

school teacher Ferdinand Blumentritt. At the same time, the world of defense relations has its own linkages formed via strong legislative documents and agreements that signify the will to deepen the relationship. **What has been accomplished in this field in the recent years?**

Despite common history and prospect of cooperation, the Czech Republic and the Philippines are considered as non-traditional partners that have recently been boosting their cooperative measures in defense industry. The concrete starting point in the modern history would be May 2017, when two countries signed Defense Cooperation Agreement at the Czech Ministry of Defense in Prague. Signing on behalf of the Secretary of National Defense of the Philippines was Undersecretary for Defense Policy Ricardo A. David Jr., while Deputy Minister for Defense Policy and Strategy Division Jakub Landovský signed for the Czech Republic. The cooperation aims to develop Defense and Security Policy, Procurement Policy and Defense Industry, Defense Logistics, Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Operations, Compliance to Treaties on Defense, Security and Arms Control, Armed Forces Organization, Structure, Equipment and Personnel Management, Military Training and Education, and other activities as may be agreed upon. Department of National Defense of the Philippines outlined the meeting as "Convinced that bilateral cooperation shall help both countries in the understanding of their respective military issues and consolidate defense capabilities".

The defense realm received another major boost between May 6 to 9, 2019, when the inaugural Joint Defense Committee (JDC) took place in Prague. Defense Undersecretary Cordozo M. Luna, who also co-chaired, led the Philippine delegation along with Assistant Secretary for Logistics and Acquisitions Jesus Rey. R. Avilla and Assistant Secretary for Assessments and International Affairs Teodoro Cirilo T. Torralba III. The mechanism for JDC, clearly embedded in the 2017 Defense Cooperation Agreement provided concrete platform towards specific activities and establishment of sub-committees. Czech deputy Minister of Defense Jakub Landovský co-chaired the meeting with the respective delegation. The meeting provided first official forum to discuss the various aspects of collaboration, defense and security situation in Southeast Asia and Europe combined with common effort of military

development on the backdrop of bilateral defense cooperation. The steps forward where outlined mainly in establishing sub-committees on defense industrial cooperation. This provides clear road map towards the aspiration of joint defense projects materialized in equipment acquisition within the Horizon II of the Armed Forces of the Philippines modernization program.

Despite the main JDC bilateral platform, various meetings materialized in last 3 years that enabled concrete exchange of information and familiarization with Czech technologies and defense industry capability. In 2018, Undersecretary for Finance and Material Raymundo DV Elefante attended the recognized security and defense Future Forces Forum in Czech capital Prague. In 2019, delegation from the Department of National Defense attended the largest defense expo in eastern Czech city of Brno called International Defence and Security Technologies-IDET. There is a clear recognition on both sides that various visits and enhancement of common platform needs to continue. That is why, in 2018, Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic officially participated on the Philippines' flagship defense & security event - Asian Defense and Security Exhibition ADAS 2018. Six leading companies of Czech defense industry became the center of attention for its high-quality military vehicles, weapon systems, and ammunition. The Czech booth was open by the former Czech Ambassador Jaroslav Olša jr. with Undersecretary Cardozo M. Luna. Czech delegation was headed by Mr. Tomáš Kopečný, the former Director of Defence Industrial Cooperation Department at Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic. The Czech defense industry was represented by five Czech companies from the defense sector - Česká zbrojovka a.s., Excalibur Army spol. s.r.o., Svos spol. s.r.o., Aura s.r.o. and STV Group a.s. Czech-Filipino defense cooperation also continues with incoming presentations and information sharing. On June 4, 2019, the Department of

National Defense of the Philippines hosted the presentation of the comprehensive military logistics system of the Czech company AURA, which has long been one of the world leaders in its field. The workshop took place in the officers' club and was organized in cooperation with the Czech Ministry of Defense and the Embassy in Manila.

The shared history and current progress on defense relations provides a good platform for deeper and more comprehensive cooperation as the modernization program of the Armed Forces of the Philippines continues. The Czech Republic is a stable and democratic nation with its security structure rooted in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and open foreign policy towards nontraditional partners. Ongoing projects have full support of the Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic with its openness towards encompassing G2G structure with the government of the Republic of the Philippines. The ongoing visits of Technical Working Groups and various platforms for bilateral visits continue to play vital role in the strive for continued defense cooperation framework. This can be clearly seen and openly discussed during ADAS 2020 at booth 1530, where the Czech Republic will officially participate.

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