

The Philippines as Springboard for US War on China

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Update as of April 6, 9:30 AM ET:

The Philippines has recently announced the additional four new EDCA sites which are as follows: Naval Base Camilo Osias in Santa Ana, Cagayan; Camp Melchor Dela Cruz in Gamu, Isabela; Balabac Island in Palawan; and Lal-lo Airport in Cagayan.

The geographic locations of the sites are very convenient for America's China containment strategy — three in northern Luzon with close proximity to Taiwan, and one in southern Luzon, just along the South China Sea.



Map of the new sites encircled in red. (Image source: Nations Online Project)

Moreover, US-PH Balikatan exercises will be held on April 11-28, involving “[more than 17,600 members of the Armed Forces of the PH and the US military](#)”. It is said to be the largest iteration to date.

The US-Philippine relations are at a detente under the new administration of **President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.** This is especially evident in the strengthened military ties between the two countries, which are accelerating the full implementation of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA), a pillar of the US-PH alliance. [Reports](#) from the PH Department of National Defense (DND) confirm the addition of four more agreed locations to the existing five agreed locations in strategic areas in the country. This translates to US military access of a total of nine local

military bases, presence of US troops and placement of defense assets. The alliance is set to conduct their biggest war games in the second quarter of 2023, involving more troops than the previous year. This renewed vigor is occurring against a backdrop of escalating tension in the South China Sea (SCS) and a looming Taiwan conflict.

According to the DND, the additional EDCA locations will expedite response to “[shared challenges](#)” especially on matters of [regional and national security](#). The US feels threatened by the inevitable rise of China as a regional (and global) key player; therefore it is only equally necessary and important to reinforce its military relations with Asian friends. What is being untold is that the Philippines is used as a springboard for Washington’s war on Beijing due to its favorable [proximity to Taiwan](#). In other words, the geographic location of the Philippines is leveraged by the US to accomplish its goal of encircling China, with the Philippines’ claimant status on the SCS as the icing on the cake.

The SCS is a bilateral issue between the Philippines and China; it is an issue that needs bilateral agreement and resolution without the need for militarization. US-PH military exercises only send wrong signal to China, given the prevailing geopolitical circumstances. What needs to be done is for involved parties to open communication lines for bilateral talks, dialogue and negotiation. The presence of US military in Philippine soil will only escalate the tension between China and the Philippines and will subsequently disturb regional security architecture.

The EDCA is clearly a liability more than a benefit. The Philippines should reconsider.

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Featured image: Through the Balikatan 2023 Joint Mobility Coordination Center, a U.S. Air Force C-17 Globemaster III carrying equipment to support the Philippines’ oil spill response in Oriental Mindoro lands at Subic Bay International Airport on March 25. (Source: [US Embassy in the Philippines](#))

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