

FROM THE FRONT PAGE

US Assistance to RP increased in new proposal

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 In the proposed budget, an estimated total amount of US\$667 million is to be allocated to the Philippines. The amount represents a substantial increase from previous years and can be taken as a reflection of the appreciation and value the Obama Administration gives to the strategic Philippines-US partnership.
 "At this difficult time of ongoing economic crisis in the US and the intense pressures on the US budget to support domestic recovery efforts, the increase in foreign assistance is a sure sign of continuing US commitment to support peace and development efforts in the Philippines. Our partnership is growing stronger and this has benefited not only our country but also the region," Secretary Romulo stated.
 Development assistance, defense and military support programs, poverty alleviation programs, as well as the Filipino Veterans Equity Fund will benefit from the increases in the budget proposal.
 In terms of development assistance, funds will be allocated for the child survival and health program. USAID is also expected to step up its efforts in such areas as Mindanao, where 60 percent of its assistance has already been directed.
 The aid agency has been focusing on helping communities in conflict-affected areas in Mindanao and promoting economic

growth and business opportunities there. Around US\$100 million was requested to fund development assistance.
 The Philippines has also been engaged with the US government's Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) and expects to conclude talks this year on at least US\$350 million worth of grants for poverty alleviation and development projects. The FY 2010 budget proposal is in anticipation of such an agreement.
 Filipino World War II veterans have also been assured of US budget support in the amount of US\$198 million for the Filipino Veterans Equity Compensation Fund.
 The US is the Philippines' only mutual defense treaty partner and is the largest source of foreign military financing. Continued US support to Philippine defense and military establishment is critical considering that as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP), Philippine military expenditure is second to the lowest in Southeast Asia.
 US Foreign Military Financing to the Philippines, which contributes to the Armed Forces of the Philippines' modernization efforts, is the 12th largest in the world. The Philippines also receives the highest level of International Military and Education Training funds in East Asia and the Pacific.
 In maritime security, for instance, the US facilitated the

development of the Philippine Navy's capability in maritime security through Coast Watch South (CWS) and the provision of surveillance, communications, and interdiction equipment.
 The RP-US Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) has facilitated defense cooperation. The conduct of joint exercises builds the AFP's capacity to meet traditional and non-traditional security threats and challenges, such as natural disasters, terrorism, piracy and other transnational crimes.
 Under the annual Balikatan exercises, civic and humanitarian projects have been implemented. These involved the provision of medical services and the building of infrastructure, roads, schoolhouses and water wells, to improve community life and economic opportunities in Basilan, Sulu, Palawan, Samar and other provinces in the Philippines.
 The Obama Administration's move to provide additional assistance to the Philippines is seen as a clear manifestation of the deep and abiding friendship and mutual support that has characterized RP-US relations through the years.
 According to Secretary Romulo, "this augurs well for the future of our enlightened partnership." ■

US Filipino citizens urged to participate in choosing next RP president

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 elections in the Philippines even without going back to the country.
 With OAV, ballots are sent to voters by mail. Voters need to mail the ballots back to the Consulate where he or she registered.
 This is the third OAV registration for overseas Filipinos after the law was passed in 2003 in time for the 2004 Philippine presidential elections. Registration period this year, for the 2010 elections, started last February and will end in August.
 "All OAV registrants during this period can vote for the president and vice president, 12 senators, and party list representatives during the May 2010 general elections," PCG LA Vice Consul Reyes also said in the interview.
 Consular outreach programs will be initiated by PCG LA on May 16th in Panorama City, CA; in Las Vegas, NV on May 23rd and 24th; in Walnut CA on May 30th; and in Chandler, AZ on July 18th.
 This consular office has jurisdiction over the areas of Southern Nevada, Southern California, Texas and Arizona.
 For its part, the Philippine Consulate General New York (PCG NY) will hold outreach programs in Rochester, NY on May 16th; in Philadelphia, PA on July 11th and in Massachusetts on July 18th.
 PCG NY covers Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont.
 Both NY and LA consular offices have been trying to reach out to more Filipino voters via outreach programs in their respective jurisdictions. This is to make registration faster and more convenient for Filipinos.
 These two consular posts have the highest

turnout of OAV registrants in the US since registration started in February.
 While voter registration during outreach programs is free, registrants may be asked to make appointments via fax or e-mail.
 PCG LA, in particular, has asked Filipinos to download forms from their website and have these ready during registration at the outreach sites. They need to make appointments online and view the appointment schedule on the website.
 US-based Filipinos need to register in the consular office that has jurisdiction in the area where they reside.
 Those residing in the areas of Northern California, Northern Nevada, Alaska, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Utah, Oregon, Washington, Wyoming need to register at the Philippine Consulate San Francisco.
 Filipinos in Midwest states namely Arkansas, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Minnesota, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Illinois, and Wisconsin are covered by Philippine Consulate Chicago.
 Those living in Hawaii, American Samoa, Kiribati, Tonga, French Polynesia, meanwhile are under the jurisdiction of Philippine Consulate Honolulu.
 The Philippine Embassy in Washington, DC, meanwhile, has jurisdiction over Alabama, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia.
 Complete schedule of voter registration hours and outreach programs in these consular offices can be viewed in their respective websites. (Dymphna Calica-La Putt)

The upside of a downturn

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 Foundation at a press briefing for the Asian American media held at the Time Warner Center Wednesday, May 13. "Asian American businesses have an opportunity to expand their markets through President Obama's economic stimulus plan, and they will learn about it at the conference," she added.
 The conference, slated for May 20-22, aims to find out the growth areas and opportunities, best practices and strategic solutions for small and minority businesses in today's challenging marketplace. The 24th Anniversary CelebrAsian Business Opportunity Conference will be held at the New York Marriott at The Brooklyn Bridge in Brooklyn, New York.
 "USPAACC Education Foundation has been at the forefront of education, training and nurturing Asian American suppliers and business owners since 1984, and CelebrAsian, our flagship event, provides valuable access, puts the spotlight on innovation, and sharpens their competitive edge to sustain growth in today's challenging times," Allen added.
 The conference theme, *Business beyond Boundaries: Turning Challenges into Opportunities—Follow the Money*, highlights how businesses could thrive in an economic downturn, where to find opportunities in the federal initiative on "green" energy, and strategy to win a piece of the Obama Administration's \$787 billion economic stimulus package.
 "We started USPAACC because we wanted to create an organization that would help improve each community's economic standing so we, as Asian Americans, can collectively raise our voice," Allen shared.
 As the oldest and largest pan-Asian American business opportunity conference in the country, CelebrAsian connects hundreds of top-caliber Asian American suppli-

ers and business owners with buyers from Fortune 500 corporations, the federal government, and the small and minority business community, through pre-scheduled one-on-one matchmaking meetings, informative summits, workshops and networking events.
 Featured speakers this year include PepsiCo International Vice Chairman and CEO Michael White, New York City Department of Small Business Services Commissioner Robert Walsh and Steve Tappin, co-author of the bestselling book *The Secrets of CEOs*.
 Tappin, who will be the featured speaker at the International CEO Forum on May 20, will share his unique insights based on his personal interviews with 150 global CEOs.
 Sessions also include Follow the Money: Expand through the Stimulus Plan; Successful Marketing; Strategy for Growth; Guanxi Business Opportunity Fair (Guanxi is a commonly used business term meaning "connections" or "relationship"); Go Green: Opportunities for Green Suppliers; Strategic Alliances with Corporations and the Federal Government, among others.
 "It is a little known fact that federal contracting is one of the largest in the world, with the federal government spending \$500 billion in contracts a year," Allen said.
 The spotlight will also be placed on the success and achievements of outstanding Asian American businesses, through several special events during the conference, including the USPAACC Education Foundation/Wells Fargo Asian Business Leadership Awards, the Business Leaders and Scholarship Awards luncheon and the Excellence Awards Gala Dinner presenting the "Fast 50 Asian American Businesses."
 For more information about CelebrAsian, visit www.uspaacc.com. ■



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Processing of Filipino vets' claims 'on track,' says Gaa

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 that were filed, about 200 have been disapproved.
 Ambassador Gaa also welcomed the inclusion of funding for the Filipino Veterans Equity Fund in the 2010 proposed budget submitted by President Barack Obama to the US Congress last May 7.
 "The inclusion of funding for our veterans in the 2010 budget proposed by President Obama not only assured continued appropriations for their benefits but also reiterates the importance the current administration gives to the contribution, courage and sacrifices of our Filipino veterans of World War II," Ambassador Gaa said.
 According to the *San Jose Mercury News*, seven Filipino-American veterans from San Jose are among the first Northern Californians to receive long-sought compensation for their military service during World War II, and among those getting a \$15,000 check was Dominador Valdez, 83, president of the Santa Clara County chapter of the American Coalition for Filipino Veterans of WWII.
 "We are happy and grateful to the 111th Congress for finally taking this action," Valdez told the newspaper.
 Based on estimated figures, only about 18,000 of the 250,000 Filipinos who fought in World War II war are still alive—with 6,000 still in the United States and 12,000 in the Philippines. (Momar G. Visaya)

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