

Remarks of Ambassador ENDO Kazuya at the 38th Anniversary of the General Headquarters and Headquarters Service Command of the Armed Forces of the Philippines

30 May 2025

Magandang hapon po sa inyong lahat!

Ikinagagalak ko na makasama kayong lahat sa araw na ito.

It is my great honor to join you all in celebrating the 38th anniversary of the General Headquarters and Headquarters Service Command of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. My sincerest congratulations to the entire leadership, officers, and personnel here with us.

This camp, this institution is more than a center of national defense. It stands as a living testament to the courage, discipline, and unwavering commitment of the men and women of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the Department of National Defense, and other key defense organizations. The establishment of this institution 38 years ago showcases the transformation, excellence, and innovation of both the AFP and DND. These grounds embody the spirit of service that has safeguarded this nation through times of trial and triumph.

As the Ambassador of Japan, I have had the privilege of visiting Camp Aguinaldo on many occasions for the last 14 months. It speaks to the rapid expansion of defense exchanges between Japan and the Philippines under the leadership of Secretary Teodoro.

Breaking new grounds in cooperation, our relations have entered a Golden Age with renewed closeness. The year 2025 is a defining moment in this remarkable trajectory. We have welcomed Foreign Minister IWAYA in January, Defense Minister NAKATANI in February, and Prime Minister ISHIBA in April. These engagements build upon the momentum of 2024, which saw dynamic exchanges between the chiefs of staff of each branch of the Japan Self-Defense Forces and their Philippine counterparts. Demonstrating the growing trust and mutual respect shared by our defense institutions.

Just three weeks ago, I had the honor of attending the closing ceremony of the Balikatan Exercise. The scale of this joint endeavor underscored the Philippines' vital role as a pillar

of peace and security in the Indo-Pacific. Expectations for Japan's enhanced participation are high, and we are prepared to meet them with equal resolve and dedication.

This week, over one hundred (100) members of the JSDF are participating in the Kamandag Training, and next week, JSDF observers will join the Salaknib Training.

In the maritime domain, the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force vessels have successfully made nine (9) port calls in the Philippines this year alone. Bilateral and multilateral Maritime Cooperative Activity in the waters near the Philippines are being conducted frequently. Each one reinforcing our shared commitment to maritime cooperation, freedom of navigation, and a rules-based order at sea.

In the skies above, the Japan Air Self-Defense Force work closely with the Philippine Air Force to support the developments of the country's air defense system. This cooperation includes not only the transfer of advanced air surveillance radar system, but also rigorous education and hands-on training on radar operation and maintenance.

These are not isolated actions. They are part of a broader, strategic framework. In addition to the ongoing deliberation for the Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) at the Japanese parliament, we have now initiated negotiations for an Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA). Once concluded, the ACSA will facilitate seamless logistical cooperation.

At the same time, intergovernmental discussions are underway towards the early conclusion of an Agreement on the Security of Information. An essential step in enabling secure information-sharing between our defense institutions.

I am happy to note that the Japanese Embassy in Manila is working hand in hand with our Philippine partners on these matters so that we can advance upon the commitments made during Prime Minister ISHIBA's visit in April.

Alongside these agreements, Japan is steadfastly moving forward with the Official Security Assistance (OSA) and defense equipment transfers. Through these combined efforts, we aim to provide holistic support for the Philippines' ongoing modernization efforts.

A senior colleague of mine once described that the management of a close partnership is like gardening. To sustain a beautiful garden, it requires a wide range of attentive care including watering grass, pruning bushes, pulling weeds out, enriching the soil, often without recognition. In the same way, beyond high-level visits, joint exercises, framework negotiations and equipment transfer, it is the consistent, day-to-day missions that serve as the base of our strengthening security cooperation. These quiet, persistent contributions are what truly strengthen and sustain our partnership.

As we diligently tend to every aspect of our partnership, we also place profound emphasis on boosting people-to-people connections. Many exchanges among experts on various subjects have been strengthening our partnership at its most fundamental level: trust between people and the cultivation of lasting friendship.

The foundation of any close partnership is not merely shared interests; it is shared understanding. And time and again, I have witnessed the professionalism, humility, and empathy of Philippine military personnel as they engage with their Japanese counterparts.

I am humbled to play a part in the gardening of our cooperation. It is our shared sense of mission that drives this attentive care. I deeply appreciate all the invaluable contributions of the distinguished leaders and dedicated personnel gathered here today. I am fully confident that the Japan–Philippines security partnership will grow even stronger, more dynamic, and more resilient in the years ahead.

Camp Aguinaldo has long been a landmark along EDSA. But I must admit there is one challenge: the journey from the embassy in Pasay can take anywhere from 40 to 80 minutes, depending on my luck along EDSA.

So now I am especially excited about the Metro Manila Subway Project, another transformative initiative supported by Japan’s Official Development Assistance. One of its stations will be located right here at Camp Aguinaldo. When completed, it will drastically reduce travel time and enhance accessibility not only for military personnel and DND officials, but for hundreds of thousands of commuters across Metro Manila. And yes- this means I’ll get here without EDSA traffic... I have no more excuses for being late.

This project promises not only greater convenience and connectivity, but also long-term benefits for the environment and climate. I understand that the construction of the station has been welcomed and fully supported by the Armed Forces of the Philippines. I extend my sincere appreciation for your invaluable cooperation.

In many ways, the subway reflects the theme of today's celebration—innovation, transformation, and excellence—in action. It will serve as a lasting symbol of how strong cooperation, smart infrastructure, and visionary leadership can collectively drive progress to improve lives for generations to come.

As we gather today at Camp Aguinaldo, named after a great hero of Philippine independence, I am grateful for the opportunity to reflect on the enduring friendship between Japan and the Philippines and the far-reaching progress we continue to make together.

Today, Japan and the Philippines stand as true partners committed to peace, stability, democracy, and the rule of law. Together, we are building not only a stronger partnership, but a Free and Open Indo-Pacific. One where shared prosperity is anchored in mutual respect.

To the officers and personnel of the General Headquarters and Headquarters Service Command of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, once again my heartfelt congratulations on your 38th anniversary. Your unwavering dedication, your pursuit of excellence, and your commitment to service inspire not only the Filipino people but all of us who stand with you in partnership.

Mabuhay ang Sandatahang Lakas ng Pilipinas.

Mabuhay ang pagkakaibigan ng Japan at Pilipinas.

Maraming salamat po sa inyong lahat!