



PRESS RELEASE

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RP-US to Continue Joint Military Trainings

National Defense Secretary Delfin N. Lorenzana confirmed that President Rodrigo R. Duterte has approved the continuation of combined and joint military trainings between the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and their US counterparts.

“The President has approved practically all our recommendations,” Lorenzana said after a cabinet meeting held last Monday, 07 November 2016, during which the AFP presented the various security engagements between the US and the Philippines.

The defense chief likewise confirmed that the President has given a go-signal for the implementation of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA), an executive agreement between the Philippines and the US to advance the implementation of the Mutual Defense Agreement signed in 1951.

Affirmed as constitutional with finality by the Supreme Court, EDCA seeks to develop interoperability and capacity-building for external defense, maritime security, maritime domain awareness and humanitarian and disaster response. As a contract of use and access agreement, EDCA does not grant permanent bases to US security forces but only temporary rotational access to five military bases for joint operational efficiency.

Among the recommendations presented by the Department of National Defense to the President include the refocusing of bilateral activities on command post exercises, tabletop exercises, staff exercises and simulation exercises and trainings; maintenance of bilateral humanitarian and disaster response and counter-terrorism exercises; and giving focus on non-traditional security concerns such as counter-narcotics and transnational crimes.

Lorenzana also recommended putting more weight on civic action and engineering projects to benefit a number of civilian communities and the strengthening of the Self-Reliant Defense Program.

However, Lorenzana said the President ordered to discontinue assault exercises and some bilateral drills between both forces, but clarified that other joint trainings and exercises with other countries would likewise continue as scheduled.

The recommendations approved by Pres. Duterte will be presented to the US panel of the Mutual Defense Board – Security Engagement Board (MDB –SEB) in its upcoming meeting this month.

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