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SPEECH BY PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR.
AT THE CEREMONIAL SIGNING OF THE SELF-RELIANT DEFENSE POSTURE (SRDP)
REVITALIZATION ACT

[Delivered at the Ceremonial Hall, Malacanan Palace in Manila | 08 October 2024]

Thank you, Executive Secretary, for your kind introduction. *[Please be seated.]*

Senate President Chiz Escudero; members of the Senate, specifically I think Migz Zubiri, Senator Migz Zubiri whose bill this really is and he has fought very hard for quite a while to get this bill passed and it is a good one, so congratulations; House Speaker Martin Romualdez and the members of the House of Representatives here present; National Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro and the Cabinet members who have also joined us today; Presidential Adviser for Legislative Affairs Mark Llandro Mendoza; our key development partners and stakeholders; AFP Chief of Staff General Romeo S. Brawner and the other service commanders who are here today; my fellow workers in government; ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

We lay today the foundation of resilience shaped by our own ingenuity, our own talent, and our unwavering resolve.

With the signing of the Self-Reliant Defense Posture Revitalization Act, we are anchoring our defense strategy firmly in the strength of our own resources and capabilities.

Our Constitution mandates that the State shall “serve and protect” its citizens and sovereignty— a duty that is not just reactive but also in preparation for whatever challenges may lay ahead.

For decades, our defense capabilities have relied upon what we could acquire from abroad. Every purchase, every negotiation, and every partnership—although necessary—reminded us that our strength depended on the supply chains and the interests of other parties.

The SRDP Program, implemented under my father, former President Ferdinand Marcos Sr., set the stage for a more self-reliant defense strategy, urging us to tap into our own resources and capabilities.

In the early years and in the ‘80s, the SRDP successfully met the basic materiel requirements of the Armed Forces of the Philippines as we were able to manufacture ammunition, mobility equipment, and tactical communication sets; produce vehicles from jeeps to boats; and supply the AFP’s clothing requirements.

Through this Act, we can build on its legacy and expand upon that same vision—a defense posture that is independent, dynamic, and geared to the future.

This law goes beyond the development of weapons or equipment, as it seeks to create a framework that makes us less dependent, more resilient, better prepared.

It is a commitment to a long-term growth trajectory for a national defense industry that will support the defense requirements of our country. It's a logical move forward for a country that finds itself at the fulcrum of geopolitical shifts and volatilities.

At its core, this Act is about cultivating a robust and sustainable National Defense Industry. It establishes a structured approach to defense development, starting with research and production capabilities that align our defense sector with our strategic objectives.

We will prioritize R&D to develop systems that meet our unique requirements [and] stay ahead of evolving threats—particularly asymmetrical threats that traditional systems may not be completely equipped to address.

The strategy is clear: we start by strengthening the foundations—the research, the production capabilities, and institutional support—then build upwards, layer by layer, until we have an industry that can stand strong and succeed on its own.

By consolidating these efforts under one roof, we aim to ensure that every peso spent and every effort made directly contribute to our overarching goal of self-reliance.

The National Defense Industry Development Plan will serve as our guiding document, detailing the principles and goals that will shape our defense sector for years to come.

It prioritizes the production of critical defense materiel here at home—from small arms and tactical vehicles to more sophisticated systems.

This is about understanding what we need and why we need it, ensuring that every component is purpose-driven and strategically designed.

Turning this vision into a reality necessitates collaboration across sectors. The government does not do this alone—this endeavor requires the best minds in defense, science and technology, and business, from both practitioners and researchers.

By establishing a clear framework to guide public-private partnerships, we are saying to local innovative councils, invention societies, universities, and other learning institutions: “It is our chance to contribute to something greater—to help us protect the sovereignty and security of our nation.”

We will support these efforts through various means, from research grants to infrastructure assistance, because building a national defense industry is as much about enabling as it is about producing.

The challenges we face today go far beyond traditional conflicts, and the need to develop technologies that will counter unconventional threats is more crucial than ever.

Cybersecurity breaches, chemical attacks, radiological threats—these are more than hypothetical risks but pressing realities.

With this Act, we are broadening our perspective on defense. We are not just looking at tanks and rifles; we are building capacities that address these unconventional dangers head-on. This means developing systems and strategies that are reactive and predictive, allowing us to stay a step ahead of those who wish harm to the Philippines.

To foster innovation and the development of advance defense equipment and systems, this law introduces a comprehensive incentive scheme for those who will choose to invest in defense technology and production.

These incentives range from tax breaks to government-backed financing.

Recognizing the importance of safeguarding the fruits of these efforts, this law prohibits the sale of defense materiel to private entities. This guarantees that the weapons, the equipment, and technologies that we build will never be turned against the very people they were designed to protect.

At this juncture, I once again would like to acknowledge the hard work of our legislators. We thank you for your determination to ensure the timely passage of this important bill.

Your support to align this law with the Administration's defense strategy while promoting self-defense reliance is truly commendable.

To the private sector, it is an invitation to build an enduring defense industry.

To our esteemed research institutions, let your innovations shape our future and propel us toward self-reliance.

And to our Armed Forces, understand this: we pledge that the Filipino soldier will be bolstered by the ingenuity and the expertise of the Filipino innovator.

So together, let us build a robust defense industry that enhances national security, strengthens defense capabilities, and reinforces economic growth.

Let this law lead us to a truly self-reliant defense posture—one that reflects the spirit, the skill, and resilience of Filipino people.

Thank you. Good morning.

Mabuhay ang Bagong Pilipinas! [applause]

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