced that some US servicemen who participated the war games will be staying in the country on a rotational basis to continue joint training and working with Filipino soldiers "to contribute to regional security and stability."

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China reacts to US-RP force build-up, warns military to defend its territories

China reacted defiantly to the announcement of Philippine-US build-up, with its defense ministry warning the military would protect the nation's territory.

"US-Philippine joint patrols in the South China Sea promote regional militarization and undermine regional peace and stability," said a Chinese defense ministry statement released late Thursday.

"The Chinese military will pay very close attention to related developments, and firmly safeguard China's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests," China stated.

China's reaction came with the report of US Defense Secretary Ashton Carter saying he would visit a warship close to flashpoint waters of the South

China Sea on Friday.

Beijing reacted defiantly to an American military build-up in the area.

The 275 US troops and nine aircraft that Carter said would stay in the Philippines following the Balikatan (shoulder to shoulder) war games are the first major deployments under a bilateral defense pact finalized in January.

The pact allows US forces to rotate soldiers and military hardware through the Philippines, an important part of American efforts to expand its military presence throughout the Asia-Pacific.

US forces will initially have access to five Philippine

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China reacts to US-RP force build-up, warns military to defend its territories

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military bases, including two close to the hotspot areas of the South China Sea.

Philippine Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin on Thursday said he hoped the US efforts would "deter uncalled-for action by the Chinese."

The heightened US military presence in the Philippines is an important plank of the United States' so-called re-balance to Asia under President Barack Obama.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang on Friday blamed the United States' deploying extra forces to the Asia-Pacific for any rise in tensions in the region.

"Peaceful settlement of the disputes is what regional countries including China and parties directly concerned by the South China Sea aspire to," Lu told reporters in Beijing.

"Before the US rebalance to Asia, the relevant disputes had already existed for several decades."

Carter's trip to the USS John C. Stennis is the latest move by the United States to show it is committed to maintaining security in the hotly contested waters, where China has built artificial islands on islets and reefs that are close to the Philippines.

In announcing his short visit to the warship, which was due to take place on Friday afternoon, Carter emphasized it would support the Philippines and other allies as they faced "coercion and intimidation".

"We will continue to stand up for our safety and freedoms, for those of our friends and allies, and for the values, principles, and rules-based order that has benefited so many for so long," Carter said at the closing ceremony for the 10-day war games.

China claims nearly all of the strategically vital sea, even waters close to its Southeast Asian neighbors, and has in recent years built the islands in an effort to assert what it insists are its sovereign rights.

The Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan also have overlapping claims to parts of the sea, which is home to some of the world's most important shipping lanes and is believed to sit atop vast oil reserves.

China has constructed the

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islands on reefs in the Spratly archipelago, which are close to the Philippines and Malaysia, as well as airstrips capable of accommodating military aircraft.

China in 2012 also took control of a rich fishing shoal just 220 kilometers from the main Philippine landmass. The shoal is 650 kilometers from China's nearest major landmass.

Philippine and American officials would not disclose exactly where the Stennis was sailing on Friday.

However Carter was due to make only a short flight to the carrier from a military base on the southwestern Philippine island of Palawan, which is the closest landmass to the Spratlys.

Carter announced on Thursday that the United States had launched joint naval patrols with the Philippines in the South China Sea, as he spoke of growing concern about China's "land reclamation" and "militarization" of the region.

He also said the United States would deploy hundreds of troops, as well as warplanes, to the Philippines.

Pinoy, US troops now more prepared—Carter

Together, Filipino and American troops are now more prepared to face any challenge that may come, including in the disputed South China Sea, following the conclusion of the 14-day PH-US Balikatan bilateral exercises.

Thus, declared United States Defense Secretary Carter yesterday during the closing ceremony of Balikatan 2016 participated in by more than 7,000 Filipino and American troops.

"Together you can prove our combined command and control, together you rehearsed maritime interdiction operations so we can respond more quickly to threats on the sea and together, you simulated the recovery of oil and gas platform for possible forces in the South China Sea," Carter said.

According to Carter, the Balikatan 2016 further enhanced the strong defense alliance of the Philippines and the US, stressing the US "ironclad" commitment to assist the Philippines under the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty.

"Through it all, you made our strong alliance even stronger, you helped prepare our nations of this

important alliance to confront very real challenges to face, and you've demonstrated to the region and to the world that United States and Philippines are standing together to defend the rules and principles that have benefited so many in the region," he said.

"At a time of change in this dynamic region and democratic transitions in the Philippines and the United States, we will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder and we will continue to stand up for our safety and freedom, for those of our friends and allies and for the values, principles, and rule based order that has benefited so many for so long," he added.

The US defense chief said both countries should expect intense and bigger military activities as the US has shifted its focus to the region through two major security arrangements.

For his part, Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin urged planners of the next Balikatan to further improve the activities covered by the bilateral training.

"We should keep in mind that the activity does not end with the execution, an assessment and evaluation of each activity should be carefully undertaken to continue improving the conduct of Balikatan. We should see to it that the activity remains to be of high value and great impact as agreed upon during the inaugural of Philippines-US 2+2 ministerial consultations in 2012," he said.

"Such an assessment should also be undertaken for other activities, in particular, planners should ensure that the Balikatan serves its primary purpose which is to test the Philippines-US MDB (Mutual Defense Board) concept plan and that the activity remains as a major bilateral exercise between the Philippines and the US, planners should also be able to identify the specific activities under balikatan where multilateral security collaboration and inter-agency coordination could be optimized," he added.

Gazmin said that aside from developing interoperability between Filipino and American servicemen and enhancing bilateral cooperation, "Balikatan also contributes to regional security cooperation."

He said that the capability developed by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) during the

Balikatan "helps us do our part in maintaining regional peace and stability."

Carter also acknowledged Balikatan contributes to the regional stability in the Asia Pacific region.

"In each balikatan and each crew by the USS Stennis, with each new multilateral exercise and each new defense agreement, we had a stitch to the fabric of the region's security network," said Carter.

"This is the network, peaceful, principled, and inclusive America continues to stand for and stand with," he said.

The US defense chief likened the security in the Asia Pacific to oxygen.

"We have enough of it, you pay no attention of it, but when you don't have enough you can think of nothing else," Carter said.

"Here in the Asia Pacific, through exercises like Balikatan and real world operations, all of you Americans and Filipinos, soldiers sailors airmen and marines provide that oxygen. The security that enables millions upon millions of people all around the Asia Pacific to be safe, to raise their children and to dream their dreams, to live lives," Carter added.

Balikatan 2016, the 32nd iteration of the annual bilateral exercises between the Philippine and US troops, started last April 2. More than 7,000 Filipino and American troops participated in the actual training which was highlighted by the livefire at Crow Valley featuring the US' high mobility artillery rocket system (Himars).

Gazmin noted the significance of the presence of Carter during the last phase of the Balikatan as he cited the participation of servicemen from other allied nations like Australia, Japan, Canada, United Kingdom, Brunei, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Republic of Korea, Timor Leste and New Zealand as observers.

"The invitation of observers from other countries contributes to our thrust of enhancing multilateral security cooperation and engaging our other partners. We should continue to use this opportunity to exchange best practices and learn from each others' experiences," said Gazmin.

Mario J. Mallari and AFP

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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'Rambotito' tells 'Punisher': Your days are numbered

By Tarra Quismundo

RAMBOTITO will not be cowed by the Punisher. Vice President Jejomar Binay yesterday said rival presidential candidate Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte should be ready to "kneel down and pray" as he will soon be brought to justice—if Binay wins, of course. "Your days are numbered. The law will soon catch up with you," Binay said in a strongly

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'Rambotito' tells 'Punisher': Your days are numbered

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worded statement as he ramped up his rhetoric against Duterte whom he called "Mr. Butcher who kills children and the poor."

Binay was obviously trying to get back at the Duterte camp for saying that the former city mayor of Makati would be the first "big fish" to be thrown in jail for corruption if Duterte, who is now the recognized front-runner, becomes President.

For more than a week now, the Vice President has been relentless in his attacks against the tough-talking Davao mayor—nicknamed the Punisher for his uncompromising stance against criminals—warning that he will soon be held accountable for his alleged involvement in extrajudicial killings.

"You admitted many times—you even bragged about it—that you killed thousands who are suspected to be involved in crime You should be made to answer under the law and in the eyes of God," Binay told those attending his campaign sorties.

Not afraid

He began pouncing on his rival on April 7, when Duterte started scaling the polls on preferred presidential candidates. Earlier this week, Duterte became No. 1, while Binay had to settle for third.

In his statement yesterday, Binay told off the Duterte camp for

threatening to send him to jail for corruption if the Davao mayor becomes President.

"Do not threaten me. I am not afraid of you," said Binay, who was famously given the "Rambotito" (Little Rambo) moniker when, as the Makati mayor, he was photographed wearing fatigues and carrying an Uzi during one of the coup attempts against President Corazon Aquino.

Binay, whose key campaign platform is poverty alleviation, accused Duterte of killing only the poor.

"You should be the one that should fear God and the law. Instead of helping the poor, you kill them based on mere suspicion. You never kill anyone who is rich, any big-time [drug] pusher or smuggler in your city," he said.

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MACHISMO OVERLOAD The gloves are off, as far as tough-talking Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte aka “The Punisher” (left) and Vice President Jejomar Binay aka “Rambotito” are concerned. The rival presidential candidates have publicly traded threats, insults and accusations during their campaign sorties.

INQUIRER FILE PHOTOS

“Your plan to eliminate poverty is to eliminate the poor. Violence is not the solution to poverty. Killing minors is not the solution,” he said.

Killing the poor

Binay took his anti-Duterte campaign to Dipolog City yesterday, where he drew a contrast between his “respect [for] the right to life” and Duterte’s allegedly grim record of extrajudicial killings.

“I respect a person’s right to life. That’s why when I was Makati mayor, the poor did not die because of sickness or poverty. Why? Because hospitalization and medicine are free for the poor,” he said, addressing a crowd at the Dipolog City

plaza.

“That’s my experience: I help the poor live. I do not kill. I am not a butcher who kills,” he said.

By contrast, he said Duterte kills the poor. “He does not kill anyone who is rich. Why the poor? Because they can’t put up a fight,” Binay said.

Binay then brought out photos of the Alia siblings—Richard, 18, Christopher, 17, and Bobby, 14—who were allegedly executed by the Davao Death Squad between 2001 and 2002 “based on mere suspicion.”

He had first cited the case of the siblings in a radio interview on

April 7, when he launched his assault on Duterte.

On Thursday, Binay promised to bring death squad executions to justice and hold Duterte and the hit men accountable, if elected President.

So sue me

Responding to Binay’s accusations, Duterte yesterday said he had already been cleared by the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) and the Department of Justice concerning his alleged involvement in extrajudicial killings.

“If you have evidence against me, then file a case,” Duterte told

Binay.

The Davao mayor said he had already been investigated by the CHR, when it was headed by senatorial candidate Leila de Lima, on his alleged role in the killing of criminals in Davao City and nothing was found.

He said De Lima had twice investigated him on this issue but never filed a case.

Duterte also said he had never killed women and children. “I have never killed an innocent person,” he said.

He explained that he had set up a multimillion-peso drug rehabilitation center where drug dependents could voluntarily go for re-

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habilitation.

"Why would I kill the women and children, it's better to rehabilitate them," he said.

But he admitted having shot and killed criminals who kidnapped a teenager.

He also said he has a standing order for the police not to hesitate in shooting a criminal who violently resists arrest.

Justice, not vengeance

As two of her rivals threaten each other with jail over corruption and murder allegations, Poe said all crimes should be investigated, but the motive should be justice, not vengeance.

"We should investigate any issue of corruption or abuse. But a President must be fair and give the parties due process," Poe told reporters in Pili, Camarines Sur province.

"It's difficult if we would just keep on wanting to seek revenge," Poe said.

"If there is something to investigate, we should do so but we should follow the proper legal process and have a swift trial," she added.

Poe also addressed criticisms of the statement she earlier made about making Duterte her anticrime czar should she win. She said it was not an endorsement of the Davao mayor's alleged support of extrajudicial killings.

If Duterte gets such a position, he would have to follow the law and due process, she said.

With reports from Nancy Carvajal and Leila B. Salaverria

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Documenting Duterte

BUSINESS MATTERS

Edilberto C. de Jesus



in dealing with criminals, conceding that the national government must handle revolutionary groups. But the prospect of assuming the presidency has already tempted him to make unilateral policy pronouncements on the longest-running insurgency in the world.

Many in the business sector, and even among the military, would support the P-Noy administration's plan to engage in talks with the CPP/National Democratic Front, which Duterte also favors. But without careful preparation to arrive mutually acceptable terms of engagement, such talks are unlikely to bear fruit. And yet, Duterte has already announced that he would invite "[Jose Ma.] Sison and other communist leaders to join his Cabinet. He further declared that would give the CPP/NPA three Cabinet portfolios: agrarian reform, social welfare and development, and environment and natural resources.

His supporters applaud Duterte's decisiveness and his readiness to take action. As mayor, he probably not encountered much resistance from the City Council to any of his initiatives. He will find the legislature and the Supreme Court more challenging governance partners, and Manila a more complex environment.

The NDF was more realistic in its assessment of the Duterte offer. Luis Jalandoni, chair of the N peace panel, courteously declined the invitation to take Cabinet appointments in the Duterte Cabinet. Even the NDF recognized that the issue of peace required more than a private understanding between Sison and the Philippine president, even if he happens to be Duterte.

Edilberto C. de Jesus (edcdejesus@gmail.com) professor emeritus at the Asian Institute of Management. Prof. Rofel Brion's Tagalog translation of this column and others earlier published, together with other commentaries, are in <http://sandthoughts.ph>.

PEOPLE REMAIN ambivalent about Mayor Rodrigo Duterte. He wants to jail Vice President Jejomar Binay for plunder; Binay wants to jail him for his "death squad." Sen. Grace Poe wants to make him crime czar. (Mar Roxas supporters say, Elect him and nail two for the price of one.)

With Duterte's current lead in the election surveys, however, people should begin considering what a Duterte presidency might mean. Not so easy to do; he has performed as a one-note musician, trumpeting his law-and-order credentials in Davao City.

His political opponents have questioned his record, citing police data (2010-15) documenting Davao as third highest in the number of robbery cases, second in rape cases, and first in murder cases. Then there is the "death squad" issue—that, whatever the achievements, the Duterte approach to controlling crime had come at the high cost of other crimes, involving extrajudicial executions that allow no appeal.

Duterte has repeatedly pledged to end criminality in the country within three to six months, or give up the presidency. Perhaps it's just empty talk, although his official running mate, Sen. Alan Cayetano, is now echoing the six-month schedule. To be fair, Duterte had warned the public to be careful about what it asked for in "forcing" him to run: Blood will have to flow for him to keep his promise.

But he should now expect more rigorous research on his past record and policy-related statements. He had been quite ready to speak his mind, even on delicate political issues—as when he addressed the Davao Trade Expo on Oct. 29, 2013, at the SMX Convention Center. (Davao Today's report appeared on its website and on that of Bulatlat.com, but both links are no longer functioning.)

In that speech, Duterte tackled the issue of the "revolutionary taxation" imposed by the New People's Army in Region 11. Davao Today headlined his typically blunt advice to businessmen confronted by NPA tax collectors: "NPA taxation a reality, not navi-

them." The actual quote: "If you pay to the [Bureau of Internal Revenue], you prepare also for the NPA."

In December 2012, Duterte was quoted as admitting to paying revolutionary taxes amounting to P125 million a year. He later explained that he had spoken at a Communist Party of the Philippines anniversary celebration in an area that Typhoon "Pablo" had devastated. The money he gave, he said, was not a revolutionary tax payment, but donations he had solicited for disaster victims. In the absence of any barangay captain, he entrusted the money to the NPA.

He also lauded the NPA for offering to pay compensation to all the victims of its grenade attack on a gym in Paquibato. "When they informed me they will pay P5,000, I said, 'Good.' When I asked where they will get the money, they said they will get it from banana planters," he quipped.

The quip meant that businessmen will have to pay for the violence that the NPA had inflicted on undeserving victims. This did not seem to bother Duterte, who pointed out that the CPP had been the victim of "historical injustice." Sadly, he is not as concerned about the "historical injustice" dealt to the victims of martial law.

According to the survey agencies, Duterte draws support from the A, B, C sectors from which would come the investors with money to risk in Mindanao. Did they give this support knowing of the Duterte prescription on revolutionary taxes?

Duterte has admitted that his experience was

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EDCA striptease

The United States was peeling off the true breadth of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) signed with Noynoy through its Defense Secretary Ashton Carter, who revealed a lot of surprises that the opaque administration of Noynoy withheld from Filipinos.

Carter, among others, revealed that for sometime now "joint" sea patrols of Philippines and American ships have been conducted in the South China Sea, presumably since January when the Supreme Court (SC) greenlighted EDCA. Carter may have as well said that US ships are all over the contested areas with the limited vessels of the Philippine Navy.

In a joint press briefing with his local counterpart, Voltz Gazmin, Carter also indicated the permanent presence of American forces stationed in local military camps.

Some 200 airmen in a contingent of 300 appear to be part of a quick reaction unit that can suit up American aircraft for battle on notice.

The soldiers will be left behind after the Balikatan exercises, according to Carter.

Carter said the troops and five A-10 ground attack aircraft that participated in the annual war games will remain in the country "temporarily."

Stars and Stripes which is the US military publication said the 200 airmen will operate out of Clark Air Base, which used to host 20,000 personnel prior to the base's closure in 1991, after it suffered catastrophic damage from Mount Pinatubo's eruption.

Then in 1992, the US Navy left Subic Bay, once one of the largest overseas US bases, after the Philippines rejected the extension of the US military bases agreement a year before.

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The 200 or so US airmen will deploy from various bases in the Pacific to support five A-10C Thunderbolt II attack aircraft from the 51st Fighter Wing at Osan Air Base, in South Korea; three HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopters from the 18th Wing at Kadena Air Base, Japan; and an MC-130H Combat Talon II special operations aircraft.

Defense officials would not specify where the Talon was based. The Talon specializes in delivering and extracting special operation teams into contested areas and has a suite of sensors that can be used to support rescue and humanitarian missions.

Carter revealed more, saying that the US plans to expand its presence beyond the five bases earlier announced where its forces will operate under EDCA to include Clark Air Base and the main military facility Camp Aguinaldo.

Last month, the US announced it would rotate troops in Antonio Bautista Air Base, Fort Magsaysay, Lumbia Air Base, Basa Air Base and Mactan-Benito Ebuen Air Base.

Antonio Bautista Air Base is on Palawan Island which is about 100 miles away from some of the Spratly Islands, a collection of rocks and small islands claimed by several countries in the region.

US also fired long range missiles during the Balikatan war games at Crow Valley in Capas, Tarlac which was a thinly-veiled warning against China.

China was the least pleased with the apparent US striptease of its Asian pivot designs with the Philippines as base.

Armed forces officials said that they will acquire the high Mobility Artillery Rocket System (Himars) that was test fired during the military exercise.

"Military exchanges by relevant countries should not target third parties, much less support a few countries in challenging China's sovereignty and security, inciting regional contradictions and sabotaging regional peace and stability," the Chinese Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

Noy noy has been in his most opaque in the US military activity in the country after he swung the SC to approve the EDCA deal.

Filipinos had to hear of their fate sold to the policy to contain China from a visiting American official.

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