

## Australia and Philippines Begin Major Military Drills

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The Philippines and Australia will hold large-scale military exercises this month, with the United States and Canada also joining the training operations. The drills, formally named Exercise Amphibious and Land Operations (ALON 2025), will be staged across Northern Luzon and Palawan, marking a significant step in regional defence cooperation.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Australian Defence Force (ADF) are spearheading the event, which involves more than **3,600 troops** from participating nations. According to ADF Exercise Director McLeod Wood, the scale of the 2025 edition reflects months of detailed planning between the partners.

“This year, we have taken a much more comprehensive approach to Exercise ALON. The planning has been going on for nearly five to eight months with the Armed Forces of the Philippines,” Wood said. “What it has resulted in is a major growth in our ability to interoperate with each other and other services across the Armed Forces of the Philippines in conducting activities together.”

Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Ma. Theresa P. Lazaro, Defence Secretary Gilberto Teodoro, and Australian Ambassador Marc Innes-Brown are expected to attend the opening ceremonies.

The naval components of the exercise will see the deployment of the **Philippine Navy’s BRP Jose Rizal (FF 150)** and the **Royal Australian Navy’s HMAS Brisbane (DDG41)**. Both ships will lead a range of drills designed to enhance cooperation at sea.

One of the key highlights will be the **Combined Joint Forcible Entry Operations (CJFEO)** in San Vicente, Palawan on 24 August. This segment will showcase coordinated manoeuvres across air, land, and sea, including reconnaissance missions, joint air bombardments, naval gunfire support, small boat landings, and beachhead seizures. A final phase will see air assault troops secure the objective zone.

On 27 August, forces will stage a **Combined Arms Live Fire Exercise (CALFX)** at Fort Magsaysay in Nueva Ecija, featuring close air support operations.

Beyond combat exercises, the training agenda covers a broader range of security operations. These include special operations integration, cyber resilience, civil-military and religious engagement, and public affairs coordination.

Military planners note that this year’s exercise builds on the lessons of past joint operations while expanding into new areas of cooperation. The emphasis on cyber resilience and public affairs underlines a growing recognition that modern defence partnerships must extend beyond traditional battlefield activities.

Exercise ALON 2025 is taking place against the backdrop of rising tensions in the South China Sea, where maritime disputes continue to dominate regional security discussions. Although the drills are officially framed as routine cooperation, defence analysts suggest that the involvement of Australia, the United States, and Canada demonstrates a unified stance on maintaining stability in contested waters.

The Philippines and Australia signed a **Reciprocal Access Agreement** in 2023, which enables more streamlined defence collaboration. This year's exercise is widely seen as a practical test of that agreement, strengthening the operational readiness of both countries' forces.

For the Philippines, the presence of international allies highlights the importance of maintaining external partnerships in ensuring maritime security. For Australia, the exercise underlines its continued role in the Indo-Pacific as a key regional partner in collective defence.

The joint drills also reinforce the **longstanding alliance between the Philippines and the United States**, while expanding the network to include Canada. Defence cooperation on this scale signals an intention to ensure that no single power dominates the maritime domain in the region.

Officials from all four participating nations have emphasised that Exercise ALON 2025 is not directed at any specific country, but instead aims to enhance interoperability and readiness for disaster response, humanitarian missions, and regional stability.

By the end of the exercise, participating forces are expected to have refined their joint command structures, coordination protocols, and operational tactics, leaving them better prepared for both military and non-military missions.

With an extensive schedule of air, land, and sea manoeuvres, the exercise represents one of the most ambitious examples of Philippine-led multinational defence cooperation in recent years.