The Philippines and the United States have agreed that the defense departments of the two countries would be the designated implementing authorities of the proposed framework agreement on the increased rotational presence (IRP) of American troops and defense equipment in the country.

In the third round of the talks held last week at the US Department of Defense (DoD) in the Pentagon in Washington D.C., the two sides also agreed to change the working title of the accord to “Framework Agreement Between the Philippines and the United States on Enhanced Cooperation and Rotational Presence,” according to Defense Undersecretary Pio Lorenzo Batino, head of the Philippine panel of negotiators.

“Both sides concurred that the designated authorities of the agreement would be the DND and the DoD. This reflects the very nature of the agreement that it is an executive agreement,” Batino said.

According to Batino, the framework agreement, which the Philippine government envisions to bolster its external defense, provide training and expertise to the armed forces and improve disaster response, would be within the purview of the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty with the US and the Visiting Forces Agreement signed in 1998.

Foreign Assistant Secretary Carlos Sorreta, panel spokesperson, said that during the last round of negotiations the two sides continued talks on the key provisions of the proposed framework agreement, including duration and termination, ownership, prepositioning of defense equipment, supplies and materiel, and agreed installations.

“There is still a need to hold further discussions on these to thresh out some issues, and hopefully both panels will be able to come to an understanding when we hold the fourth round of talks in Manila next month,” Sorreta said.

Sorreta also said the negotiators held informal discussions on environmental policies and standards of the Philippines and the US that will apply to the activities of American troops.

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