

By JOSEPH G. LARIOS

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CHICAGO (*jGLi*) – United States Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton assured Filipino World War II veteran Celestino Almeda Wednesday (May 23) in Washington, D.C., that “we have a team in Manila working” to help Philippines over the Chinese intrusions into the Philippine territorial sea.

Mr. Almeda was able to solicit support for the Philippines from Secretary Clinton after Clinton testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee

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hearing for the
U.S.
ratification of the United Nations Convention of Law of Sea
(UNCLOS) or the
Law of the Sea Convention
or the
Law of the Sea treaty
.

An e-mail from Eric Lachica of the American Coalition for
Filipino Veterans, Inc. based in Arlington, Virginia, said when
Mr. Almeda asked Secretary Clinton what the
U.S.
is doing about Chinese intrusions into Philippine territorial sea,
Clinton
replied, “we have a team in
Manila
working on it.”

When Almeda followed up with another question,
“diplomatically, the U.S. is not signatory to the United Nations

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Convention on Laws of the Sea, will the
U.S.
support the
Philippines
, like in World War II,
Clinton
responded, “absolutely!”

Almeda was accompanied at the Capitol Hill by Mr. Lachica and Dr. Bambi Lorica of the U.S. Pinoys for Good Governance, which is participating in the June 3 Philippine Independence Day parade in New York to urge China to honor UNCLOS.

‘GIVE ADVICE AND CONSENT’ TO THIS TREATY

In asking the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations committee Chair

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John Kerry to “please give advice and consent to this treaty (UNCLOS) before the end of this year,” Secretary Clinton said, “The time has come for the United States to have a seat at the table, to fully assert its role as a global leader, and accede to this important treaty. It is the bedrock legal instrument underpinning public order across the maritime domain. We are the only permanent member of the U.N. Security Council that is not a party to it. Ch

ina

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France

,
Russia
, other countries,
Germany

,
India

, 161 countries have approved this treaty. We are the only industrialized country in the world that has not approved it.

“Let me take a few minutes and outline why I, too, believe that this Treaty is absolutely critical to U.S. national security, why it is time to move forward on this important issue, and why the longer we delay, the more we undermine our own national security interests.”

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Aside from Secretary Clinton, the others, who spoke in favor of the ratification of UNCLOS treaty were National Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta and Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Secretary Clinton said, “So far we’ve been fortunate, but our navigational rights and our ability to challenge other countries’ behavior should stand on the firmest and most persuasive legal footing available, including in critical areas such as the South China Sea

.

“I’m sure you have followed the claims countries are making in the South China Sea. Although we do not have territory there, we have vital interests, particularly freedom of navigation. And I can report from the diplomatic trenches that as a party to the

convention, we would have greater credibility in invoking the convention's rules and a greater ability to enforce them.”

FOUR NEW DEVELOPMENTS FOR JOINING CONVENTION

Secretary Clinton added, “Now, one could argue, that 20 years ago, 10 years ago, maybe even five years ago, joining the convention was important but not urgent. That is no longer the case today. Four new developments make our participation a matter of utmost security and economic urgency.

“First, for years, American oil and gas companies were not technologically ready to take advantage of the convention's provisions regarding the extended U.S. continental shelf. Now they are. The convention allows countries to claim sovereignty over their continental shelf far out into the ocean, beyond 200

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nautical miles from shore. The relevant area for the United States is probably more than 1.5 times the size of Texas . In fact, we believe it could be considerably larger.

“The second development concerns deep seabed mining, which takes place in that part of the ocean floor that is beyond any country’s jurisdiction. Now for years, technological challenges meant that deep seabed mining was only theoretical; today’s advances make it very real. But it’s also very expensive, and before any company will explore a mine site, it will naturally insist on having a secure title to the site and the minerals that it will recover. The convention offers the only effective mechanism for gaining this title. But only a party to the convention can use this mechanism on behalf of its companies.

“The third development that is now urgent is the emerging opportunities in the Arctic. As the area gets warmer, it is opening up to new activities such as fishing, oil and gas exploration, shipping, and tourism. This convention provides the international framework to deal with these new opportunities. We are the only Arctic nation outside the convention.

Russia

and the other Arctic states are advancing their continental shelf claims in the

Arctic

while we are on the outside looking in. As a party to the

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convention, we would have a much stronger basis to assert our interests throughout the entire Arctic region. (And)

“The fourth development is that the convention’s bodies are now up and running. The body that makes recommendations regarding countries’ continental shelves beyond 200 nautical miles is actively considering submissions from over 40 countries without the participation of a U.S. commissioner. The body addressing deep seabed mining is now drawing up the rules to govern the extraction of minerals of great interest to the United States and American industry. It simply should not be acceptable to us that the United States will be absent from either of those discussions.”
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