

**Presidential Communications Operations Office
Presidential News Desk**

**SPEECH OF PRESIDENT RODRIGO ROA DUTERTE DURING THE
85TH AN NIVERSARY OF THE ARMED FORCES OF THE PHILIPPINES**

[21 December 2020]

National Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana; Senator Bong Go; AFP Chief of Staff General Gilbert Gapay and major service commanders; Lieutenant General Jose Faustino; officers and enlisted personnel of the Armed Forces of the Philippines; ladies and gentlemen.

I am honored to join the men and women of the Armed Forces of the Philippines as we celebrate 85 years of selfless service to the nation.

This year, we were faced with the most daunting health crisis in recent history. This invisible enemy – COVID-19 – caused a global pandemic that swept across the world and radically changed our way of life.

Despite its very insidious nature, the entire nation witnessed how the AFP fought proudly at the frontlines alongside our valiant health workers.

Your crucial role in the crafting of the National Action Plan Against COVID-19 was complemented by the deployment of military personnel at various quarantine and swabbing facilities and local communities to help curb the spread of the virus.

Sadly, this year we also saw our country ravaged by numerous typhoons and other natural calamities. In the middle of these disasters, you bravely shielded our people from harm and helped them rise above the ruins, risking your lives in the process.

On behalf of a grateful nation, I express my most profound gratitude to you for your willingness to serve at the frontlines as our nation faced these natural disasters, calamities, and a global pandemic. Your involvement in these efforts enabled the government to remain on top of the situation and maintain order.

The trials we faced this year underscored the need to make the AFP even more responsive to the most challenging of situations. I therefore reiterate my unyielding commitment to pursue the full implementation of the AFP Modernization Program.

We will continue to enhance your skills through capacity building initiatives and the procurement of modern equipment that will enable you to fulfill your mandate with the highest degree of expertise and professionalism.

While this year has indeed been a very difficult one for all of us, it is also a fitting time to celebrate the founding of the AFP – an institution that was built to withstand these hardships and serve the Filipino people at all costs.

Let us look forward to the coming year without losing sight of all that we have been through as a nation. May the history of our struggle for freedom, peace and inclusive progress rekindle the patriotism in your hearts that made you join this elite organization.

As we celebrate this milestone, I ask you to remain committed to your sworn duty to protect the Constitution, uphold our sovereignty, and look forward to healing and genuine progress.

Again, congratulations to the Armed Forces of the Philippines! Mabuhay kayong lahat! *[applause]*

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