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GEEK SWAPS BENEFIT U.S. AND PHILIPPINES

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SUBJECT: Geek Swaps Benefit U.S. and Philippines

1. Summary: U.S. agencies and private institutions have active science partnerships in the Philippines that build goodwill and capacity in both nations and add to global knowledge. The synergy that results from USG active engagement in science in the Philippines is beneficial to the work of USG science agencies and private U.S. scientific institutions as well as to Philippine scientists. We expect scientific collaboration to accelerate after the signing of an improved bilateral Science and Technology agreement in the near future. This report gives examples of how we facilitate bilateral science cooperation. End summary.

2. The geological events of the last 50 million years and remarkable biodiversity of the Philippines make it of tremendous scientific interest. Post now actively connects scientists; obtains marine and aerial clearances through a cumbersome Philippine bureaucratic process; and finds audiences for training, meetings, and scientific presentations. After a Post-facilitated marine exploration (reftel), National Geographic scientists dazzled school groups, media, and Philippine government officials with images of in new scientific discoveries. Post has hosted six Science Fellows during the last two years. One of our Science Fellows shepherded the Philippines into the Environmental Protection Agency-led Environmental Technology Verification International Working Group, and another of our Science Fellows helped draft pending Philippine technology transfer legislation based on the Bayh-Dole Act.

New Science and Technology Agreement

3. Post worked with Philippine agencies to craft an improved bilateral science agreement to institutionalize scientific exchange meetings; facilitate cooperation like the Biosecurity Engagement Program; speed marine scientific clearances; and exempt U.S. foreign assistance money from taxes. A Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs Assistant Secretary is so delighted with increased scientific cooperation over the last few years that she has consulted with other agencies to establish cooperative activities in non-traditional areas of science.

4. The U.S research vessel R/V Melville returns to Philippine waters in February 2009 to continue investigating ocean temperature and circulation patterns. Post arranged for the Melville's American and Filipino scientific team to conduct ship tours to showcase the value of scientific cooperation between the Philippines and the U.S.

We will use the tours to spur review and acceptance of the new Science and Technology agreement.

Atmospheric Sciences/Tracking Climate Change

5. The U.S. National Aviation and Space Administration (NASA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Manila Observatory on January 21, 2009, to install instruments to track aerosols in Southeast Asia via satellite and ground stations. This joint NASA and Office of Naval Research (ONR) program studies pollution impacts on global climate change. U.S. scientists will distribute instruments to Philippine science students to augment aerosol data collection. Post plans an International Visitors' group to build capacity for this research, and will request a science fellow from NASA and/or ONR.

6. Post has worked closely with Philippine scientists on the USG Methane to Market Partnership, assisting the Philippines to become a partner in March 2008. Since Philippine agricultural activity produces 45% of methane, we invited a U.S. Department of Agriculture methane expert through the Embassy Science Fellows Program to consult with Philippine pig farmers. An Environmental Protection Agency agricultural expert visits quarterly to work with the Philippine government and private sector on methane capture programs. Filipinos attended agriculture and landfill Partnership committee meetings in Mexico January 2009.

7. The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) signed an Earth Sciences Memorandum of Understanding in March 2007 to provide technical advice to Philippine officials and coal mine owners. Since the MOU was signed, Philippine officials have attended USGS workshops, and a

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USGS coalbed methane expert has made repeated visits to the Philippines to introduce methane capture technologies.

Scientific Collaboration in Philippine Waters

8. Over the past two and a half years, American scientists have applied for Philippine government clearance to explore Philippine waters on 18 different research projects. U.S.-Philippine collaborative research has involved students from both countries in oceanography and marine biology, increasing capabilities of developing scientists. The University of the Philippines and

National Institute of Health have a project to seek cures for diseases from marine sources. The National Science Foundation has funded a multi-year study of marine evolution. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration-funded research resulted in the discovery of new marine species. American and Filipino oceanographers and biologists have collected and shared data with the Philippine government and the international scientific community.

Laboratory Collaboration

9. Post has actively promoted the State Department's Biosecurity Engagement Program in the Philippines since 2006 to strengthen laboratory safety and security and collaborate on infectious disease diagnostics, research, and surveillance. Post orchestrated U.S. scientists' surveys of Philippine facilities to locate dangerous pathogen collections. The U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Philippine Bureau of Animal Industry continue joint animal disease research and the State Department has purchased and gifted an animal incinerator to the Philippines for disposing of diseased animals. Post organized workshops for Philippine lab directors and policymakers. Consequently, Filipino stakeholders established the Philippine Biosafety/Biosecurity Association.

10. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) personnel in Manila have assisted Philippine researchers to investigate the 2008 discovery of Ebola Reston antibodies in Philippine hogs that had died of an undetermined cause. CDC scientists are also leading the investigation of the January 2009 discovery of Ebola Reston antibodies in a Filipino hog farm worker, the first such case ever found. Investigators will conduct extensive laboratory and field study to determine the transmission vectors and implications of the spread of this antibody. The opportunity for CDC researchers to participate in this and other similar investigations, has significantly increased Filipino, American, and global understanding of emerging infectious diseases.

Preserving Philippine Forests and Coastlines

11. A "debt for nature" swap with the United States allows the Philippines to divert \$8 million in interest payments on debt owed to the U.S. for Philippine forest conservation. USAID and State Department officers represent the United States on the board that selects and funds forest conservation activities of local non-governmental organizations, which has given 87 grants to conserve, maintain, or restore Philippine tropical forests. Through

our Science Fellows Program, a U.S. Department of Agriculture forester made site visits and evaluated these projects.

12. Post arranged for the Manila Observatory to host a Science Fellow from the Environmental Protection Agency to work on environmental issues of Philippine coastlines. The Science Fellow introduced modeling to demonstrate how human activity, such as pollution and mangrove deforestation, can cause coral bleaching. The scientists at Manila Observatory now use the information in their own outreach programs.

13. The above paragraphs give a sample of the science fellowships, lectures, scientific projects, and exchanges that have taken place in recent years, but do not touch on the many science-related activities of USAID. Post expects the quantity, quality and scope of bilateral cooperation in joint research projects to increase with

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the signing of the improved Science and Technology agreement in the near future.

KENNEY

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