

## Australia and the Philippines Launch Largest Overseas Military Drills Amid South China Sea Tensions

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Australia has initiated its most extensive overseas military exercise to date, Exercise Alon 25, in collaboration with the Philippines. The drills, commencing on August 15, 2025, involve over 3,600 personnel, including units from the Canadian Navy and the U.S. Marine Corps' Marine Rotation Force based in Darwin. The training operations are set to take

place across the Philippine islands of Palawan and Luzon, concluding on August 29.

Vice Admiral Justin Jones of the Australian Defense Force emphasized that the exercise aims to enhance interoperability between the participating nations and strengthen their collective response to regional security challenges. “Exercise Alon 25 is an opportunity for us to practice how we collaborate and respond to shared security challenges and project force over great distances in the Indo-Pacific,” Jones stated.

The drills encompass a range of military operations, including live-fire exercises, amphibious landing operations, and maritime maneuvers. A notable component of the training is the joint force projection through the mass airlift of an Army battle group, comprising armored, engineering, health, and artillery elements. This aspect of the exercise underscores the strategic importance of rapid deployment capabilities in the region.

The timing of Exercise Alon 25 coincides with heightened tensions in the South China Sea, particularly concerning territorial disputes between the Philippines and China. The proximity of the training areas to contested zones underscores the strategic significance of the exercise in reinforcing the commitment to regional security and the protection of international law.

The inaugural edition of Exercise Alon was held in 2023, and the 2025 iteration marks a significant expansion in scale and scope. The increased participation and complexity of the drills reflect the growing defense cooperation between Australia and the Philippines, as well as their shared interest in maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

The collaboration also aligns with broader regional security initiatives, including joint maritime drills conducted by the U.S., Japan, Australia, and the Philippines in the South China Sea. These multilateral exercises aim to bolster collective defense capabilities and demonstrate a unified stance against coercive actions in the region.

As Exercise Alon 25 progresses, the participating nations continue to focus on enhancing their operational readiness and strengthening partnerships to address emerging security challenges in the Indo-Pacific. The outcomes of the exercise are anticipated to contribute to the ongoing efforts to ensure stability and uphold the principles of international law in the region.