

# Duterte to Obama: “you can go to hell” - Will Philippines “break up with America”?

Manila to suspend joint exercises and patrols with US military

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*“The Philippine defense chief has told the US military that plans for joint patrols and naval exercises in the disputed South China Sea have been put on hold, the first concrete break in defense cooperation after months of increasingly strident comments by the country’s new president.”*

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## Philippines to suspend joint exercises and patrols with US military

**Move is first sign of President Duterte’s hardline anti-US rhetoric in action  
US currently stages 28 exercises with Philippine forces each year.**

The Philippine defense chief has told the US military that plans for joint patrols and naval exercises in the disputed South China Sea have been put on hold, the first concrete break in defense cooperation after months of increasingly strident comments by the country’s new president.

Delfin Lorenzana, the defense secretary, also said that 107 US troops involved in operating surveillance drones against Muslim militants would be asked to leave the southern part of the country once the Philippines acquires those intelligence-gathering capabilities in the near future.

President Rodrigo Duterte also wants to halt the 28 military exercises that are carried out with US forces each year, Lorenzana said. Duterte has said he wants an ongoing US-Philippine amphibious beach landing exercise to be the last in his six-year presidency as he backs away from what he views as too much dependence on the US.

“This year would be the last,” Duterte said of military exercises involving the Americans in a speech on Friday in southern Davao city where he lashed out at the US anew.

“For as long as I am there, do not treat us like a doormat because you’ll be sorry for it,” Duterte said. “I will not speak with you. I can always go to China.”

In Washington, the state department spokesman, John Kirby, said the US government is not aware of any official notification on curtailing military exercises. He said the US remains focused on its security commitments to the Philippines, with which it has a mutual defense treaty.

"We think comments like this, whether they are or will be backed up by actual action or not, are really at odds with the closeness of the relationships that we have with the people of the Philippines and which we fully intend to continue," Kirby told reporters.

Duterte, who took office in June and describes himself as a leftist politician, has had an uneasy relationship with the US, his country's former colonial master.

Duterte has lashed out against US government criticism of his deadly crackdown against illegal drugs, which has left more than 3,600 suspects dead in just three months, alarming western governments and human rights groups.

But while some Filipino officials have walked back on Duterte's sometimes crude anti-US pronouncements - early this week he told President Barack Obama "to go to hell" - Lorenzana's comments show for the first time that the Duterte administration will act by rolling back cooperation with the US military.

With the turquoise backdrop of the South China Sea, US marines and allied Filipino combat forces barged ashore on Friday on amphibious vessels in a mock assault on a Philippine beach in San Antonio town in north-western Zambales province.

Pounding rain prevented military aircraft from joining the beach assault drills, but the US and Filipino forces managed to rapidly come ashore to take out a "notional target", said Maj Roger Hollenbeck, a US military spokesman for the drills.

Asked to comment on the possibility that the joint maneuvers will be the last under Duterte, Hollenbeck replied, "If it's the last, so be it.

"I have nothing to do with that and we are going to continue to work together, we've got a great relationship," he said.

Lorenzana said some US military officials have expressed concern about where the countries' 65-year-old treaty alliance is headed under Duterte.

Duterte's moves to limit the presence of visiting American troops will impede Washington's plans to expand the footprint of US forces in south-east Asia to counter China.

"President Duterte's shoot-from-the-hip style of parochial democracy is deeply troubling," said Carl Thayer, an expert on the South China Sea. "If Duterte moves to curtail US rotational military presence from bases in the Philippines, this would undermine the US ability to deter China not only in defense of Philippines sovereignty but regional security as well."

Despite the difficult stage in the countries' relations, Lorenzana remained optimistic that those ties would eventually bounce back.

"I think it's just going through these bumps on the road," Lorenzana told a news conference. "Relationships sometimes go to this stage ... but over time it will be patched up."

**Associated Press** in San Antonio, Philippines

\* *The Guardian*. Friday 7 October 2016 23.19 BST:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/07/philippines-suspend-joint-exercises-duterte-anti-us-rhetoric>

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## **Rodrigo Duterte to end joint US and Philippine military drills**

**President says exercises to take place next week will be the last between the two nations, as ties are further strained.**

Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte has said he is giving notice to the United States, his country's long-standing ally, that joint exercises of Filipino and American troops next week will be the last such drills.

He told the Filipino community in Hanoi late on Wednesday night that he will maintain the military alliance with the US because of the countries' 1951 defence treaty. He says next week's exercises will proceed only because he did not want to embarrass his defence secretary.

Duterte said he wants establish new trade and commercial alliances with China and Russia, and the war games were something Beijing does not want.

Describing himself as a socialist, Duterte has had an uneasy relationship with the US. He said he was charting a foreign policy not dependent on the US.

"I would serve notice to you now that this will be the last military exercise," he said. "Jointly, Philippines-US, the last one."

"I will maintain the military alliance because there is an RP-US pact which our countries signed in the early '50s," he said, referring to the Republic of the Philippines.

"I will establish new alliances for trade and commerce and you are scheduled to hold war games again, which China does not want."

Duterte has had an uneasy relationship with the United States since he won a presidential election in May.

As president he has taken steps to revive ties with China, which had been strained under his predecessor over longstanding territorial conflicts in the South China Sea.

Earlier this month, he said he would not allow government forces to conduct joint patrols of disputed waters near the South China Sea with foreign powers, apparently scrapping a deal his predecessor reached with the US military earlier this year.

He has said he wants US military forces out of the southern Philippines and blamed America for inflaming local Muslim insurgencies there.

Duterte has said he was considering acquiring military equipment from Russia and China.

**Associated Press**

\* The Guardian. Thursday 29 September 2016 06.10 BST Last modified on Saturday 8 October 2016 08.37 BST:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/29/rodrigo-duterte-to-end-joint-us-and-philippine-military-drills>

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## **Rodrigo Duterte says Obama 'can go to hell' and considers breaking up with US**

**Philippine leader continues tirade against America for criticizing brutal anti-drug crackdown that has left more than 3,000 people dead in three months.**

Philippine leader Rodrigo Duterte has told Barack Obama “you can go to hell” in his strongest tirade so far against the US over its criticism of his deadly anti-drug campaign, adding that he may eventually decide to “break up with America”.

He also lashed out anew at the European Union, saying the bloc, which has also criticized his brutal crackdown, “better choose purgatory, hell is filled up”.

Since becoming president in June, Duterte has had an uneasy relationship with the US and with Obama and has declared intentions to bolster relations with China and Russia as he revamps Philippine foreign policy that has long leaned on Washington.

The brash-speaking leader also has been hypersensitive to criticism over his anti-drug crackdown, which has left more than an estimated 3,000 suspected drug dealers and pushers dead in just three months, alarming the United Nations, the EU, the US and human rights watchdogs.

In a speech before a local convention attended by officials and business executives, Duterte outlined his disappointments with the US, which has asked his government to stop the widespread killings and has questioned whether human rights are being violated. He also described Washington as an unreliable ally, saying Filipino forces had not benefited from joint combat exercises with US troops.

“Instead of helping us, the first to criticize is this state department, so you can go to hell, Mr Obama, you can go to hell,” Duterte said. Then addressing the EU, he said: “Better choose purgatory, hell is filled up.”

In a later speech at a synagogue in Makati city in the Manila metropolis, Duterte warned he may decide to “break up with America” in his most serious threat so far to push relations back with Washington.

“Eventually I might, in my time, I will break up with America,” he said without elaborating. “I would rather go to Russia and to China.”

In Washington, White House spokesman Josh Earnest said Tuesday the US had not received any official request from Duterte or any other Philippine official to alter any aspect of bilateral cooperation.

“This is an alliance that is robust and that benefits both of our countries,” Earnest said. “Even as we

protect this strong alliance, the administration and the United States of America will not hesitate to raise our concerns about extrajudicial killings. We remain deeply concerned by reports of widespread extrajudicial killings by or at the behest of government authorities in the Philippines. The use of that kind of tactic is entirely inconsistent with universal human rights and the shared values of our two countries.”

Duterte has given assurances that he will not abrogate a 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty with the US and will maintain the long alliance with America, one of his country’s largest trading partners and provider of development and military aid and defense equipment.

The US has expressed concern over the killings and urged Duterte’s government to ensure law enforcement efforts comply with human rights obligations. Last month, Obama canceled a planned first meeting with Duterte on the sidelines of an Asian summit in Laos after the Filipino leader blurted “son of a bitch” in warning the US leader not to lecture him on human rights ahead of their meeting. Duterte later expressed regrets over his remarks.

Angered by US criticism, Duterte has made a series of public pronouncements that he could scale back the activities and presence of visiting US troops in the country.

Last week, Duterte said the joint US-Philippine combat exercises to be held this week, the first of his presidency, would also be the last of his tenure. The exercises, centering on amphibious landing drills, started Tuesday under some uncertainty because of those remarks.

Marine commanders from both sides said at the opening ceremony that the exercises, involving 1,100 American and 400 Filipino military personnel, were aimed at improving readiness by the two countries to respond to a range of crises while deepening their historic ties.

US embassy officials said Washington had not been formally notified by the Philippine government of any move to scrap other planned drills. Such a move by the Philippines would impede Washington’s plans to expand the footprint of US forces in south-east Asia to counter China.

A Philippine military spokesman for the exercises, Capt Ryan Lacuesta, sidestepped the question of whether Duterte’s remarks had affected the troops and the atmosphere of the drills.

US Marine Brig Gen John Jansen said that aside from promoting regional security, the exercises had helped save lives in terms of fostering more rapid and organized responses to disasters like Typhoon Haiyan in 2013.

“Our alliance remains a key source of stability in the Asia-Pacific region,” Jansen said, expressing confidence “that we will continue to build our partnership and capabilities together”.

**AP** in Manila

\* *The Guardian*. Tuesday 4 October 2016 21.36 BST Last modified on Saturday 8 October 2016 08.36 BST:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/04/philippines-rodrigo-duterte-tells-obama-go-to-hell>

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