

Philippine, U.S. forces kick off most expansive Balikatan exercise to date



From the I Marine Expeditionary Force

CAMP AGUINALDO, Quezon City, Philippines – The Armed Forces of the Philippines and the U.S. military will conduct the 41st iteration of Exercise Balikatan across the Philippine archipelago from April 20 to May 8.

Coinciding with the 75th anniversary of the U.S.-Philippine Mutual Defense Treaty, more than 17,000 personnel from the Philippines, United States, Australia, Japan, Canada, France, and New Zealand will train shoulder-to-shoulder, and an additional 17 nations will participate as part of the international observer program.

“Balikatan is the embodiment of our nation’s commitment to a strong and credible defense posture” said Philippine Army Maj. Gen. Francisco F. Lorenzo Jr., Armed Forces of the Philippines

Education and Training Command Commander. "This exercise is a prime opportunity for the Armed Forces of the Philippines to accelerate our modernization and enhance our capabilities as a vanguard of regional peace. Training shoulder-to-shoulder with our oldest ally and our many partners ensures our forces are prepared to face any challenge, together."

The exercise will feature cutting-edge training across the air, land, sea, space, and cyber domains. Key events include:

- AFP and U.S. forces will sharpen their ability to command and control by establishing parallel exercise joint task forces to navigate a challenging training scenario.
- Field training exercises throughout the Philippines will culminate in capstone events to rehearse warfighting skills in maritime security, coastal defense, and the integration of combined and joint fires.
- Dynamic maritime sustainment and distributed logistics through ship-to-shore equipment offloads and movements. Prior to the start of Balikatan 2026, the AFP and U.S. forces rehearsed equipment and supply offload from maritime prepositioning force shipping at Port of Cagayan de Oro that was transported and distributed across Luzon. Supplies and equipment movement and distribution will continue throughout the exercise in support of the training.
- Ships from four countries will participate in a multi-day multilateral maritime exercise along the west coast of the Philippines conducting deck landing qualifications, live-fire gunnery, anti-submarine

warfare, and search and rescue training.

- Humanitarian and civic assistance activities including engineering and construction projects and community health engagements at five locations across the archipelago to directly benefit Filipino communities and strengthen humanitarian assistance preparedness.

“Our alliance with the Philippines has been a cornerstone of peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific for 75 years,” said U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Christian Wortman, I Marine Expeditionary Force Commanding General. “Balikatan 2026 is a powerful demonstration of our ironclad commitment to that alliance. By training together with our friends and partners using the most advanced systems, we are not just enhancing our shared capabilities; we are forging the trust and readiness required to secure a prosperous and peaceful future for the region.”