

Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade
The U.S.-Philippines Alliance: Deepening the Security and Trade Partnership
Opening Statement - Chairman Ed Royce
February 7, 2012

Today, the Subcommittee examines a rejuvenated relationship with the Philippines. The Philippines is one of our five treaty allies in Asia. Last year marked our alliance's 60th anniversary.

But there is no blunting the fact that the Philippines has been largely ignored in U.S. foreign policy. This is the first congressional hearing focused solely on the U.S.-Philippine relationship in many years, in fact. Fortunately, as we will hear today, things are starting to change.

Since 9/11, the U.S. and the Philippines have been closely cooperating on combating terrorism. U.S. Special Forces have worked under the Armed Forces of the Philippines, providing training, logistics and other support to root out terrorist organizations seeking sanctuary in the southern Philippines - and with a good deal of success. Just last week, Philippine forces killed some of Southeast Asia's most wanted terrorists.

Importantly, U.S.-Philippine security cooperation is expanding beyond counterterrorism. While the Aquino Administration has taken steps to bolster its military, it faces years of neglect. Last year, the U.S. transferred the Coast Guard Cutter *Hamilton* to the Philippine Navy. Renamed the *Gregorio del Pilar*, the ship - originally commissioned in 1967 - immediately became the Philippine Navy's flagship vessel. This simple step bolstered an alliance and saved the U.S. taxpayer a hefty disposal tab. I am pleased to report that the congressional review process for another ship - Coast Guard Cutter *Dallas* - wraps up this week. It should soon be on its way to Manila.

There is talk of even greater security cooperation between our two countries - more exercises, and more troop and ship visits. There are reports the Philippines would like to bolster its air defenses with refurbished F-16s. While generally supportive, this doesn't mean the Philippines can shirk its own defense responsibilities. Manila's human rights record has impacted security cooperation in recent years.

Aggressive Chinese claims on the South China Sea - or the West Philippine Sea as it is referred to in Manila - are driving the nations of Southeast Asia to seek closer U.S. ties. Chinese ships have fired live rounds at Filipino fisherman and severed Philippine oil survey cables, sometimes merely miles from its coast. The U.S. and the Philippines want peace and stability in this region, which is key to the global economy.

Our economic ties are important too. For too many years, the Philippines has suffered from economic malaise as its neighbors have soared. The problems have been bad government, corruption, and generally harmful economic policies. There are some signs that conditions are improving. Legislation pending in the Ways and Means Committee that I support would restore

to the Philippines preferential access to the U.S. market for many clothing items it lost when the global apparel quota system was lifted seven years ago.

In recent months, the Obama Administration has placed heavy emphasis on Asia. While welcome, a word of caution. Raising expectations is the easy part. It's the follow-through that matters.