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America Plans Ammunition Comeback in Subic as Security Risks Grow

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The United States is studying the possibility of setting up an ammunition manufacturing and storage facility at the former US naval base in Subic Bay, as tensions continue to rise in the Indo-Pacific region.

In a report released on June 16, the US House Committee on Appropriations instructed the Department of Defense, the Department of State, and the International Development Finance Corporation to assess the feasibility of establishing a “forward-staged ammunition

manufacturing facility.” Lawmakers said there is an urgent need to strengthen the supply of ammunition and related materials closer to potential conflict zones in Asia.

“The committee is concerned with the lack of a forward-staged ammunition manufacturing facility in the Indo-Pacific,” the report stated. The facility would allow the United States to preposition ammunition stockpiles and key components such as nitrocellulose, nitroglycerin, and acid, which are essential in producing various types of munitions.

US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has been asked to submit an update on the progress of this study within 60 days after the 2026 defense budget is approved. The report did not detail what types of ammunition would be produced if the plan goes ahead.

A Strategic Location

Subic Bay served as America’s largest naval base in Asia until 1991, when the Philippine Senate voted to end the US military presence. Since then, Subic has been transformed into a commercial and industrial hub. However, with China expanding its claims over the South China Sea, Subic is once again considered a strategic site for US military operations.

During Secretary Hegseth’s visit to Manila in March, US and Philippine officials released a joint statement highlighting ammunition manufacturing as a priority area for defense cooperation. This plan aligns with Washington’s broader strategy to strengthen alliances and secure logistics in the region.

Potential Collaboration with the Philippines

It remains unclear whether the proposed Subic facility would be a joint project with the Philippines or an entirely American operation. The Philippines already operates its own Government Arsenal in Limay, Bataan, near Subic. Established in 1957, the Arsenal has been producing small arms ammunition for the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police for decades.

In October last year, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. signed the Self-Reliant Defense Posture Revitalization Act to boost the country’s defense manufacturing capacity. The law offers tax incentives and customs exemptions to local defense companies to encourage more domestic production.

Strengthening Defense Ties

The US and the Philippines maintain a Mutual Defense Treaty, which commits both nations to assist each other in case of armed attack. In 2023, President Marcos also approved the expansion of American access to four more military bases under the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement, allowing the US to preposition supplies and equipment across the country.

As the feasibility study begins, the plan to build an ammunition facility in Subic highlights Washington's efforts to reinforce its presence and support allies in the Indo-Pacific.