

US Provides Over US\$250 Million For Southeast Asian Maritime Capabilities

Bernama

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KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 18 (Bernama) -- The United States is providing more than US\$250 million to develop Southeast Asian maritime capabilities over two years.

A statement from the White House's Office of the Press Secretary posted on the White House website said the recipients of the funding were the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia.

The United States would be committing US\$119 million in financial year (FY) 2015 and seek to provide US\$140 million in assistance during FY2016 subject to appropriation, it said.

"We are increasing the maritime security capacity of our allies and partners, to respond to threats in waters off their coasts and to provide maritime security more broadly across the region.

"We are not only focused on boosting capabilities, but also helping our partners develop the necessary infrastructure and logistical support, strengthen institutions, and enhance practical skills to develop sustainable and capable maritime forces," said the statement.

It said the US presence has supported the stability and openness necessary for the unimpeded flow of resources and trade across Asia's waterways that has been critical to its unprecedented economic success.

The statement said the United States in expanding its regional maritime capacity building efforts would be developing regional maritime security programmes and funds to rapidly respond to evolving challenges.

It said pursuing the Southeast Asia Maritime Security Initiative announced by Secretary of Defense Ash Carter at the Shangri-La Dialogue, a new effort was necessary to work together with its allies and partners in Southeast Asia to build a shared maritime domain awareness architecture that would help countries share information, identify potential threats, and work collaboratively to address common challenges.

It said the Philippines which remains the largest recipient of maritime security assistance, would receive US\$79 million in FY2015 funds for developing maritime capabilities.

The assistance was largely focused on building the training and logistical base for expanding the Philippine Navy, Coast Guard, and Air Forces' ability to conduct operations within waters off the Philippines' coasts, it said.

The White House statement said Vietnam would be receiving UD\$19.6 million in FY2015 and US\$20.5 million in FY2016 subject to appropriation.

The US would be helping the country to bolster its maritime Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) and command and control within Vietnam's maritime agencies, it said.

Indonesia would be receiving nearly US\$11 million in maritime-related assistance in FY2015 and almost US\$10 million for FY2016, it said.

The statement said the US was assisting Malaysia by providing almost US\$500,000 in FY2015 and planning to provide over US\$2 million in FY2016 to work with Malaysia to build maritime law enforcement training capacity and inter-agency coordination to help improve their maritime domain awareness.

The US was also assisting Malaysia by enhancing port security to prevent illicit activity and transshipment of illegal goods, it added.

"The United States will remain engaged and committed to improving maritime security capabilities in Southeast Asia," the statement said, adding that it would consult with their allies and partners to ascertain their needs more effectively and to explore new opportunities for maritime collaboration.

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