

**Joint Readout of the Meeting of Defense Ministers
From Australia, Japan, the Philippines, and the United States**
November 1, 2025

Australian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Richard Marles, Japanese Minister of Defense Koizumi Shinjiro, Philippine Secretary of National Defense Gilberto Teodoro, Jr., and United States Secretary of War Pete Hegseth met together on November 1, 2025 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. This marked the fifth meeting of the defense leaders of these four countries in the last three years, underscoring their ongoing commitment to advance a shared vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific.

The Ministers and Secretaries reiterated their serious concern regarding China's destabilizing actions in the East China Sea and the South China Sea, and their strong opposition to any unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion. The defense leaders underscored the importance of upholding international law and freedom of navigation and overflight, as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and reaffirmed that the 2016 South China Sea Arbitral Award is final and legally binding on the parties to the proceeding. They acknowledged their continued support for ASEAN's central role in shaping the future of the region.

The defense leaders voiced their shared determination to ensure peace and stability in the region with the following commitments:

1. To reaffirm the focus of Australia, Japan, the Philippines, and the United States joint efforts on deterrence and operational readiness.
2. To enhance coordinated defense cooperation activities.

The defense leaders also discussed progress related to information-sharing, joint training, and operational coordination to enable advanced operations and seamless coordination among their forces. In support of greater alignment between policy and operational objectives, the Ministers and Secretaries expressed support for the framework to establish the Australia, Japan, the Philippines, and the United States Indo-Pacific Chiefs of Defense Cooperation Council.

Recognizing that participation of the four countries in exercises and cooperative activities enhances readiness and deterrence in the region, the defense leaders applauded the entry into force of the Reciprocal Access Agreement between Japan and the Philippines, which enables Japan and the Philippines to be more comprehensive partners bilaterally and multilaterally. The defense leaders welcomed the upcoming BALIKATAN 2026 as the next exercise in the Philippines with participation from all four countries' respective forces to enhance joint preparedness.