

US Defense Contractors Seek More Deals in the Philippines

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A high-level American trade mission has brought twenty-six leading defense and aerospace firms to Manila this week with the goal of forging new agreements and strengthening security cooperation with the Philippines. The two-day visit, held August 14 to 15, reflects Washington's push to deepen military ties in Asia at a time of rising tensions in the South China Sea.

The Aerospace, Defense and Security Mission was organized by the US-ASEAN Business Council with support from the US Embassy and Department of Defense. Representatives from major US defense firms including Boeing, Lockheed Martin, RTX, Northrop Grumman, GE Aerospace, Bell, and BAE Systems met with senior Philippine officials from the Departments of National Defense and Interior, along with the Armed Forces, Coast Guard, police, and the Office of Civil Defense. Local industry leaders such as Armscor Global Defense and First Philippine Industrial Park also took part, signaling interest in homegrown partnerships.

At the center of the talks was the Philippines' Self-Reliant Defense Posture program, which seeks to reduce dependence on foreign suppliers by developing local production and technical expertise. American companies said they are ready to provide more than weapons systems. They highlighted training, technology transfer, and infrastructure development as part of a broader strategy to modernize the Philippine military and improve regional readiness. Boeing described the visit as a chance to advance Philippine defense while reinforcing allied strength across the Indo-Pacific.

The mission comes as Manila moves forward with a possible purchase of twenty F-16 fighter jets from the United States, a deal estimated at 5.6 billion dollars. Officials see the acquisition as central to improving air combat capability and maritime defense under the Comprehensive Archipelagic Defense Concept. Combined with expanded cooperation on technology and industry, the deal reflects a long-term strategy of interoperability with US forces while building resilience at home.

The presence of senior executives from some of the world's largest defense firms underscores Washington's commitment to the Philippines as a treaty ally. Successive US administrations have affirmed this alliance, including support for joint patrols and expanded access to Philippine bases. That commitment has taken on new urgency as China escalates its activities in contested waters.

Lockheed Martin has already pledged to go beyond arms sales, promising workforce training, local industry partnerships, and the potential creation of a defense research and innovation hub in the Philippines. Such investments aim to empower the host nation and reduce reliance on external supply chains.

Talks also extended beyond weapons to cybersecurity, logistics, and infrastructure support, areas seen as critical to both national security and economic growth. Philippine officials welcomed the mission as a step toward aligning defense cooperation with the country's industrial development goals.

As discussions continue, outcomes could include joint ventures, technology sharing, and new procurement agreements. For both nations, the objective is clear. Strengthen the alliance, ensure the Philippines is prepared to defend its sovereignty, and build an economy that benefits from security as well as self-reliance.