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Indo-Pacific Weekly Mail May 25-May 31, 2026

Greetings Colleagues,

The Consortium is pleased to share its latest newsletter for the Indo-Pacific.
Press the reply button for your feedback and comments.

Philippines and Japan Enhance Strategic Partnership



Figure 1: Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. with Japanese Prime Minister Sane Takaichi in Tokyo, Japan, May 28, 2026.

Manila and Tokyo are not dwelling on the bitter past, but they are racing toward a future in which neither can afford to face China alone. Additionally, their superpower ally, the United States, has been pushing them to increase defense spending and capabilities.

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. (Bongbong Marcos, BMM) met with Japanese Prime Minister Sane Takaichi on a state visit to Japan. Takaichi hosted Marcos Jr., and both leaders warmly turned the page on elevating bilateral relations to a “comprehensive strategic partnership” to commemorate 70 years of normalizing diplomatic relations.

The two leaders discussed the enhancement of defense and security cooperation, emphasizing the fundamentals and values of the updated Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP, Japan) and the ASEAN Outlook of Free and Indo-Pacific (AOIP). Both leaders agreed to cooperate in maritime security cooperation through the provision of patrol vessels and Joint military exercises. They also reiterated to bring the like-minded countries along with them and to bolster the trilateral cooperation of Japan-US-Philippines.

It is important to note that Japan and the Philippines have a territorial dispute with China in the East China Sea and the South China Sea. Both countries view China’s nine-dash-line is an incursion and violation of International maritime law.

Marcos Jr. spoke positively about the recent revision of Japan's decision to export lethal weapons and looks forward to the transfer of defense equipment, including Abukuma-class destroyers and TC-90 aircraft. Furthermore, the two countries will work together in trade, commerce, space, disaster management, and other domains. Both leaders discussed the regional issues and the Iran war and agreed to contribute to peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific and beyond. [Read More](#)

Canada Turns to Beijing as Ties with Washington Strain

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi is on a three-day visit to Canada, the first visit by a Foreign Minister in a decade. Canadian Foreign Minister Anita Anand welcomed Wang Yi and described the visit as significant for bilateral relations. Both countries seek cooperation in various domains, including agriculture, clean tech, energy, and manufacturing, and re-open a dialogue on national security concerns. Wang says, "China's door will always open for Canada." He met Prime Minister Carney and other senior officials.

Canada will nearly double its exports by 2030 and sell more Canadian canola meal, lobsters, crabs, and peas to China. Canada will also buy 49, 000 Chinese Electronic Vehicle (EV) with a most-favored-nation tariff rate of 6.1 %

It is important to note that [Carney visited China in January](#) this year to reset the ties. Now, China has a considerable presence in US backyard, where relations between Canada and the US are strained due to tariffs and President Trump's repeated statements about the 51st state.

Why it matters: Canada has embraced China for its economic prosperity, however, to be cautious on intelligence and national security matters.

Recalling, Canada's expulsion of Huawei executives on intelligence and security charges while China imprisoned two Canadian, the case of "two Michaels" in 2018 for spying charges. [Read More](#)

“We Need Partners, not Protectorates”- Says Hegseth

US Secretary of War Pete Hegseth highlighted the need for increased defense spending among Indo-Pacific allies and partners while speaking at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore. He expressed concern about "China's historic military buildup and the expansion of its military activities in the region and beyond," while stating the US would not let China be a Hegemon.

He applauds Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, and Indonesia for increasing defense spending and military capabilities. He termed India a "critical anchor" for the Indo-Pacific. India and the US seek to co-produce Javelin anti-tank guided munitions.

Since the Second Trump administration is aggressive in its pragmatic approach and realistic view of partnership and alliance, that is embedded in burden-sharing and burden-shifting. Hegseth remarked, "The era of the United States subsidizing the defense of wealthy nations is over. We need partners, not protectorates. We seek alliances built on shared responsibility, not dependency." [Read More](#)

Taliban and Moscow Forge Military Alliance

While America fights in the Middle East, Russia is quietly rewriting the rules in Central Asia, starting with the Taliban. Russia and the Taliban signed a military pact, indicating the strengthening of bilateral relations. After the US chaotic exit from Afghanistan in 2021, the Russian Ambassador was the first foreign diplomat to approach the Taliban. A year ago, Russia lifted the ban on the Taliban as a terrorist group, a designation that had been in place since 2003. Then, later, it became the first and only country to formally recognize the Taliban as the government of Afghanistan.

While the US has been stuck in the Iran War, the new defense agreement would help the Taliban to bolster its footprint in the region and provide leverage to Russia in Central Asia, which could complicate American strategy for Central Asia. [Read More](#)

Indo-Pacific Quiz

In which year Russia Invaded Afghanistan?

- | | |
|---------|---------|
| a. 1978 | c. 1979 |
| b. 1989 | d. 1990 |

What is Southern Jackaroo?

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------|
| a. a missile system | c. a warship |
| b. military exercise | d. military base |
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Consortium Highlights

- ❖ [Commentary](#): What Operation EPIC FURY Taught about Access, Basing, and Overflight
 - ❖ [Commentary](#): Tehran to Taiwan: How will the Two Superpowers Negotiate
 - ❖ [Blogpost](#): How the Iran War is Reorienting the Indo-Pacific Security Arrangements
 - ❖ [Feature](#): America's 21st Century Raiders: Punitive Expeditions and Counter Terrorism Doctrine Reformed, By Grant T. Willis.
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Indo-Pacific Quiz Key

Here are the **Answers** for May 24, 2026, Newsletter Quiz

Q. In which country's coal mine blast killed 90 people?

- c. China

Q. Fort Magsaysay is the largest military base of which country?

b. Philippine

Contributions: Indu Saxena