

Philippines, U.S. Conclude Exercise Balikatan 25



U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer Mary Grace Villarica, center-right, a dental hygienist with the Combined Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force, and Philippine Dental Corps 1st Lt. Eliza Aira, a dental hygienist assigned to 1365th Dental Detachment 5ID, teach dental hygiene to local children during Exercise Balikatan 25. *Photo credit: U.S. Marine Corps | Lance Cpl. Roger- Junior Annoh*

CAMP AGUINALDO, Quezon City, Philippines – The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) hosted the closing ceremony of Exercise Balikatan 25 on May 9, marking the successful completion of the largest annual combined military exercise between the Philippines and the United States.

During this 40th iteration of Balikatan, more than 14,000 Filipino, U.S., Australian and Japanese service members trained shoulder-to-shoulder across the Philippine archipelago.

“Together, we executed complex training across the archipelago, building readiness for today and resilience for tomorrow,” said U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Michael S. Cederholm, the U.S. Joint Task Force commander. “From live-fire drills and humanitarian missions in Palawan to sea denial in the Luzon Strait with the deployment of NMESIS to Batan Island, we advanced our capability to deter, respond, and prevail.”

In a display of the increasingly modernized Philippine-U.S. alliance, the combined force conducted six all-domain field events, enhancing air and missile defense, counter-landing, and maritime security and strike capabilities. These events provided tactical and operational units with realistic, challenging training while refining command and control capabilities throughout the Philippines.

At the same time, service members from all four participating nations constructed classrooms, provided medical and dental exams, and built community ties during five humanitarian civic assistance projects. These events introduced nearly \$2.5 million in support and supplies for local Filipino communities and improved the lives of more than 75,000 Filipinos.

“Beyond the technical achievements, the most valuable outcome has been the enhanced mutual trust, deeper understanding and renewed commitment to shared security goals,” said Philippine Army Gen. Romeo S. Brawner Jr., chief of staff, Armed Forces of the Philippines. “Balikatan is not merely a series of military exercises – it is a demonstration of enduring partnerships and collaborative resolve.”

With the improved quality, complexity, and scope of this year’s events, Balikatan 25 underscored the strength of the ironclad alliance in addition to the enduring friendship between the two nations and other regional allies and partners.

“The evolutions in Balikatan, and in our alliance, are only possible thanks to the foundation on which they are built: our shared democratic values and the deep abiding ties between our peoples,” said MaryKay L. Carlson, U.S. Ambassador to the Philippines. “With that strong foundation in place, our countries work together – at all ranks, civilian and in uniform – to adapt to evolving threats in order to achieve our shared security goals.”