

'No to expansion of US military forces on Philippines soil'

Tuesday 23 May 2023, by [BAINBRIDGE Alex](#), [DELIZO Rasti](#) (Date first published: 16 May 2023).

As part of its renewed military cooperation under the Enhanced Defence Cooperation Agreement (EDCA), the United States and the Philippines conduct annual joint military exercises. This year, more than 17,600 members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the US military took part in Balikatan 2023 from April 11–28 — the largest such joint exercise to date.

The EDCA also allows for the US military to preposition military assets and construct facilities in select Philippine bases. Signed in 2014, the EDCA is due to be fully implemented this year.

Rasti Delizo, an international affairs analyst, longtime socialist activist in the Philippines and former vice president of the Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino (BMP, Solidarity of Filipino Workers) spoke to Green Left's **Alex Bainbridge** about the EDCA and rising militarism in the region.

What is your response to the Enhanced Defence Cooperation Agreement?

The BMP joins the broad Philippine left movement in fully condemning this latest show of “iron-clad” loyalty by the Philippines reactionary state to back up United States imperialist designs in this part of the world.

We continue to struggle against any expansion of US military forces on Philippines soil, just as we also call for all US military troops to be kicked out of the Philippines and the broader Asia-Indo-Pacific region.

All US imperialist troops should be out of Japan and South Korea and its advisors out of Taiwan, the Philippines, Australia, and wherever they are stationed. This includes the British imperialist military presence as a result of the Five Powers Defence Arrangements (FPDA) and Five Eyes Intelligence Security Arrangements. All of these imperialist forces have to be kicked out and expelled from all across the eastern hemisphere.

This is exactly the reason why China and Russia are combining forces in a strategic alliance to defend whatever interests they may have themselves against an offensive onslaught that US imperialism has been launching in this part of the world since 1991 — since the end of last century's Cold War.

But the US military says it is committed to the defence of the Philippines. What do you say to that?

Clearly that is part of the US foreign policy narrative that is trying to win over a lot of potential allies

and puppet states such as the Philippines. Clearly the US is trying to show that they need to uphold a rules-based international order, to ensure that the international community remains stable and to allow for freedom of movement of international forces all across the Indo-Pacific.

These are just catch phrases that effectively aim to uphold, protect and preserve the imperialist world system under US control and dominance.

A recent ABC Australia report basically said that this US deal with the Philippines was a direct response the build up of Chinese forces in the South China Sea. What do you say to that?

Of course the Australian bourgeois media will, in a default mode, defer to the US imperialist narrative, which is already being cast wide across the world as a result of the AUKUS [Australia-United Kingdom-United States security] agreement and even the Quad [Quadrilateral dialogue] project.

The AUKUS/Quad and you could even say the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) — which I would call an imperialist triad in this part of the world — is essentially trying to run a counter narrative against — not necessarily Moscow or Beijing — but the independent working class movement's position, which says no to all imperialist designs, offensives and manoeuvres across the world.

So effectively this kind of statement is trying to hide the real motive, by saying “We’re here to protect you”, which is exactly what the Philippine state leadership accepts.

Under Philippines President [Ferdinand] “Bong Bong” Marcos’s leadership they deliberately and consciously accept this, because they aim to remain puppets of US imperialism in this part of the world.

The term “interoperability” [under the EDCA] ... essentially means that the Philippines military forces will now come under the direct command and control of the US imperialist military structure.

The entire Philippines military establishment and state security forces will now act as a single unified military unit - a unit inside the US imperialist war machine together with those of Taiwan, Australia, South Korea, Japan and India.

Because this is how the interoperability concept actually operates as a mechanism. And this is exactly what they want to do to ensure that the AUKUS, Quad and any globalised NATO in the Asia-Pacific region will operate in the future.

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