

PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

PRESIDENTIAL NEWS DESK

**REMARKS BY PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR.
AND UNITED STATES DEFENSE SECRETARY LLOYD JAMES AUSTIN III**

[Delivered at the Malacañan Palace in Manila | 02 February 2023]

PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, of course, to our visitor Secretary Austin. And welcome once again to the Philippines. You have already visited us. This is your second visit already.

And I thank you for finding the time to come and be with us and perhaps exchange some ideas and thoughts and comments and information on the current situation geopolitically and of course more specifically here in the Asia Pacific Region, which has become a terribly complicated situation. And it is something that we can only navigate properly with the help of our partners and our allies in the international sphere.

And I would be stating the obvious to say that our longest partner and ally has been the United States. And as we traverse these rather troubled waters, geopolitical waters, the economic waters that we are facing, I again put great importance on that partnership specifically with the United States but all partnerships and alliances that we are able to make with our friends around the world.

And again I have always said that it seems to me that the future of the Philippines and for that matter the Asia Pacific will always have to involve the United States simply because those partnerships are so strong and so historically embedded in our common psyches that we can only – it can only be an advantage to both our countries.

So thank you once again for coming to visit with us and to give us the opportunity to discuss with you and through you the American government our own outlook on the situation as it stands at the present.

But thank you for your visit, Mr. Secretary.

US DEFENSE SECRETARY LLOYD JAMES AUSTIN III: Mr. President, thanks for being such a great host and thanks for the very warm welcome. I bring warm greetings from President Biden.

And let me begin by saying that we are very sorry to learn yesterday that there was an earthquake down in Mindanao. And I'm relieved to hear from my team that the damage was not significant at least that's what we understand thus far, and of course we have not heard of significant injuries being reported as well but we know how these things develop.

We stand ready to help in any way that we can. And again I think our AID personnel are in the area and they stand ready to help to provide humanitarian assistance when and where possible. So please don't hesitate to reach out if there's a need.

Mr. President, you made a number of comments about the strength of our relationship and I echo those comments. We do have a strong relationship and my goal and certainly President Biden's goal is to strengthen that relationship in every way possible. You are a key ally and an important ally.

And so from the defense perspective, we will continue to work together with our great partners to build and modernize your capability as well as increase our interoperability.

So we are very, very happy to be here once again and I look forward to a great discussion, Mr. President. Again, thanks for being such a great host.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary.

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