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## Australia and Philippines Deepen Defence Ties With Exercise Alon

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Australia and the Philippines have launched their largest joint military exercise, Exercise Alon, underscoring a growing security partnership as tensions rise in the South China Sea. The drills, running from 15 to 29 August, involve more than 3,600 troops from both nations, with participation from the United States, Canada, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, and Indonesia as observers.

The exercise features land, air, and sea operations, including amphibious landings, live-fire drills, coordinated airlifts, and complex battle maneuvers. Australia has deployed F/A-18 Super Hornets, EA-18G Growlers, C-130J Hercules aircraft, and the guided-missile destroyer HMAS Brisbane. The Philippines is contributing naval frigates, aircraft, helicopters, and marine brigades.

Officials describe the deployment as one of Australia's most significant overseas force commitments in decades. Defence leaders say the exercise demonstrates the ability of both nations to operate together across multiple domains, while strengthening interoperability with other regional partners.

The timing of Exercise Alon highlights ongoing concerns about freedom of navigation and territorial sovereignty in the Indo-Pacific. Recent maritime incidents, including confrontations near Scarborough Shoal, have heightened security risks in contested waters. By training together at this scale, both Australia and the Philippines aim to reinforce regional stability and uphold international law.

In parallel with the main exercise, Australian, Philippine, and Canadian naval forces conducted a joint sea patrol in waters within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone. The operation involved HMAS Brisbane, Philippine frigate BRP Jose Rizal, and Canadian frigate HMCS Ville de Québec, further illustrating enhanced maritime cooperation.

Defence analysts note that the scale of Exercise Alon reflects Australia's strategic commitment to the region and Manila's increasing focus on strengthening alliances. Both governments view the exercise as a signal of deterrence against potential coercion while reinforcing their mutual defence partnership.

With Exercise Alon, Australia and the Philippines have established a new benchmark in military cooperation, showing that their partnership is not only expanding in scope but also in operational depth.