

Submission on Australia–Philippines Defence Cooperation Program (DCP)

From 2017 to 2019, the Philippines and Australia have witnessed the increased engagements between their Armed Forces following the arrangements reached during the bilateral meeting between the Australian Defence Minister and Philippine Defense Secretary in September 2017. Both sides agreed to increase defense cooperation built on the existing Philippines-Australia bilateral defense cooperation program, specifically across four (4) areas: enhanced intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance; enhanced information sharing; enhanced maritime security engagement and bilateral maritime patrols; and counter-terrorism training assistance inside Philippine military bases and also in Australia.

Under the DCP, education and training opportunities provided by Australia have bolstered the professionalization of officers and personnel of the Philippines' Department of National Defense (DND) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) as well as enhanced the AFP's capability and level of interoperability with the Australian Defence Force (ADF). A total of twenty (**20**) courses, excluding single service courses, have been successfully availed for the CY 2018-2019. This highlights the significant contribution of Australia in enhancing capability-building efforts of the DND and AFP.

From January to December 2019, a total of fifteen (**15**) training /exercises, four (**4**) visits/dialogues, and fourteen (**14**) courses under the DCP were completed, including the conduct of the 18th Philippines-Australia Joint Defense Cooperation Committee (JDCC) meeting last December 2019 in Canberra. Likewise, a total of forty-four (**44**) AFP personnel benefitted from the courses offered by the Australian government under the DCP. As reported during the JDCC meeting, an average of 140 military students are being sent to Australia annually and there are four (4) major land activities and two (2) maritime activities being conducted each year between the Philippines and Australia.

Based on the Philippines-Australia Defense Engagement Plan for CY 2019-2020, the following are the approved activities:

- Six (6) Dialogues;
- Five (5) Senior Leadership Engagements;
- Seventeen (17) Exercises;
- Eighteen (18) Mobile Training Team Activities;
- Nine (9) Exchanges;
- Two (2) Service- To- Service Talks (Army and Air Force);
- Two (2) Symposium/Fellowship;
- Two (2) High-Level Visits (Air Force Chiefs – Reciprocal and FOIC, PN Visit in AU);
- Two (2) Subject Matter Expert Exchanges;
- Eight (8) Defence Cooperation Program Courses;
- Thirty Five (35) Courses from the Major Services; and,
- Nineteen (19) Joint Training Programs.

To increase the availment of courses supported by the DCP, the Philippines requested that courses on Australian Defence Force English Language Profiling Systems (ADFELPS) training be also increased to ensure that prospective candidates are prepared for the rigor and language requirement of DCP technical courses. This has been conveyed to the Australian side during the 18th JDCC meeting.

Also, the possibility is being explored for the AFP and ADF to extend its military education and training initiatives by intensifying research collaborations on strengthening cooperation, forecasting emerging security threats in Southeast Asian region, and innovations in training and doctrines.

In addition, the Philippines welcomes opportunities in which both countries could enhance its cooperation on humanitarian assistance and disaster response (HADR). This could be explored under the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Program, which took effect on 01 December 2019.