



PRESS RELEASE

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Two Plus Two Meeting

The Two Plus Two meeting extensively discussed the South China Sea issue, with the US side reiterating the US ironclad commitment to the defense of the Philippines while the Philippines batting for joint patrols. The US also conveyed that it remains committed to the AFP's modernization program.

The US side emphasized that it will not allow China to control the South China Sea and will act to ensure that freedom of navigation is respected. The US also stressed that they will continue to fly and sail whenever and wherever international law allows. It committed to maintain presence in the South China Sea to include naval, sub-sea, air and special forces.

In addition, the US urged the Philippines to stay closely coordinated with respect to the developments in the South China Sea.

Noting China's claim that it will not militarize the area, the US suggested the need for parties in the South China Sea to have a common and shared understanding of the term "militarization" to avoid growing tensions. A common sense among the other parties would put pressure on China.

Both sides agreed that maritime security and maritime domain awareness have to rise high on the agenda in PH-US strategic engagement. The Maritime Security Initiative is a good project.

Both sides also acknowledged the usefulness of multilateral cooperation in addressing security challenges and agreed to explore the possibility of the participation of other partners such as Japan and Australia in Philippine-US exercises and activities.

The Philippine side stressed that the involvement of other parties in these activities shall be in accordance with the Philippines' national legal framework.

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