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Australia, Philippines Strengthen Defense Partnership

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The Philippines and Australia are taking steps to deepen their defense cooperation, with high-level meetings and joint military exercises highlighting the growing strategic partnership between the two nations.

Philippine Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin met with Australian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defense Richard Marles on Friday at the Presidential Guest House in

Malacañan Palace. Marles' visit coincides with the second Philippines–Australia Defense Ministers Meeting, which aims to advance military collaboration and regional security initiatives.

During his visit, Marles is scheduled to observe Exercise Amphibious and Land Operations (Alon) 2025, the largest overseas joint training exercise conducted by Australia this year. The exercise brings together more than 3,600 personnel from the Philippines, Australia, the United States, and Canada, focusing on interoperability and coordinated operations across maritime and land domains.

In a statement, Marles highlighted the importance of strengthening the defense relationship. He is set to meet with Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. to explore opportunities to enhance Australia–Philippines defense cooperation through capacity-building measures and joint operational planning.

“Our cooperation through Exercise Alon reflects a shared commitment to maintaining a peaceful, secure, and prosperous region where sovereignty is respected,” Marles said.

The defense partnership is built on several formal agreements and frameworks. The Status of Visiting Forces Agreement, ratified in 2012, serves as the legal basis for joint activities and troop exchanges. In 2022, both countries finalized a Mutual Logistics Support Arrangement and a memorandum of understanding on Defense Industry Cooperation and Logistics, further institutionalizing defense collaboration.

In 2023, the diplomatic relationship between the Philippines and Australia was elevated from a comprehensive partnership to a strategic partnership. This upgrade aims to broaden cooperation in key areas, including maritime security, counterterrorism, and defense policy coordination, reflecting shared strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific region.

The partnership aligns with Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s call for stronger regional cooperation to safeguard stability and ensure security in the Indo-Pacific.

Formal diplomatic relations between the Philippines and Australia were established in 1946, and both countries will mark 80 years of bilateral relations in 2026. The defense collaboration underscores a long-standing commitment to regional stability and mutual security interests.

As global security challenges evolve, the Philippines–Australia partnership demonstrates the countries’ dedication to working closely together to respond to emerging threats and strengthen collective defense capabilities.