

# Pacific Partnership Brings Disaster Response Training to Virac, Philippines



VIRAC, Philippines (June 2, 2025) – U.S. Navy Cmdr. Robert Reyes, gives opening remarks to Armed Forces of the Philippines personnel, local emergency responders, and civilian authorities before an Incident Command Systems training in Virac, Philippines, June 2, 2025. (U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Jordan Jennings)

By Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Jordan Jennings

VIRAC, Philippines – Pacific Partnership 2025 officially commenced its mission in Virac, Philippines, bringing together international expertise and local leadership to strengthen disaster response capabilities in the region and deepen strategic partnerships, June 1.

Members of the Hawaii National Guard, the Center for Excellence-Disaster Management and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) are conducting a series of intensive training events with local emergency responders and civilian authorities.

The training will focus on three core areas: urban search and rescue (USAR), Incident Command System (ICS) training, and a disaster management workshop. These activities are designed to enhance technical skills, exercise the use of coordination frameworks, and support community-based resilience initiatives. In the end, the intent is to increase natural disaster preparedness in Virac and the greater Catanduanes province.

“Pacific Partnership is about more than training; it’s about building lasting relationships that strengthen regional security and stability,” said U.S. Navy Cmdr. Robert Reyes, the officer in charge for the Philippines mission stop. “Each interaction brings us closer to achieving a shared goal of a safer, more resilient Indo-Pacific.”

The ICS and disaster management workshops are modelled after the U.S. National Incident Management System (NIMS), which provides a standardized framework for incident management to improve disaster preparedness and response capabilities. These sessions include command post simulations, interagency coordination exercises, and disaster response planning scenarios aimed at building a common operating framework between civilian and military organizations in the Philippines.

The Hawaii National Guard’s and AFP’s USAR component will focus on lifesaving operations in challenging environments. This includes practical, hands-on training in simulated collapsed structure rescue, shoring and stabilization techniques, confined space navigation, and rubble pile

operations. The program concludes with a realistic disaster scenario to test coordination and execution of newly learned skills.

Now in its 21st iteration, the Pacific Partnership series is the largest annual multinational humanitarian assistance and disaster management preparedness mission conducted in the Indo-Pacific. Pacific Partnership works collaboratively with host and partner nations to enhance regional interoperability and disaster response capabilities, increase security and stability in the region, and foster new and enduring friendships in the Indo-Pacific.

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