PH-US kick off seventh round of talks on enhanced defense cooperation

MANILA, PHILIPPINES  24 March 2014 The Philippines and United States Negotiating Panels kicked off today the seventh round of negotiations on a proposed agreement which is seen to further deepen defense cooperation between the two treaty allies.

In his opening statement, Defense Undersecretary and Chair of the Philippine Negotiating Panel Pio Lorenzo Batino cited the “enduring alliance” between the Philippines and the United States, stating that as “our partnership has evolved and our relations have matured,” both countries must continue to find ways to ensure that our alliance remains responsive to our security requirements.

Undersecretary Batino stressed that, “For the Philippines, our internal environment has changed as well and we need to find a new model for our security engagement.”

Undersecretary Batino also emphasized that the draft agreement being negotiated was a reaffirmation of “our shared commitment to the enduring alliance,” stating that as we seek to build a minimum credible defense posture, we are leveraging our long history of partnership to meet both traditional and emerging challenges and extend our areas of cooperation to new grounds, like humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

While looking forward to “productive discussions,” Undersecretary Batino also expressed hope that “significant progress“ will be made during the seventh round of negotiations.

This round follows the sixth round held earlier this month in Washington, D.C.

In the sixth round of negotiations, both panels went through the entire draft agreement and reached consensus on many provisions, including on the proposed accord’s preamble, purpose and scope, definition of terms, ownership of constructed infrastructure, coordination on security, contracting procedures, and resolution of disputes.
The Agreed Minutes of the sixth round described the discussions as “substantive and productive.”
Undersecretary Batino also emphasized that, as in the preceding six rounds, the Philippine Negotiating Panel is guided by the principles of full respect for Philippine sovereignty, non-permanence of US troops and no US basing in the Philippines, mutuality of benefits and respect for the Philippine Constitution, including the prohibition against nuclear weapons.”

The other members of the Philippine Negotiating Panel are Ambassador Lourdes Yparraguirre, Ambassador J. Eduardo Malaya, DOJ Undersecretary Francisco Baraan III and DND Assistant Secretary for Strategic Assessments Raymund Jose Quilop.

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