

The Threat of War in Korea: Philippines prepares for possible mass evacuation from S.Korea, requests Japan's aid

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Philippine President Benigno Aquino has held talks with Japanese Ambassador Makoto Katsura in Manila on the possible immediate evacuation of some 50,000 Filipinos from South Korea to Japan, NHK television reported on Saturday.

President Aquino's concerns come after reports of a U.S. naval task force led by the George Washington nuclear-powered aircraft carrier that will join South Korean warships in naval exercises on November 28-December 1.

The drills will be held in the wake of a recent military clash between North Korea and South Korea. The South claimed it returned fire after the North opened artillery fire on Yeonpyeong Island in the Yellow Sea on Tuesday, killing at least two South Korean marines and two civilians. Sixteen others were injured, along with three civilians.

Aquino held an extraordinary meeting with government officials to inform them of the need to be prepared for the evacuation of Filipinos living and working in South Korea, adding that their evacuation to the Philippines would take much time and "the closest country to South Korea is Japan."

THK television neither reported on how such an evacuation would occur nor on Japan's actions should it need to accept 50,000 Filipino refugees.

The situation on the Korean Peninsula remains tense and South Korea has boosted its military presence on Yeonpyeong Island.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei on Friday said, citing the upcoming U.S.-South Korean naval drills in the Yellow Sea, that China strongly opposes any foreign states' military maneuvers in its exclusive economic zone.

China has always remained a close ally to North Korea.

The USS George Washington, which carries 75 combat aircraft and a crew of over 6,000, has left its naval base in Yokosuka, Japan, and will arrive in the Yellow Sea on Sunday to begin military maneuvers with South Korea, which many see as irritating the already tense situation between the North and South.

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