

## Australia and the Philippines Conduct Largest Joint Military Exercises

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Australia and the Philippines launch their largest joint military exercises, named “Alon,” in Palawan province, involving thousands of troops and multiple allied observers to strengthen regional security and cooperation.

The Alon exercises began on August 15, 2025, with over 3,600 personnel participating from the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and the

Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). Military observers from the United States, Canada, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, and Indonesia also attend. The drills include live-fire demonstrations, amphibious landings, and operations involving advanced equipment such as F/A-18 fighter jets, C-130 aircraft, guided-missile destroyers, and special forces units.

The exercises underscore Australia's commitment to regional security and the enforcement of international law in the South China Sea, a region marked by territorial disputes and rising tensions. A recent collision between Chinese and Philippine vessels near Scarborough Shoal highlighted the need for strengthened maritime cooperation. The United States also deployed warships in the area to support freedom of navigation operations, reflecting growing concern over regional stability.

The Alon exercises form part of a broader strategy to improve interoperability and deepen defense ties between Australia and the Philippines. In 2025, the Joint Australian Training Team-Philippines (JATT-P) program has expanded significantly, with over 20 training activities and exchanges scheduled, more than double the number conducted in 2024. These initiatives cover a wide range of skill sets, including combat planning, engineering, fire support, maritime and aircraft maintenance, aviation safety, and intelligence analysis.

ADF personnel participating in the exercises include members from the Army, Navy, and Air Force. Deployed assets include an amphibious task group, HMAS Brisbane, and F/A-18F Super Hornets. The exercises are strategically positioned near Scarborough Shoal, just days after a collision between Chinese vessels and a Philippine patrol ship.

Vice-Admiral Justin Jones, Chief of Joint Operations for the ADF, emphasized that the exercise aims to strengthen cooperation and enhance force projection across the Indo-Pacific to uphold sovereignty and international law. Security analyst Michael Shoebridge described the deployment as a deliberate act of collective deterrence against potential aggression in the region, noting that Australia's strategic intent demonstrates a serious commitment to regional allies.

The Alon exercises are scheduled to continue until August 29, 2025. Officials from both countries indicate that the drills will further solidify defence relations, build operational readiness, and contribute to long-term stability in Southeast Asia. By fostering collaboration across multiple domains, land, air, and sea, the exercises enhance the ability of the two nations and their allies to respond to evolving geopolitical challenges effectively.

In conclusion, the Alon joint exercises represent the largest coordinated military training between Australia and the Philippines to date. They highlight a shared commitment to security in the Indo-Pacific region, strengthen bilateral defense cooperation, and demonstrate the capacity of both nations to act decisively in the face of regional tensions. The continued expansion of these exercises underscores the importance of preparedness, interoperability, and alliance-building in maintaining peace and stability across contested maritime areas.