Secretary of National Defense of the Republic of the Philippines, Voltaire T. Gazmin, visited Japan from 29 to 31 January 2015. Secretary Gazmin and Defense Minister of Japan, Gen Nakatani, held Japan-Philippines Defense Ministerial meeting on 29 January 2015 in Tokyo, Japan.

At the meeting, the two Ministers extensively and frankly exchanged ideas regarding security circumstances surrounding the two countries, their defense policy and regional and global security challenges, as well as bilateral defense cooperation and exchanges. The two Ministers particularly briefed each other on and acknowledged the current situation of South China Sea and East China Sea. In this regard, both Ministers shared the view that any dispute should be settled peacefully, without use of force or coercion, in accordance with basic principles of international law. They also reaffirmed the importance of the freedom of navigation and over flight in the high seas. Minister Nakatani also explained Japan’s proactive contribution to peace based on international cooperation promoted under the Abe administration and Japan’s efforts on the ongoing development of security legislation. Secretary Gazmin welcomed Japan’s efforts to actively contribute to the peace and stability of the world together with international community. The two ministers also condemned the terrorist act of hostage taking of two Japanese nationals allegedly by ISIL. Secretary Gazmin expressed his strong support for the intention of Japanese government’s not to give in terrorism.

Recalling that ASEAN defense ministers, at the Japan-ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Informal Meeting held in Myanmar in November 2014, expressed that they value the active contribution by Ministry of Defense of Japan/Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) for the region and they specifically showed high expectations toward promoting Japan-ASEAN defense cooperation in the area of non-traditional security, the two Ministers shared the view that non-traditional security area will also be a core field of developing defense cooperation and exchanges.

The two Ministers highlighted and valued the progress on bilateral cooperation and exchanges between the two defense authorities through activities such as high-level
exchanges, Vice-Ministerial dialogue, JSDF’s contribution to the International Disaster Relief Operations during the Typhoon Haiyan that devastated the Philippines, Pacific-Partnership, Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF)’s participation as an observer to the Philippine-US Joint Exercise, among others. Minister Nakatani also expressed his appreciation for the participation of Military Music Band of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to “JSDF Marching Festival 2014” for the first time ever and deeply moved the heart of Japanese audience with their impressive performance.

The two Ministers shared views to elevate bilateral defense cooperation and exchanges to a new phase based on the “Strategic Partnership” between Japan and the Philippines, strengthening cooperation and exchanges through capacity building assistance and trainings/exercises in the area of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HA/DR) and Maritime Security, exploring a new possibility of cooperation in such areas as defense equipment and technology. To express their will, they signed the “Memorandum on Defense Cooperation and Exchanges between the Ministry of Defense of Japan and the Department of National Defense of the Republic of the Philippines”. The two Ministers confirmed that, based on this Memorandum, the Ministry of Defense of Japan/JSDF and the Department of National Defense of the Republic of the Philippines/AFP will cooperate even closer in strengthening the bilateral relationship in security and defense field.

At the meeting, both Ministers concurred with the conduct of the following major cooperation and exchanges among others:

(1) Defense Ministerial dialogue will be held on a regular basis;
(2) In 2015, Chief of Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) will visit the Philippines, and the Commander of the Philippine Army (PA) and the Commander of the Philippine Air Force (PAF) will visit Japan;
(3) Vice-Ministerial dialogue will be held on a regular basis;
(4) Joint Staff of JSDF and General Headquarters of AFP will newly establish staff talks and will promote cooperation and exchanges in joint areas;
(5) Ground Staff Office of JGSDF and Headquarters of PA/Philippine Marine Corps will establish staff talks and will start multi-layered army-to-army exchanges;
(6) To promote cooperation in maritime security, JMSDF and Philippine Navy (PN) which are both members of Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) will work together to contribute to the sound implementation of and further development of the Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea (CUES). They will conduct bilateral naval training using CUES in 2015. JMSDF will positively support the WPNS Workshop hosted by the PN in 2015;
(7) PAF will endeavor to participate in future “Cope North Guam”, Japan-US-Australia Joint Exercise, and promote cooperation and exchanges in the area of HA/DR; and
(8) Ministry of Defense/JSDF will commence capacity building project for the AFP in the area of HA/DR. As a part of this project, they will conduct capacity building assistance in the area of air transportation to the members of PAF in 2015.

(9) To explore a possibility of cooperation in the area of defense equipment and technology, the Ministry of Defense of Japan and the Department of National Defense of the Republic of the Philippines will start working-level discussions.