



NEWSCOOP 2014

NAMRIA draws PH-Indonesia EEZ Boundary Map



EEZ boundary chart of the Philippines

The recent signing of the new maritime boundary agreement between the Philippines and Indonesia is another significant achievement for NAMRIA. The agency was part of the 20-year negotiations that led to the signing of the agreement which defines the limits of the two countries' Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) in the Celebes Sea and southern Philippine Sea.

Under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the EEZ is a 200-nautical-mile (370-kilometer) expanse of sea from the baselines where a country has the exclusive rights to fish and exploit undersea resources such as oil, gas, and other mineral deposits. The negotiations were made by diplomatic and technical representatives of the two archipelagic states to find an equitable solution to their overlapping maritime areas. In the Celebes Sea, the distance is much lesser than 400 nautical miles, hence the overlap. The EEZ boundary line is composed of eight turning points and has a total length of 627.51 nautical miles (1,162.2 kilometers). The EEZ boundary line, which cuts across the Celebes Sea unto the Philippine Sea, has varied distances from the archipelagic baselines of both countries, the shortest of which is 16.07 nautical miles from Sarangani Island of the Philippines and 15.37 nautical miles around Marore Island of Indonesia.

The signing of the agreement was held at Malacañang on 23 May 2014 on the occasion of the state visit to the Philippines of Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. President Aquino and President Yudhoyono witnessed the signing of the agreement by their respective foreign ministers, Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert F. del Rosario and Indonesian Foreign Affairs Minister Dr. R. M. Marty M. Natalegawa.

One of NAMRIA's core functions is the delimitation of the maritime boundaries of the Philippines. The agency was responsible for the establishment of the Philippine archipelagic baselines which was enacted into law in 2009. NAMRIA determines the different maritime zones, delineating them in accordance with domestic laws and the UNCLOS and works closely with the Department of Foreign Affairs when it comes to maritime boundary issues. The agency also led the preparation and successful defense of the country's submission to the United Nations for an extended continental shelf in the Benham Rise Region.

NAMRIA and its Indonesian counterpart assisted the Philippines-Indonesia Joint Permanent Working Group on Maritime and Ocean Concerns (JPWG-MOC) in preparing the charts for the EEZ boundary. The NAMRIA representatives who were part of the Philippine Technical Panel on Maritime Boundary Delimitation were Deputy Administrator Efren P. Carandang, HB OIC-Assistant Director Capt. Herbert L. Catapang, and Geophysicist IV Dennis B. Bringas.

The NAMRIA delegation took part in the fourth preparatory meeting held in Jakarta, Indonesia on 17 May 2014 to resolve the remaining issues pertaining to the draft EEZ boundary agreement and agree on the final design of the accompanying EEZ boundary chart. The boundary agreement stipulates among others that it shall not prejudice the rights or positions of both sides with regard to the delimitation of the Continental Shelf boundary. The NAMRIA delegation also attended the eight meeting of the JPWG-MOC on the following day to endorse the draft agreement for signing of the respective foreign ministers and certify the accompanying chart. Administrator Peter N. Tiangco and Hydrography Branch Director Capt. Jacinto M. Cablayan along with their Indonesian counterparts signed the EEZ boundary chart.

The boundary agreement is the first for the Philippines, and possibly the first between two major archipelagic states. This early, it is being hailed both locally and internationally for setting a good example on how two neighboring states can, in a friendly and peaceful manner, resolve a dispute that otherwise has become very contentious between and among several countries in other parts of the region. For both sides, the agreement will not only provide a clear reference line for the exercise of their respective jurisdictions, but will also promote more cooperation in terms of managing and preserving the resources in the Celebes Sea and southern Philippine Sea.

NAMRIA was present from day one of the negotiations in Manado in June 1994 until its conclusion in Jakarta on 18 May 2014. To date NAMRIA continues to provide the national government with the technical expertise particularly in dealing with maritime boundary issues to ensure that the metes and bounds of the national territory are always safeguarded.

NAMRIA representatives, Philippine Technical Panel on Maritime Boundary Delimitation & GISD-GISMB



President Aquino and Indonesian President Yudhoyono witness the signing of the charts showing the EEZs of their respective countries



Administrator Tiangco (at right) signs the EEZ boundary chart jointly produced by the Philippines and Indonesia; Beside him is Dr. Asep Karsidi who heads the Geospatial Information Agency of the Republic of Indonesia