

Australia, Philippine, U.S. forces conduct multilateral Maritime Cooperative Activity



Sailors assigned to Whidbey Island-class dock landing ship USS Ashland (LSD 48) uses the ship's 60-ton crane to lift an excavator from the Philippine Navy 3rd Naval Combat Engineer Battalion onto Ashland as part of multilateral Maritime Cooperative Activity (MCA) with the Armed Forces of the Philippines and Royal Australian Navy in Manila, Philippines, April 9, 2026. (U.S. Navy photo by MC1 John B. Hetherington)
From By Commander, U.S. 7th Fleet Public Affairs, April 12, 2026

SULU SEA – The combined forces of Australia, the Philippines and the United States conducted a multilateral Maritime Cooperative Activity (MCA) within the Philippine Exclusive Economic Zone, April 9-12, 2026. This activity demonstrated a collective commitment to strengthening regional and international cooperation in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

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As the fifth MCA of 2026, these regular at-sea events strengthen the interoperability of our respective military doctrines, tactics, techniques, and procedures. This multilateral MCA focused on critical maritime skills, including communication drills, maritime domain awareness activities and supporting equipment offload from Manila to Puerto Princesa, Philippines.

“We embrace any chance to conduct at-sea operations with our allies, Australia and the Philippines, and reinforce our commitment to security in the region,” said Cmdr. Adam Peeples, commanding officer of U.S. Navy Whidbey Island-class dock landing ship USS Ashland (LSD 48). “These exercises provide an opportunity to strengthen our bonds, hone our skills and interoperability, and demonstrate the resilience of our crews. Our Sailors are dedicated to ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific and deterring aggression.”

MCAs are conducted in a manner consistent with international law and with due regard to the safety, navigational rights, and freedoms of all nations.

Participating units included Royal Australian Navy Anzac-class frigate HMAS Toowoomba (FFH 156) with an embarked MH-60R helicopter; Philippine Navy Rajah Sulayman-class offshore patrol vessel BRP Rajah Sulayman (PS 20) with an embarked AW109 helicopter; Philippine Air Force FA-50 fighter jets, A-29B Super Tucano, C-208B Grand Caravan EX aircraft, a Sokol search and rescue helicopter; Philippine Coast Guard Teresa Magbanua-class patrol vessel BRP Melchora Aquino (MRRV 9702); and U.S. Navy's Ashland.

The U.S., along with our allies and partners, upholds the right to freedom of navigation and overflight and other lawful uses of the sea and international airspace, as well as respect for maritime rights under international law.

U.S. 7th Fleet, the U.S. Navy's largest forward-deployed numbered fleet, routinely operates with allies and partners in preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific.