

14 February 2013 – The top foreign affairs official of the United States (U.S.) has assured the Philippine Government of full cooperation in the salvaging of the USS Guardian as well as in the investigation of the grounding incident and that the U.S. stands ready to fully and appropriately provide compensation for all damages.

This was the assurance given by the new U.S. Secretary of State, former Senator John Kerry, in a phone call last night to Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert F. del Rosario.

“One of the first things we discussed was the USS Guardian incident. We had a very frank discussion between friends. We both agreed on the importance of removing the USS Guardian from the reef without causing further damage,” Secretary del Rosario said, adding “Secretary Kerry reiterated the deep regret of the US government over the incident and its readiness to provide full and appropriate compensation.”

Secretary del Rosario told Secretary Kerry that the Philippine Government is determined to find out what exactly caused the grounding incident and that a full investigation is being carried out by the Philippine Department of Transportation and Communication (DOTC) and the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG).

“Secretary Kerry said that he himself wants to know and get to the bottom of what truly happened. In this context he said that he wants to be a full partner of the Philippines in finding out what happened and that the U.S. government will cooperate fully with the investigation that the Philippines is conducting,” Secretary del Rosario said, adding that this would include the willingness of the U.S. to accept and answer queries posed by Philippine investigators to key U.S. personnel.

According to Secretary del Rosario, Secretary Kerry is also committed to sharing the findings of the U.S. investigation and to consulting the Philippines and its experts before finalizing its investigation.

“We both agreed that it is important to understand what happened and to take the necessary navigational safety measures to protect the reef and that would prevent other ships from grounding there.”

On the part of the Department Foreign Affairs, Secretary Del Rosario said that it is determined to make sure that the compensation to be provided by the United States will be appropriate, taking into account the amount and degree of damage to the reef.

“I would like to assure the public that every effort will be made to obtain proper compensation. We also are of the view that a long term commitment of resources by the United States to the future well being of the reef is important, on top of the issue of compensation,” Secretary del Rosario explained. END