

Overseas Base Realignment and Closure Coalition

Why New US Military Bases in the Philippines Are a Bad Idea

What Happened?

- On February 1, the governments of the United States and the Philippines [announced](#) the US military will have access to four new military bases in the Philippines as part of an “Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement” signed in 2014.
- Five bases that already host US troops will see \$82 million in infrastructure spending.
- Most of the new bases are likely to be in the [northern Philippines](#) close to China, Taiwan, and East Asian waters that have been the subject of growing regional disputes.

The US Already Has Too Many Bases in Asia

- There are already at least 313 US military base sites in East Asia, according to the Pentagon’s most recent [list](#), including in Japan, South Korea, Guam, and Australia.
- New bases would add to a [counterproductive buildup](#) of US bases and forces in the region that is costing US taxpayers billions while undermining US and regional security.
- New bases would further [encircle China](#) and escalate military tensions, encouraging a Chinese military reaction.
- There are hundreds of additional bases in other parts of Asia and a total of around [750 US bases](#) abroad located in some [80 countries and territories/colonies](#).

Key Takeaways

- Expanding the US base presence in the Philippines is a wasteful and dangerous idea.
- Doing so accelerates a major US military buildup in East Asia that is unnecessary, costly, and dangerously provocative.
- Expanding the US military presence in the Philippines will worsen escalating military tensions between the US and China.
- Escalating military tensions increases the risk of a military clash between the US and China and the potential for an unthinkable possibly nuclear war.
- The US government should help lower military tensions by reversing a dangerous buildup and using diplomacy with China and others to help resolve regional disputes.
- Expanding the US military infrastructure in the Philippines will be costly when domestic infrastructure is crumbling. A relatively small US presence could grow into a much larger and more expensive presence, as has happened frequently at US bases abroad.

A Better Approach

- It’s not too late to choose a [wiser, more secure, more cost effective path](#).
- The US should stop building up its military presence in the Philippines and across East Asia. Encircling China with bases and troops continues [long-outdated](#) Cold War strategies of “deterrence” and “containment” that are [not backed by evidence](#).
- The US instead should invest in building up its regional diplomatic presence and efforts. One step in this direction was announcing a [new embassy](#) in the Solomon Islands.
- The US would strengthen its physical and financial security by beginning a process to [close unnecessary bases overseas](#) while building up its diplomatic presence abroad.

Consequences from an Increased Base Presence in the Philippines

- The US military presence in the Philippines is a hugely [sensitive issue](#) dating to US colonization of the archipelago in 1898 and a colonial war that continued until 1913.
- The 2014 homicide conviction and controversial 2020 [pardon](#) of a US marine for choking and drowning a transgender Filipina woman reignited anger among many in the country.
- An increased US military presence increases support for a Philippines military with a troubling [human rights record](#).

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- The Philippines gained independence from the US in 1946 but stayed under neocolonial control, with the US military maintaining major bases and broad powers in the country.
- After years of anti-base protest and the downfall of the US-backed Ferdinand Marcos dictatorship, Filipinos forced the US to close its bases in 1991–92.
- The Philippines still feels the effects of the former Clark and Subic Bay bases in the form of long-term environmental and attendant health damage, thousands of children born to and abandoned by US military personnel, and other harms.
- The former bases have been converted into productive civilian uses including shopping, restaurants, entertainment, leisure activities, and a civilian airport.

Facts on US bases abroad: <https://www.overseasbases.net/fact-sheet.html>

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