

**Office of the Press Secretary
Presidential News Desk**

SPEECH BY PRESIDENT FERDINAND ROMUALDEZ MARCOS JR. AT THE ARMED FORCES OF THE PHILIPPINES CHANGE OF COMMAND CEREMONY

[Delivered at the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Lapu-Lapu Grandstand Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City | 08 August 2022]

[Troop commander, kindly give the order to our troops of tikas pahinga.]

Thank you very much, Vice President Sara Zimmerman Duterte; House Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez; Department of National Defense Officer-in-Charge Undersecretary Jose Faustino Jr.; the outgoing AFP Chief of Staff General Andres Centino; the incoming Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Bartolome Vicente Bacarro; Medal of Valor awardees who are here present today; officers, enlisted men and women, and civilian employees of the Armed Forces of the Philippines; all our other distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon.

This afternoon is special as we become witnesses to a historic tradition that has long been undertaken by the Armed Forces of the Philippines each time a new president is elected to lead the country.

It is the Change of Command as the outgoing leadership of the AFP in the person of General Andres Castor Centino, the 57th Chief of Staff of the AFP, will give way now to the incoming and the 58th Chief of Staff Lieutenant Bartolome Vicente Orpilla Bacarro.

Also called the Changing of the Guards, it is a sacred military ritual and ceremony that symbolizes consistency and continuity in service complementing the democratic way of turning over the helm of authority from one administration to the next.

And like all military traditions, the solemnity of the occasion is treated with great respect and sensitivity as it has always been. It is the perfect time to convey my utmost gratitude to General Centino for his exemplary service that he rendered as he faithfully executed the mandate of his office during the entirety of his tenure.

He has been a source of national pride. General Centino's unwavering commitment to excellence and duty was duly recognized through the various awards and decorations that he has received through his professional career. Four Distinguished Service Stars, gold, silver and bronze Cross Medals, CSAFP commendation medal and ribbon, long service medal, numerous merit medals for combat and administration, several certificates of commendation from both the military and civilian sectors of society.

And most notably, in his capacity as the 57th Chief Commander of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, he has been awarded the prestigious Philippine Legion of Honor for his professional competence and firm resolve to maximize the AFP's core competence focusing on operational efficiency, internal security, delivery of basic services, and the optimal use of our resources.

As a public servant who stood for meritocracy, professionalism, and accountability, he effectively managed the AFP by giving special credence and substance to competence, fair play, and justice in dealing with the ranks.

Qualified personnel were selected for promotion. The placement of senior officers to key positions was deliberated upon. The AFP rotation policy was judiciously implemented.

These were the guiding policies used to ensure good governance. And in so doing, effectively strengthened the AFP as a public institution that can last the test of time. He is a true patriot, a valiant soldier, an accomplished officer, a committed leader, an exemplary public servant.

To General Centino, much respect and admiration for all that you have done. Thank you for your excellent service. *[applause]*

A well-deserved round of applause for the outgoing Chief of Staff General Andres Castor Centino. *[applause]*

And as we bid farewell to General Centino, it is now time to welcome the incoming Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, Lieutenant General Bartolome Vicente Orpilla Bacarro.

A graduate of PMA Maringal Class of 1988. He held various command and staff positions starting with platoon commander, company commander, administrative officer, intelligence officer, operations officer, civil military operations officer, and secretary to the general staff.

Holding the rank of Captain, he became the administrative officer at the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff and Office of the Vice Chief of Staff of the AFP. And there are many, many more.

As an army lieutenant serving as a commanding officer at the 6th CAA Company, 21st Battalion, 5th Infantry Division, he was initially deployed in Isabela at the height of a counterinsurgency campaign in the Cagayan Valley that lasted until 1995.

It was this tour of duty that earned him his Medal of Valor in December 1991, the highest award for military combat in the AFP. Acts of courage and gallantry were abundantly shown during a 10-hour encounter with 150 fully-armed New People's Army insurgents who surreptitiously attacked the town of Maconacon, Isabela in February 1991.

He was fearless in combat and at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty, he took on the most formidable foes, faced them head on and eventually emerged triumphant through sheer determination and courage.

In 2014, he became the Chief of Staff of the Army's 4th Infantry Diamond Division. In 2015, he served as the Army's Assistant Chief of Staff for operations. From 2016 to 2018, he became commander of the 502nd Brigade, 5th ID, Philippine Army, and eventually the Commandant of the PMA before he assumed the position of AFP Internal Auditor from October 2020 to April 2021.

In the course of his career, numerous awards and commendations have been received recognizing his exceptional performance of duty in both operational and administrative assignments.

Aside from the coveted Medal of Valor, he also received five Distinguished Service Star: one silver Cross Medal, two bronze Cross Medals, and two Silver Wing Medals; nine Combat Commander's Kagitingan badges and 36 Military Merit Medals; the PMA Outstanding Alumnus Award in 1998, among others.

In his capacity as commander, Southern Luzon Command-Armed Forces of the Philippines from July to September 2022, he was likewise given the award of the Philippine Legion of Honor.

It is certain that we have chosen the right leader in General Bacarro to lead the AFP as it marches forward and undertakes a new journey that will eventually pave the way for a much improved and stronger AFP in the days ahead.

I am sure that we will all now know that we have a reliable partner in the AFP under the helm of General Bacarro as we commence the difficult undertaking of rebirth and restoration of the Republic, transforming the country into a haven that is safe, secure, peaceful, and prosperous for all present and future Filipinos to enjoy.

This has been long overdue. It is time to get to work and be the best that we can be in our respective capacities as public servants united in purpose and in deed.

As we look and think about a world that is constantly changing, a world wrought with conditions and situations that are hard to predict, a world full of elements and forces that can wreak havoc on its domain, the kind of leadership that you possess: the strong presence, the administrative and operational proficiency, unmatched discipline, and unwavering commitment will come in useful for the work that you are facing ahead of you.

I know that you know well that the journey will not be an easy one. It will be sometimes treacherous, always complex. It will be difficult and at times seemingly unbearable. But with the AFP beside us, assisting and putting in place the fundamental prerequisites for nation-building, we shall overcome and emerge victorious in the end.

Together, a meaningful change in the lives of many can be realized. I know it can be done and that is why we shall.

Muli, maraming salamat General Centino at Lieutenant General Bacarro sa tapat at walang sawang paglilingkod sa bayan at mamamayang Pilipino. My hat goes off to both of you.

Maraming, maraming salamat sa inyong lahat at magandang hapon po sa inyo. Mabuhay ang Pilipinas! *[applause]*

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