

Presidential Communications Operations Office
Presidential News Desk

**SPEECH OF
PRESIDENT RODRIGO ROA DUTERTE
DURING THE INSPECTION OF NEWLY DELIVERED AIR ASSETS AND TALK TO
TROOPS
[Delivered at the Clark Air Base, Air Force City, Clark Field in Pampanga | 12 February
2021]**

Kindly sit down. Salamat po.

Former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo; Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana; Presidential Adviser on Military Affairs Undersecretary Arthur Tabaquero; Senator Bong Go; AFP Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Cirilito Sobejana; Philippine Air Force Commanding General Allen Paredes; Pampanga Vice Governor Lilia Pineda; Mabalacat City Mayor Crisostomo Garbo; NOLCOM Commander Lieutenant General Arnulfo Burgos; the officers and enlisted personnel of the Philippine Air Force; mga kasama ko sa gobyerno; mga kababayan.

How beautiful it is to look at the sky at dusk and to think that we control our skies in our country. I am almost tempted to talk extemporaneous but it... Alam mo 'pag kaming mga pulitiko 'pag bumuka 'yung bunganga, matagal matapos. And I have to go home to Davao now because I have to fulfill an engagement there.

Our efforts to strengthen our military have been vital in ensuring that we are able to fulfill our sworn and shared duty of protecting our sovereignty and safeguarding the welfare of the Filipino people.

I am thus glad to join all of you today as we laud the many accomplishments of our men and women in uniform who have consistently shown dedication and excellence in serving our motherland.

I also congratulate the Department of National Defense and the Armed Forces of the Philippines for successfully procuring additional government air assets that will play an indispensable role in safeguarding our nation.

Recently, I have approved the proposal to acquire more combat utility [helicopters for] the AFP. With our recent gains against various terror groups, I am confident that our efforts under the AFP Modernization Program are already paying off.

I am particularly pleased with your efforts to eliminate terrorist groups in Northern Luzon which have led to genuine peace and sustainable progress in the area, as well as fostered greater camaraderie among [all] government security forces operating in the region.

Today, we confer the Order of Lapu-Lapu, with the rank of Kamagi, to outstanding officers and enlisted personnel who took part in restoring peace and order in Sulu in November last year. Your gallantry, bravery and courage are truly exemplary.

Alam mo hindi lahat Pilipino --- not really to derogate our race --- but mahirap itong trabaho na ito. You stare eyeball to eyeball with them. You know, I was just about 16 years old when I took my solo flight. I accumulated along the years of about 800 hours. Ang gipraktisan lang ho namin ay ‘yung L-4 --- the World War II vintage spotter plane --- the L-4 and when I stopped, I was flying the Super Cub.

I hope that your fellow soldiers will look up to you as their source of inspiration and strength, especially when it is their turn to face the battlefield.

As we celebrate your achievements, let us also take this occasion to remember [and] honor our uniformed personnel who died in the helicopter crash in Bukidnon. I express my deepest condolences to the families they have left behind.

Nag-usap kasi kami --- but the day after, I was talking to the DND secretary. Sabi ko, “Del, palitan mo na ‘yang... Is there a way where we can replace itong --- the ageing and the old Huey?”

Alam mo atin-atin lang ito but we know deep in our hearts that everytime that, you know, old helicopter flies, medyo may kaba tayo that it can falter on its own with nobody --- nobody’s intervention. Eh nire-repair nga pero matagal na talaga eh. And old, metal fatigue and the constant reborning sa pag-repair, it would take its toll on the helicopter itself.

Sabi ko kay General Lorenzana na, “Is there a way where we can replace them?” Sabi niya, we have a pending still order of 32? Is it 32?

Well, I can buy more or less madagdagan ko ng lima ‘yan o anim before I go. Pero I cannot give you the entire 32. It will be spread along --- in a number of years. But maghanap ako na madagdagan ko ng mga maski lima and to phase out Huey. Eh kaganda-ganda ng Black Hawk eh.

Alam mo ganito ‘yan --- nandito si Chief of Staff --- ang problema ho kasi whenever I read my briefer, every night, ang una kong tinitingnan ‘yung mga sundalo kong nasawi and, of course, the wounded.

And it grieves me deeply to realize that we can improve on this in terms of fighting, capability and the airworthiness of ‘yung... Sabi ko na kailangan talaga mapalitan na ‘to. I mean, it has come to age for retirement. Hindi na talaga puwede.

So it could be an insertion of the troops or a transport or whatever humanitarian runs that you have to make. Itong mga bago madagdagan lang naman sana. Hindi ito puwede na ganito lang kasi bugbog ito.

‘Pag bugbog ang equipment mo medyo maalanganin rin tayo. So kung madagdagan ng 32 ‘yan that would about maybe complete really the requirements --- the standard minimum requirements of a working Air Force, iyan.

Now the reason why I am so... I am walking on a tightrope, actually. I cannot afford to be brave in the mouth against China because, well, we are avoiding any confrontation --- a confrontation that would lead to something which we can hardly afford, at least not at this time.

Eh ako naman sa America, well, in the past, marami silang --- ang paghihinakit ko rin. We asked so much of them because they have taken so much from us. Libre sila to advance their troops in our land. Okay lang iyan sa akin but we do not like it because we want to remain neutral. We do not want to quarrel with anybody.

But for the reason is that the exigency of the moment requires their presence here, okay na lang ako diyan. But in the past, we ordered so much from them and so much were not delivered at all kaya huwag ninyo ako...

Kaibigan ako ng Amerika, kaibigan ako ng China. But what I don't like is ‘yang para kang bata na they promise you and they --- ganoon ‘yan eh. Magpunta ‘yung mga top brass nila, this group will promise you. Once they take off, they forget all about it and nobody's following until you keep on reminding them.

Until such time that I was able to talk to President Trump, sinabi niya what are our requirements? “So we need the guided rockets. We have been asking for it and, as a matter of fact, we are willing to pay for it, Mr. President, but until now it's still in the air.”

I think it was delivered after a few weeks, a few months. Kaya gano'n ang... Do not be surprised with my... I'm not allied with anybody. I am ally... I'm alay. I-alay ko ang buhay ko pati ang ally ko ang Pilipinas, nobody else. Iyon ang tandaan ninyo.

Kung marinig ninyo ako, it's a... Well, the game here is geopolitics. The theater is really geopolitics. So ako naman, I am just hold on on my salita ko, not really to seriously offend, but sinasabi ko sa kanila na hindi, hindi puwede ‘to.

I would like to put on notice if there's an American agent here, that from now on, you want the Visiting Forces Agreement done? Well, they have to pay. It's a shared responsibility, but your share of responsibility does not come free. Because after all, when the war breaks out, we all pay. You, kami, we are nearest to the garrison there where there are a lot of arsenals of the Chinese armed forces.

Iyon lang ang ano ko kaya makita mo minsan suplado --- suplado talaga ko. I --- when I deal with them, talagang nagiging suplado ako simply because of past and the pinaka-past, and until now kung hindi mo makausap ‘yung presidente.

Dito ngayon, wala akong --- I don't expect anything. It's different when it is the Republican and a Democrat. A Democrat, they --- iyong migration. They are allowing migration left and right,

but that is their problem. Ang Amerika naman is war hawks talaga ‘yan sila, but at least ina-ano tayo... Nilalagay lang sa back burner ‘yang mga samaan ng loob.

So when the opportunity came and I talked to President Trump sabi ko talaga sa kanya, “We have been hope --- we are hoping for that, we have been promised and until now, it’s still kaput.”

And I hope that the Americans would take notice of that. But the nearest --- their nearest possible and convenient outpost would really be the Philippines, the eastern side and Palawan.

Kaya tandaan nila ‘yan. I hope they would understand that we are a nearest to a theater of war. Ang banatan diyan it could be submarines and aircraft carriers and all. Madadamay talaga tayo. I do not want to participate in any adventure of that kind, if I can help it.

I am not against the Chinese, neither am I a --- ako, hindi ako pro-American. I am just a Filipino government worker working for the interest of my country.

As we celebrate your achievements, let us take this occasion to remember and honor our uniformed personnel --- I’m reading it twice --- and the others who have died in the battlefield.

Noong pumunta ako ng ano --- just give me about a little... Noong pumunta ako ng Jolo, noong namatay, needlessly, useless ‘yung kamatayan ng binomba. Masama talaga ang loob ko, nakita ko ‘yung kalahating katawan ng sundalo.

So sabi ko kay Bong, “Bong, punta tayo.” Sabi niya, “Delikado man ngayon.” “Ah, kung panahon na natin, pati tayo kung doon --- doon tayo matatapos, eh ‘di doon.” That’s about the journey of life.

Pumunta ako. But totohanan ‘yan. It might really have looked corny, “hilas” sa Bisaya. Corny ‘yan sa --- corny o hilas the same. But I did it purposely to honor. Ang sabi ko lang doon when I kissed the ground, “Hindi ka man lang nakapagdasal maski isang salita, not even to mention the name of God.” Kaya hinalikan ko ‘yung lupa sa asar ko na...

I hope that their families and friends, and comrades will take [comfort] in the thought that they are now in a more peaceful place with our Creator. True. They are now in the heavens and you can rest assured that your comrades and the families that --- your loved ones...

I do not believe in hell. I do not think that God will create hell. Otherwise, what would be his business in creating a hell when in the first place God created us then God would create something when he knows the beginning and the end of a human being in his journey in this planet ay mapupunta ng impiyerno. That’s a stupid proposition.

Everybody --- compassion. So God is forgiving. God is a forgiving God. Eh kaya nagpapako sa krus ‘yung kaibigan natin, to save us from sin. Then, what would be the purpose of being nailed in that cross when, in spite of that, may impiyerno pa pala tayo?

On this note, allow me to convey the love and respect of a grateful nation.

Again, I thank the dedicated men and women of our Armed Forces for their unwavering commitment and selfless service to the Filipino people and the entire nation.

Again, in gratitude, I assure you that this administration will remain steadfast in doing our best to ensure to improve the welfare of the families of those who have gone ahead.

At lahat naman tayo pupunta doon, whether in the service or outside. Then, we will see each other there. Do not believe in hell. Iyan ang --- I have taken an issue with that with my religion. It does not make any sense at all.

Together, let us remain partners in protecting the life and liberty of all Filipinos and the sovereignty of our nation.

Maraming salamat po. [applause]

[President Duterte returns to the podium.]

Let me salute all of you. Yes, sir! [applause]

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