



## **Washington should drop defense treaty with PHL — ex-Reagan aide**

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A former aide to former President Ronald Reagan has suggested that Washington drop the mutual defense treaty and joint patrols with the Philippines due to President Rodrigo Duterte's "ostentatious disrespect."

In an opinion piece published by the New York Times on October 18, Doug Bandow stressed that "the Philippines needs America more than America needs the Philippines."

Bandow was a special assistant to President Reagan, and senior fellow at the Cato Institute.

"America is a curious great power. It cowers before international lightweights, begging the least significant nations to let it defend them. Such as the Philippines," he said in his opinion piece.

"United States credibility suffers when a nation long subsidized and defended by America shows such ostentatious disrespect. The Philippine president shouldn't be treated like a co-equal and ally if he doesn't behave like one," Bandow added. "Rather, Manila expects Washington's protection even though the archipelago matters little for the United States."

The Philippines and the US are treaty allies, having signed a mutual defense treaty in 1951 and the Visiting Forces Agreement in 1998.

The US and the Philippines has also signed the Enhanced Cooperation and Defense Agreement, which is intended to bolster the two countries' alliance.

Duterte had said that the military exercises earlier this month between the Philippines and US would be the last under his six-year term.

Not worth the risk

In his piece, Bandow painted the mutual defense treaty between the Philippines and the US as an unequally beneficial one.

He highlighted the Philippines' lack of defense capabilities, saying that the country "relies on American support rather than its own military in confronting China."

While base access helps the US "attempt to enforce its will," Bandow does not think it is worth the risk of war.

He said that it was not too much of a blow to the US when their military bases in Subic Bay and Clark Airfield were closed in 1992.

"Maintaining base access is good insurance but does not require a security guarantee, especially over contested territory, such as Scarborough Shoal. Moreover, such access is not worth paying any price: America lost no influence when Subic Bay and Clark Airfield closed decades ago," Bandow said.

As it continues to insist on defending the Philippines, he said the US can easily be dragged into war over the South China Sea disputes.

"Washington must decide what kind of risk it is willing to take on behalf of what remain primarily other nations' territorial interests," Bandow wrote.

"President Duterte is not a reliable ally. The United States should not allow such an unpredictable regime to be a trigger for war," he added.