



# PRESS RELEASE

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## PH and US Defense Chiefs visit Antonio Bautista Air Base



*Defense Secretaries Voltaire T. Gazmin and Ash Carter aboard USS Stennis.*

Philippine Secretary of National Defense Voltaire Gazmin and US Defense Secretary Ashton Carter on Friday afternoon visited Antonio Bautista Air Base in Palawan, one of the five agreed locations under the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) between the US and Philippines.

Flying over the vicinity of Recto Bank, they landed on the Nimitz class aircraft carrier USS Stennis, where they witnessed flight deck operations.



They also were briefed on the Carrier's history and taken on a tour around the ship. Both Secretaries addressed the men and women of the Carrier Battle Group.

Secretary Carter thanked his troops and sailors for their active participation in the PH-US Exercise Balikatan and reiterated the significance of their presence in the region.

"China's actions are causing anxiety and raising tensions. In response, countries in the Asia Pacific that are long standing allies and new partners are reaching out to the US to uphold the rules and principles that would allow the region to thrive, and we are answering that call, we are standing with these countries. We are standing up for those rules and principles," Secretary Carter said.

Secretary Gazmin also expressed his gratitude to the sailors for taking part in the Balikatan exercises, highlighting the strength of the Philippine-US Alliance.

"This is a clear exemplification of 'honor, courage, commitment,' the core values of the US Navy," Secretary Gazmin said.



*Secretary Voltaire Gazmin and AFP Chief of Staff General Hernando Iriberry aboard the USS Stennis.*

He added: "We are as ever reliant on the strong bond of sympathy and mutual ideals shared by our our two peoples, close friends and allies, to fight side-by-side against the threats of external aggression as we did in the past."

Finally, the Secretary ended his remarks to the Sailors by welcoming them to the West Philippine Sea.

"It is in the spirit of the ideals of our alliance and close relationship that we welcome the gallant crew of the USS Stennis ... to the clear waters of the West Philippine Sea," Secretary Gazmin said. ####