
PUTIN INVITES DUTERTE TO VISIT RUSSIA: YASAY

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President Rodrigo Duterte has been invited to visit Russia by no less than the man he calls his "hero," Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Perfecto Yasay confirmed that Putin extended the invitation after the two heads of state held a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the APEC Summit in Lima, Peru on Saturday (Sunday in Manila).

"Russian President Putin has formally extended an invitation for the President to go to Russia, which will be preceded by a trip that I will have to undertake there this December," Yasay said.

The trip, Yasay believes, will herald Manila and Moscow's entry into various agreements.

"I look forward for a more optimistic and closer and detailed discussions of the President with the head of state of Russia. And that will mark the beginning of our entering into various agreements to achieve our goals," he said.

Duterte, in his 45-minute meeting with Putin, launched into a rant against Western powers and how they treat small countries like the Philippines.

"Of late, I see a lot of these Western nations bullying small nations. And not only that, they are into so much hypocrisy," Duterte was quoted as saying by Agence France-Presse.

"And they seem to start a war but are afraid to go to war. That is what is wrong with America and the others. They've been waging wars in so many places -- in Vietnam, in Afghanistan and in Iraq for one single reason that there was a weapon of mass destruction, and there was there was none."

To illustrate his point about bullying tactics, Duterte also said the unnamed foreign powers "forced the Philippines to contribute soldiers to its wars."

When Manila pulled out non-combat troops that were part of the US-led coalition against Saddam Hussein in Iraq in 2004 following threats to behead a kidnapped Filipino worker there, Washington "made it hard for us," Duterte told Putin in a video shot by the Philippine presidential palace broadcast team.

He also said the Philippines longed to be part of Europe. "We've been longing to be part also of -- despite the distance -- we have been longing to be part of Europe, especially in commerce and trade around the world."

Since taking office in June, Duterte has upended the Manila's historical military alliance with the US, repeatedly saying he was shifting toward China and Russia as he embarks on an independent foreign policy.

Duterte has also repeatedly praised Chinese President Xi Jinping and Putin, whom he called his "favorite hero."

On the other hand, he has has hurled verbal tirades against US President Barack Obama, UN chief Ban Ki-moon and the European Union. All three have expressed concern over Duterte's iron-fisted policy against drugs, which they said violated human rights and due process.

Kaynak/Source: