PRESS RELEASE

DATE RELEASED: February 4, 2014

PHL-US PANELS SUCCESSFULLY CONDUCTED FIFTH ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS ON ENHANCED DEFENSE COOPERATION

Washington, D.C. 31 January 2014 The Philippines and the United States negotiating panels successfully concluded the fifth round of negotiations on enhanced defense cooperation here with both sides arriving at common understanding on key issues such as security and related topics while clarifying their respective views on other matters.

The Philippines and the United States negotiating panels reaffirmed their commitment to enhancing their cooperation in the security and related fields, particularly in humanitarian assistance and disaster response, while acknowledging that the proposed agreement must be guided by the Mutual Defense Treaty, the Visiting Forces Agreement and other international legal instruments and consistent with their respective Constitutions and laws.

Speaking after the conclusion of the fifth round of negotiations, Undersecretary of the Department of National Defense and Chair of the Philippine Negotiating Panel Pio Lorenzo Batino described the negotiations as "candid yet friendly," and stressed that key fundamental principles underscoring Philippine sovereignty and interests were "fully articulated and amplified."

"The Philippine Negotiating Panel will continue to articulate and promote our national values and interests and will remain 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," said Undersecretary Batino.

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

The sixth round of negotiations will be held in early March 2014.