



Trump Has Cordial Meeting With Philippine President Duterte

President Trump and Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte met in Manila on November 13 “to discuss a broad range of shared interests and priorities,” stated a White House press release. The visit, which will include an appearance at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and East Asia summits, concludes the president’s 13-day trip to Asia, during which he visited five countries. Trump joins the leaders of 18 other nations for the summits.



Speaking to the media before their meeting, Duterte said, “I cannot discuss the things that they want to say. You may want to make ... just a statement so that the media is going to have something to go back home.” To which Trump replied: “Yeah, I would. And I will say this: ‘The media was a little bit late, and you actually missed the best part of the President’s statement. [Laughter.] I think he should make it again, but it was good. But we’ve had a great relationship. This has been very successful. We have many meetings today with many other leaders. And the ASEAN conference has been handled beautifully by the President in the Philippines and your representatives.’”

The White House noted that both Trump and Duterte condemned North Korea’s nuclear weapons and missile development and called on the DPRK to immediately comply with UN Security Council Resolutions and agree to complete verifiable and irreversible denuclearization. Trump also commended the Philippines for its compliance with the relevant Security Council resolutions on the DPRK. The leaders also urged all countries, including those in ASEAN, to voice their opposition to these weapons programs and to take steps to downgrade their diplomatic and economic engagement with North Korea.

To say that Duterte has a much higher regard for Trump than he did for former President Obama would be an understatement. In September 2016, shortly after Obama’s White House Deputy National Security Adviser Ben Rhodes told the media, “We absolutely expect [President Obama] will raise concerns about some of the recent statements from the president of the Philippines,” Duterte responded by attacking Obama with a strongly worded statement.

CNN reported that Rhodes’ statement was in reply to question from reporters who asked whether Duterte’s controversial remarks about vigilante killings, journalists, and women would be on the agenda when the two leaders met.

White House officials had previously said that Obama would confront Duterte about his country’s alleged executions of some drug dealers without the benefit of judicial proceedings.

“Who does [Obama] think he is? I am no American puppet. I am the president of a sovereign country and I am not answerable to anyone except the Filipino people,” Duterte replied angrily to Obama in a September 5, 2016 speech. “Son of a bitch, I will swear at you.”

After Duterte’s outburst, the White House cancelled planned bilateral talks between the two leaders. However, the following day, Duterte issued a calmer statement that read: “We look forward to ironing



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on November 13, 2017

out differences arising out of national priorities and perceptions.”

Two months after that exchange, CNN reported that Duterte admitted he didn't attend sessions at a regional summit in Laos because he did not want to meet Obama.

“I was there. I attended the meetings, actually,” Duterte told the Wallace Business Forum in Manila.

“But you know, Obama was there, and because we had an exchange of words, I was just trying to avoid an awkward situation.”

The relationship between Duterte and Trump could not be more different. The two leaders shook hands during a dinner in Manila for attendees of ASEAN summit, according to White House pool reports. During their press event, the mood was lighthearted and the two leaders' remarks occasionally prompted laughter from the attendees.

Philippine congressman and presidential spokesman Harry Roque described the private, 40-minute meeting between Trump and Duterte as “warm and friendly.” He added: “It's very apparent that both of them have a person who they consider as not their best friend. They have similar feelings towards former U.S. president Barack Obama.” Many Americans were hoping that Trump would question Duterte about his methods for dealing with drug dealers, which some believe amount to human rights violations.

However, Roque said, “The issue of human rights did not arise. It was not brought up. It was President Duterte who brought up with President Trump the drug menace in the Philippines, and the U.S. president appeared sympathetic and did not have any official position on the matter but was merely nodding his head.”

Afterwards, the White House press secretary, Sarah Huckabee Sanders, said the matter of human rights came up “briefly,” although she did not say which president raised the issue.

Trump praised Duterte in May for doing an “unbelievable job on the drug problem.”

Photo: AP Images

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