



# PRESS RELEASE

Department of National Defense – Republic of the Philippines

Public Affairs Service, DND Annex Building, Natividad Ave., Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo, Quezon City 1110

**Website:** [www.dnd.gov.ph](http://www.dnd.gov.ph) | **E-Mail:** [dnd.opa@gmail.com](mailto:dnd.opa@gmail.com)

**Tel:** (+632) 982-5679 | 911-6001 to 31 ext. 8229 | **Fax:** (+632) 911-7113

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**Releasing Officer:** **DIR. ARSENIO R. ANDOLONG, MNSA, CESE**  
Chief, Public Affairs Service

## PH, China to strengthen Defense relations

Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, 25 October 2017 —The Republic of the Philippines and the People’s Republic of China have agreed to strengthen their defense and military-to-military relations by increasing bilateral security engagements in the coming months.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana met with his Chinese counterpart, General Chang Wanquan in the Department of National Defense to discuss and explore avenues wherein the two countries can improve defense and military-to-military relations.

“Riding on the improvement of our defense relations, it is only proper for us to move forward,” Secretary Lorenzana said.

The bilateral meeting between Secretary Lorenzana and General Chang centered on several key areas.

First was the enhancement of cooperation in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism, especially in intelligence sharing, joint counterterrorism exercises, and other specialized training.

Both Defense Chiefs underscored the need for countries to cooperate in order to eradicate the evils of terrorism which they considered a “common enemy.” Secretary Lorenzana thanked China for its support in the Marawi operations, stating that its earlier donations of rifles and ammunition “helped a lot in our fight against the terrorists in Marawi”.

The Chinese Minister of National Defense intimated that China plans to donate another batch of weapons and equipment later this year or early next year.

The second key area that both Defense chiefs identified was the enhancement of maritime cooperation between the two countries, focusing on humanitarian assistance and disaster response (HADR) and anti-piracy operations in the Philippines’ southern waters. Both Defense chiefs also agreed to increase visits of naval vessels as a sign of goodwill and friendship between the two countries.

Third was the increase of military-to-military personnel exchanges between junior and field grade officers. Secretary Lorenzana and General Chang agreed that this will be beneficial to both countries since it will foster interpersonal relations between both militaries’ officer corps and future leaders of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and People’s Liberation Army (PLA).

The fourth key area of discussion was China's offer to the Philippines of its weapons and equipment to support the AFP modernization program.

Most significantly the bilateral meeting touched on the South China Sea issue and how best to move forward. Both Defense Chiefs welcomed the decrease of tensions between the two countries through careful management of the dispute brought about by the warming of relations between the Philippines and China. Secretary Lorenzana and General Chang welcomed the proposal to develop a concrete mechanism to solve issues immediately and avoid future conflicts.

"I believe we are in the right direction in our defense relations and I look forward to future Defense and security dialogues with China," Lorenzana said in closing.

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