

5 February 2013

Since the grounding of the USS Guardian on the Tubbataha Reef on January 17, a series of meetings between the Philippine Government and the United States (U.S.) Embassy officials have been held to discuss the incident.

These meetings have included representatives from the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), Department of Justice (DOJ), Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC), and Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), along with representatives of the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Embassy.

In a meeting at the DFA on February 4, U.S. Ambassador Harry K. Thomas, Jr. reiterated his regrets over the grounding incident and assured Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert F. del Rosario that the United States will provide appropriate compensation for damage to the reef caused by the ship.

The Philippine government stated that the Philippine Coast Guard had commenced its independent inquiry into the grounding of the USS Guardian. Upon receipt of information on the incident, the Philippine Coast Guard formed the Maritime Casualty Investigation Team (MCIT) in accordance with its standard procedures and resolutions of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) on serious maritime incidents to establish the circumstances and causes of the grounding on Tubbataha Reef and to formulate safety measures to prevent a repetition of this incident.

In the meeting, the two governments agreed to cooperate during investigations of the grounding incident.

With an emphasis on protecting the marine environment, preparations for the salvage of the USS Guardian began shortly after the grounding occurred and include the removal of 15,000 gallons of fuel and other potentially harmful material. A salvage plan has been submitted to PCG for approval and clearance. PCG will share the salvage plan with the Tubbataha Management Office. It is expected that the start of the salvage operation will be announced

shortly. In the meantime, the United States is coordinating closely with PCG in the salvage operation to extract the USS Guardian from the reef.

The two governments agreed to continue to work closely together as the salvage operation and the investigation into the grounding proceed. Both governments agree that preventing further damage to the reef is a top priority. END