

**PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE
PRESIDENTIAL NEWS DESK**

**REMARKS BY PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR. FOR THE DANIEL K.
INOUE SPEAKER SERIES AT THE ASIA-PACIFIC CENTER FOR SECURITY
STUDIES**

[20 November 2023]

Thank you very much for your kind introduction, the Director of the DKI APCSS, Director Pete Gumataotao; the DKI Institute Director Jennifer Sabas; the APCSS Foundation President, Gerald Sumida; Her Excellency MaryKay Carlson, the US Ambassador to the Philippines; the USINDOPACOM Commander Admiral John Aquilino; members of the Philippine delegation; other distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. And I think the traditional greeting is aloha. Aloha!

I am very pleased to be able to speak with you today here, especially since it is a particular pleasure that I am here at the Daniel Inouye Center.

As has been mentioned, Senator Inouye was a great friend of my father and equally importantly a great friend of the Philippines.

As a matter of fact, one of his last acts in Congress that involved the Philippines was that he was able to finally arrange for the backpay of the so-called Bolomen that fought together with the Americans during the Second World War.

And I wrote him a letter and he responded to me and we were both very, very pleased and just a little bit sorry that my father was not here--- was not around to notice--- to note what had been achieved and what he had been working for since the end of the last war.

So, this event caps the six-day, three-city working visit to the United States, which I have just undertaken. It is my third visit since I assumed the presidency in 2022.

This Honolulu leg is of course, been of a special one for many reasons. First of all, Hawaii is home to a significant number of Filipinos and Filipino-Americans, many of whom--- the original immigrant workers came from my home province or my home region of Ilocos Norte, which is the northern part of the Philippines.

The Ilocos-Hawaii connection began here with our so-called sakadas or workers, arriving in 1906 as plantation workers.

And then, as events conspired, Filipinos were also fighting shoulder to shoulder with American soldiers during the war.

Today, Honolulu hosts the headquarters of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM). The long-standing partnership between the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the INDOPACOM have resulted in enhanced coordination, interoperability, and individual and joint defense capabilities. This is to ensure that we both uphold our commitment to our treaty alliance, especially in the face of growing and evolving regional and global challenges to our security.

It's no coincidence that I spent this morning before coming here with Admiral John Aquilino.

We had a very productive and useful exchange on regional developments and the critical role of the Philippine-U.S. alliance to promote peace, and to safeguard the international law-based order to ensure resilient, sustainable, and inclusive growth for our economies and our communities.

It is the third visit that I have made to the United States since becoming President and in this visit I have had the privilege to speak about my vision for the Philippines and the world through the platforms provided by the Asia Society in New York, the CSIS in Washington, and now here in the APCSS here in the Aloha State.

My message has always been firm, simple, and clear: the Philippines will continue to be an engaged and responsible neighbor and partner— always finding ways to collaborate with the end goal of mutually beneficial outcomes, namely, peace, stability, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific Region — it is through working together, guided by the rules-based international order, that we can ensure an environment that will allow our countries and our peoples to prosper. That has been the *raison d'être* for my foreign policy of peace.

There are many challenges, however, in the roads towards that peaceful and prosperous future that we envision. Signs of another nuclear and space arms race are hovering over us.

We are caught between the dual challenge of opportunity and presented by advanced and emerging technologies — chief of which, of course, is AI. Smaller countries like the Philippines are grappling with the need to enhance our security capabilities alongside allies and partners and amidst larger regional players.

So, allow me this afternoon to speak more specifically about the two challenges that I believe are the most crucial to our common aspirations now.

Number one is securing the peace in the West Philippine Sea (WPS). The Indo-Pacific region, particularly the West Philippine Sea, is in the middle of a global geopolitical transformation and has become an arena of normative contestation.

Tensions in the West Philippine Sea are growing, with persistent unlawful threats and challenges against Philippine sovereign rights and jurisdiction over our exclusive

economic zone (EEZ) and the continental shelf—actions that violate obligations under international law, particularly the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea or UNCLOS and the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of the Parties in the South China Sea (DOC).

Our regular routine and resupply missions at Ayungin shoal are subjective to coercive tactics and dangerous maneuvers of coast guard and maritime militia vessels in the West Philippine Sea, putting the lives of our people at risk, and challenging the rule of law in that--- that has defined our baselines, our economic zone, and the maritime territory of the Philippines.

There is rampant illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, and militarization of reclaimed features in the South China Sea. There have been recent missions to Escoda (Sabina) and Romulo (Iroquois) Reef which revealed a direct correlation between the presence of maritime militia vessels and reef damage in those features. If only for that, the impact on biodiversity and the environment are--- I'm afraid are assessed as possibly already irreversible. This imperils livelihoods. This imperils the future generations of Filipinos.

So, I have said it before and I will say it again, the Philippines will not give a single square inch of our territory to any foreign power. The law is clear as defined by the UNCLOS and the final and binding 2016 Award on the South China Sea Arbitration. Supported by the rules-based international order and our growing partnerships, both time-tested and new once, we will insist on the preservation of the sovereignty and integrity of the country, while working closely with international partners in the bilateral, regional, and multilateral settings in developing rules and processes to address these challenges.

We appreciate certainly the concrete manifestations of the U.S.' and the growing number of our other partners in support for the Philippines' position.

The strong, factual messaging in support of our lawful exercise of our rights under international law, and which will call out recent incidents in our EEZ, it demonstrates the strength of our alliance and partnership and challenges attempts to perpetuate false narratives.

That has become a very important front in all of these events that are happening in and around the Philippines. But unfortunately, rhetoric is not enough.

We need to upgrade our defense and civilian law enforcement capabilities not only to defend ourselves but also to enable us to become a reliable partner in promoting and guaranteeing regional security. That would require greater substantial infusions into funding streams needed for our armed forces and coast guard modernization plans, including lines of effort to enhance cyber cooperation.

I am optimistic from our recent engagements with our American counterparts, including U.S. legislators, and certainly in the executive department to elevate our partnership and dedicate resources to match our commitments.

Over the past week, our teams have been working on a bilateral planning and tracking mechanism that is expected to accelerate concrete and substantial capability development investments and activities in order to meet our shared defense and security objectives over the next 5 years. Our defense secretaries also just met in Jakarta on the sidelines of the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting Plus, to discuss efforts to further strengthen our alliance.

The second item that I feel is very important is the securing strategic sectors and critical infrastructure, and especially, as we have all begun to recognize the importance of activities in cyberspace.

At the same time, ladies and gentlemen, we also need to address broader notions of security, and that now will include economic security.

We welcome public-private partnerships, particularly engagements between and outside our military and defense establishments.

For example, the Agila Subic Shipyard project supports Philippine efforts to position Subic Bay as a logistics hub and complements HADR readiness and initiatives. USAID development projects can also be harnessed to help boost our economic resilience. We hope to expand these partnerships in critical and strategic sectors and infrastructure.

Just the other day, I witnessed on the sidelines of the APEC Summit in San Francisco the signing of the Philippines-United States Agreement for Cooperation Concerning Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy, or what is more commonly known as the 123 Agreement. This opens the doors for U.S. companies to invest and to participate in nuclear power projects in the Philippines. This is expected to boost national efforts towards securing an affordable, reliable, and sustainable energy supply.

Our cooperation on cybersecurity is also a priority, as it impacts both national and economic security.

Critical infrastructure, whether with respect to ports, to energy, telecommunications, they will require cybersecurity measures to be in place for the country to be resilient.

These systems form the backbone of our military infrastructure, our hospital systems, our agriculture, manufacturing, services sectors.

In September, we launched the 2023-2032 National Innovation Agenda and Strategy Document (NIASD). This is the Philippine government's 10-year innovation plan establishing the country's goals and strategies to improve innovation governance and establish a dynamic innovation ecosystem in critical areas, learning and education for

example, health, food and agribusiness, finance, manufacturing and trade, transportation and logistics, public administration, security and defense, energy, blue economy and water supply.

We anticipate many areas where the U.S., as a leader in innovation and emerging technology, can also be our major partner.

Our teams are looking to convene the inaugural interagency PH-U.S. Cyber Dialogue sometime early next year to follow through on our commitment to enhance cooperation in the face of new and emerging threats, including completing a full assessment of the cyber threat landscape and the establishment of next steps to counter cyber threats.

So, friends, ladies and gentlemen, these challenges will continue to evolve, but I am confident that, together, we will be able to manage them.

Our alliance is stronger than ever because it has been founded on our shared values, our mutual respect and trust of each other as equal, sovereign partners, and the unbreakable bonds between our two peoples.

Our recent engagements across branches and levels of government confirm that we are committed to this relationship for the long term.

At the same time, our growing network of partners, including Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the UK, European Union will serve as force multipliers which will help us bring our country closer to the vision of a peaceful, secure, and prosperous nation, within a secure and prosperous region.

So, I hope to continue this dialogue with all of you as we make our way on this principled path that we have chosen.

We today are defining the future, the future for ourselves in our lifetime but also for the generations to come.

Thank you very much. Mahalo Nui Loa. [applause]

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