PHL, US conclude sixth round of talks on enhanced defense cooperation

WASHINGTON, D.C. 07 March 2014 The Philippines and United States Negotiating Panels concluded their sixth round of negotiations here on a proposed agreement which would deepen defense cooperation between the two treaty allies.

The proposed agreement will allow the sharing of defined areas within certain AFP facilities with elements of the US military on a rotational basis within parameters consistent with the Philippine Constitution and laws.

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 two sides will meet again in Manila in late March to work on remaining issues.

The Agreed Minutes of the sixth round described the discussions as "substantive and productive" and that “significant progress was made.”

“This fresh round has clearly shown the shared commitment of both parties to enhance cooperation in defense, security and related fields, including humanitarian assistance and disaster response. The further exchanges of views have helped pave the way for the formulation of mutually agreeable language,” said Department of National Defense Undersecretary and Chair of the Philippine Negotiating Panel Pio Lorenzo Batino.

After the reconstitution of the Philippine Negotiating Panel and before the fifth round of talks last January 30-31, the Philippine side presented a full draft text which more comprehensively articulated the Philippines’ positions which are consistent with the Philippine Constitution and relevant laws as well as informed by the country’s historical experiences.

At the instance of the Philippine Panel, the United States Panel agreed to the inclusion of provisions on environment and safety, and opportunities for potential Philippine suppliers of goods, products and services.
Undersecretary Batino emphasized that, as in the preceding five 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.

#####