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Japan Ministry of Defense

Joint Readout from Australia-Japan-Philippines-United States Defense Ministers' Meeting

Australian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Richard Marles, Japanese Minister of Defense Kihara Minoru, the Philippines Secretary of National Defense Gilberto Teodoro, and U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin III, met together on May 2 in Hawaii. This marked the second-ever meeting of the defense leaders of these four nations, highlighting significant collaboration to advance a shared vision for a free, open, secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific.

The Ministers and Secretaries expressed serious concern about the situation in the East and South China Seas. They strongly objected to the dangerous use of coast guard and maritime militia vessels in the South China Sea. They reiterated serious concern over the PRC's repeated obstruction of Philippine vessels' exercise of high seas freedom of navigation and the disruption of supply lines to Second Thomas Shoal, which constitute dangerous and destabilizing conduct. The Ministers and Secretaries emphasized the importance of upholding freedoms of navigation and overflight, and respect for international law, as reflected particularly in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). They called upon the PRC to abide by the final and legally binding 2016 South China Sea Arbitral Tribunal Award and resolved to work together to support states exercising their rights and freedoms in the South China Sea.

The leaders emphasized their commitment to strengthen cooperation in support of regional security and stability, following the Maritime Cooperative Activity in the Philippines' Exclusive Economic Zone on April 7, 2024. They underscored that multilateral defense cooperation among the four countries is growing stronger than ever, and welcomed progress in coordination at all levels. The Ministers and Secretaries discussed opportunities to further advance defense cooperation, including through continued maritime cooperation in the South China Sea, enhanced procedures to enable coordination and information sharing arrangements, as well as strengthening capacity building.