

**PRESIDENT FERDINAND ROMUALDEZ MARCOS, JR.'s
TALK TO TROOPS**

WESCOM Headquarters, Puerto Princesa City, Palawan
June 23, 2024

(00:00:00)

Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro, sa iyong pagpakilala.

Please, take your seats.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines Chief of Staff, Chief of Staff General Romeo Brawner and the other Major Service Commanders who have joined us here this morning; the Commander of WESCOM, Rear Admiral Alfonso Torres Jr.; the Command Sergeant Major of Western Command, Chief Master Sergeant Rhoel Graganza; the officers and enlisted personnel of the WESCOM Armed Forces of the Philippines; my fellow workers in government; ladies and gentlemen. Good morning.

Before anything else, I want to say that it is a great relief to me to see you all back in home ground safe and sound.

The last time I visited the WESCOM was in line with the Peace Consciousness Month in September of last year. And I recall then my directive to sustain our presence in our waters amidst increasingly aggressive activities in the West Philippine Sea.

And you have fulfilled that mission—bravely without flinching, without hesitation. The past few weeks have been nothing short of challenges and you can even say dangerous.

But despite these challenges, you have stood up and upheld the fundamental principles that binds all of us Filipinos. A mutual respect for life, for dignity and for community.

So, on behalf of the Filipino nation, I make this great request of you: continue to fulfill your duty of defending the nation with integrity and respect as you have done so far.

(00:02:01)

We are not in the business to instigate wars—our great ambition is to provide a peaceful and prosperous life for every Filipino. This is the drum beat, this is the principle that we live by and that we march by.

We refuse to play by the rules that force us to choose sides in a great power competition. No government that truly exists in the service of the people will invite danger or harm to lives and livelihood.

And that is why, in defending the nation, we stay true to our Filipino nature that we would like to settle all these issues peacefully. And in the performance of our duties, we will not resort to the use of force or intimidation, or deliberately inflict injury or harm to anyone.

But at the same time, we stand firm. Our calm and peaceful disposition should not be mistaken for acquiescence.

History itself can tell that we have never, never in the history of the Philippines, yielded to any foreign power. [applause]

We owe to our forefathers the duty to keep the freedoms that they fought, bled, and died for; and that we presently enjoy.

Kailanman ay hindi tayo magpapasupil at magpapaapi kahit na kanino man.

The Philippines is a responsible state. We will continue to exercise our freedoms and rights in support of our national interest, in accordance with international law.

So, I speak to you, today, as your Commander-in-Chief, I have never been prouder of the brave women, men, and not just the Western Command but the entire Armed Forces as I am today. [applause]

I salute the eighty officers and troops who sailed the waters and exercised the greatest restraint amidst intense provocation.

You demonstrated to the world that the Filipino spirit is one that is brave, determined, and yet is compassionate.

Even stronger are the people who continue to inspire and motivate you to be at your best: your families, your friends who continue to pray for your safety and to try to ease your worries.

I reassure you that you have the entire nation behind you, praying for your safety, praying for your success.

The Filipino people is grateful for your dedicated service and to the families that support you.

So, in a simple gesture of gratitude, I will be joined by the Secretary of National Defense to award the Order of Lapu-Lapu in recognition of your recent actions in the recent reprovisioning efforts. [applause]

(00:05:23)

Let me of course mention, Seaman First Class Underwater Operator Jeffrey Facundo, who was harmed and was injured in the recent incident. [applause]

So, as we award these medals, we remember that on June the 17th, we made a conscious and deliberate choice to remain in the path of peace.

The government will continue to provide all your needs and look after your welfare and your families' welfare.

Kayo ang halimbawa ng isang Bagong Pilipinas. Kayo ay isa sa aming inspirasyon para lalo pang pagbutihin ang aming sinumpaang tungkulin.

Let us continue to chart the destiny of our nation as that is what we are doing now. We are charting the destiny of the Philippines, one that is strengthened by diversity but united in our quest for peace.

To all of you, once again, well done! You have done good work, you have made the country proud, you have made the military proud. Keep up the good work!

Maraming salamat sa inyong lahat. Mabuhay ang WESCOM! Mabuhay ang ating mga kasundaluhan! [applause]

Thank you and good morning! [applause]

(00:06:46)
