



PRESS RELEASE

No.

Releasing Officer:

Date

May 23, 2011

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Reference: Office of the Assistant Secretary for Strategic Assessment

SECRETARY GAZMIN DISCUSSES REGIONAL SECURITY ISSUES WITH ASEAN COUNTERPARTS IN THE 5TH ASEAN DEFENSE MINISTERS' MEETING (ADMM) IN JAKARTA ON 19 MAY 2011

Defense Ministers from ASEAN Member States join the Secretary of National Defense Voltaire T. Gazmin in reaffirming ASEAN's commitment to uphold peace and stability in the South China Sea during the 5th ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) in Jakarta on 19 May 2011. In the exchange of views on regional defense and security issues during the said meeting, the Defense Ministers were in a consensus that the disputes on overlapping claims should be settled peacefully and in accordance with the principles of the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DoC). The nine other Ministers agreed with Secretary Gazmin that the establishment of a Code of Conduct (CoC) would be useful in preserving peace and stability in the South China Sea. In addition to the South China Sea issue, the Defense Ministers also exchanged views on natural disasters, terrorism and piracy.

Aside from exchanging views on regional security issues, the Defense Ministers during the meeting were apprised of key developments within the ASEAN Defense Sectoral body and the ASEAN as a whole. The meeting also approved key documents such as the ADMM 3-Year Work Program for 2011-2013, the Concept Paper on the Establishment of ASEAN Peacekeeping Centers Network and the Concept Paper on Establishing ASEAN Defense Industry Collaboration (ADIC). At the end of the meeting, the Defense Ministers signed the Joint Declaration on Strengthening Defense Cooperation of ASEAN in the Global Community to Face New Challenges.

At the sidelines of the ADMM, Secretary Gazmin conducted bilateral meetings with counterparts from Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia. Salient in the bilateral meetings is the reaffirmation of the importance of the bilateral defense relations between the Philippines and the said countries. Secretary Gazmin conveyed keen interest in exploring possible means to further cooperation with the said countries in the areas of capability upgrade, defense establishment and civil society organization (CSO) collaboration on humanitarian assistance and disaster response (HADR), as well as defense industry collaboration.

The Secretary also joined the other ASEAN Defense Ministers during a courtesy call with His Excellency Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, President of Indonesia, on 20 May 2011. In the said meeting, the ASEAN Defense Ministers and the President reaffirmed their desire to maintain peace and stability in the region and reiterated the central role of the ASEAN in these efforts. ###