



Philippines

# **SOLIDARITY TO OPPOSE WARS (STOP THE WAR!)**

**A Movement For Peace With Social Justice**

## **Standing at the Crossroads: NATO Expansion and the Philippines' Role in the Pursuit of Peace [1]**

Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed peace advocates, and fellow Filipinos,

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) growing presence in Asia and the Pacific, through the United States, which has strategic interests in this region, has far-reaching repercussions for our collective futures, sovereignty, and commitment to peace.

Under President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., the Philippines' foreign policy is moving towards deeper involvement in the US military-industrial complex. Filipinos are misled into thinking that this alliance ensures stability and enhances defense capabilities, but it's the opposite. It will not uphold peace, it does not put a premium on diplomacy, and it subverts any exercise of genuine national independence.

### **NATO Expansion: A Global Military Force Moves East**

NATO, born from the crucible of war, was a defensive alliance for Europe and North America. Now it is extending its reach beyond its original boundaries to the Asia-Pacific region. It has formed alliances with US allies like Japan, Australia, South Korea, and the Philippines. In fact, the US describes my country as a major non-NATO ally.

History teaches us that when foreign powers extend their influence into new regions, the costs are often borne by local populations—the very people they claim to protect and secure. This is no less true in the context of the Philippines, with its history of repeated colonization, occupation, and neo-colonization.

Now, we see the Philippines being placed on the front lines in a potential global superpower confrontation.

### **Philippines: A Pawn in the Great Power Game**

The Marcos Jr. administration, by expanding military ties with the United States and embracing a larger role in the U.S. military-industrial complex, has positioned the Philippines as a key ally in this new era of geopolitical competition.

For instance, in April the Philippines received USD 500 Million in military aid from the United States, part of the USD 95 Billion military aid package that counts among its recipients Israel, Ukraine and Taiwan.

Under the guise of "defense cooperation," it has seen the reactivation of U.S. military bases—no longer the old-type but that of cooperative security locations variety.

As a hub for security cooperation initiatives, cooperative security locations are non-US facilities that are maintained with sporadic support from the US military, contractors, or host nation (the Philippines falls under this category). These locations provide rotational foreign military forces with logistical support and contingency access.



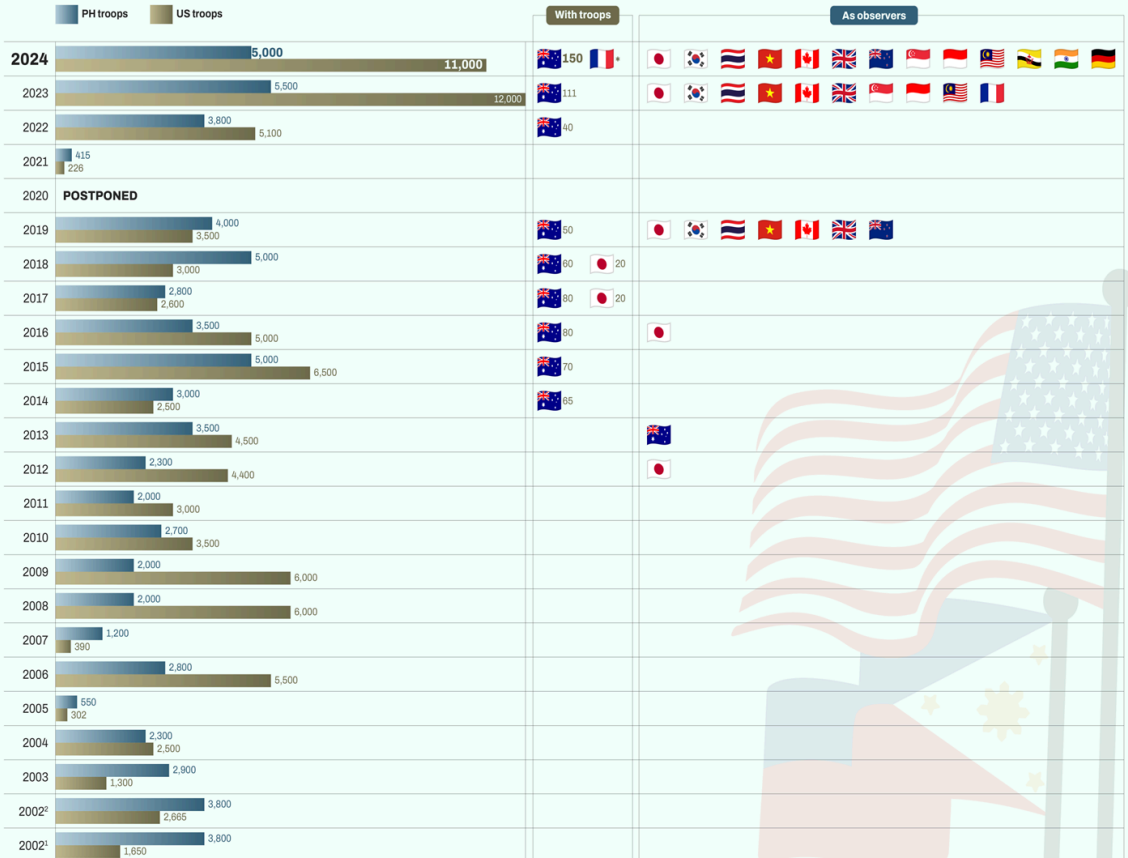


## Biggest Balikatan under Marcos Jr government: Most troops, most countries

1 - Held January to July 2002; tied with Operation Freedom Eagle, more focused on counter-terrorism  
 2 - Held April 20 to May 8 2002; regular US-PH troops exercises

\* French frigate FS Vendémiaire (F734) is participating in maritime drills in the West Philippine Sea

SOURCES: Philippine Visiting Forces Agreement Commission, US Embassy in the Philippines, US Department of Defense, US Army, US Pacific Air Forces, Armed Forces of the Philippines, Philippine Navy, Philippine News Agency, monitored news articles



Furthermore, there are over 300 joint exercises in a year with the United States and its allies, which are growing in terms of the participating foreign militaries and number of troops as well as expanded access of foreign military troops into our borders, including airspace and oceans.

But let us be clear: this is not about security. This is about power.

In the past, the Philippines was used as a pawn in historical power battles. Now, we are being groomed as a **buffer zone** or a staging ground for military operations well beyond our borders. Our proximity to flashpoints like the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait makes us an ideal site for projecting the military might of the US and its allies, but likewise endangers us if tensions rise.

For instance, many questions remain unanswered as to the fate of the 39 million gallons of military fuel transferred from the controversial Red Hill US Navy Facility in Hawaii to Subic, in the Philippines last January. According to the news article on the fuel transfer it is to be used in operations in the South China Sea. The facility was being closed following repeated contamination of the public water systems

### The Military-Industrial Complex: A Profit-Driven War Machine

The United States' military-industrial complex, a large and powerful self-perpetuating system that thrives on conflict and encourages militarism, is key here.

By design, it profits from continued weapon production, military base construction, and the maintenance of global instability—all elements of war and conflict and not of peace.

With the Philippines integrating itself into this system, we risk being complicit in a cycle of violence that harms the Filipino people and the rest of Asia and the Pacific. We already have BrahMos and Typhon Missile systems in the country and if it was up to officials of the Armed Forces of Philippines, these weapons should remain indefinitely.

Instead of investing in education, healthcare, and sustainable development, which are the foundations of national security, our government is focusing our resources on military spending and war preparedness. In fact, there are more than 18 security agreements with other countries, including NATO-member countries, that the Philippines hopes to clinch! This includes the recently concluded Reciprocal Access Agreement between the Philippines and Japan.

Defense contractors, armament manufacturers, and foreign powers benefit from conflict, not the typical Filipino.

### **The Fake Promise of Security via Militarism**

Despite assurances that associating with NATO and the US military-industrial complex will provide security, history reveals that militarism does not bring peace.

It exacerbates regional tensions, the weapons race, and the risk of conflict.

We know from history that foreign military presence has weakened the Philippines' sovereignty and disrupted peace. The Marcos Jr. regime has managed to draw the country deeper into a power game of global superpowers rather than seeking peace, stability, and a foreign policy that emphasizes the well-being of the Filipino people.

### **The Path Forward: Diplomacy, Non-Alignment, and Genuine Security**

As peace advocates, we need to challenge the notion that militarism is the only solution to security through advocating for non-alignment, diplomacy, and regional cooperation in foreign policy.

We want the Philippines to serve as a bridge for peace in the Asia-Pacific region, working with our ASEAN neighbors to foster mutual respect, dialogue, and shared prosperity.

This is a work in progress. On the one hand, Filipinos were able to develop a strong anti-bases and anti-militarism movement in the past, but now this fervor has to be likewise imbibed by younger advocates in the face of aggressive pro-American messages in the mainstream and social media sphere.

Also, it remains a challenge to push our government leaders to genuinely address the sources of insecurity—poverty, inequality, and the impact of climate change—and that they make policy decisions that favor the Filipino people and not foreign powers or defense contractors.

### **Choose Peace Over Militarism**

Finally, I urge everyone to remain committed to peace, justice, and sovereignty. We must reject militarism's false promises of security in favor of a future based on diplomacy, collaboration, and human dignity.

To the Marcos government, I say: militarism is not the route to peace.

The Philippines deserves more than to be a pawn in a deadly global power game. We deserve a future in which our children may grow up in a world devoid of violence and conflict—a future in which our sovereignty is respected, and our people are really safe.

Let us choose peace. Let us choose diplomacy. Let us choose a future where the Philippines stands as a beacon of hope, not a battleground for the ambitions of others.

Thank you.

[\[1\]](#) Speech Delivered by DJ Janier, Stop the War Coalition—Philippines in the online forum Global NATO: Implications for the Asia-Pacific (Part 2), September 27, 2024, 6 p.m. PH Time/ 12:00 CEST Berlin, Sponsored by the International Peace Bureau