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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Introduced by Representative Rufus B. Rodriguez and
Representative Maximo B. Rodriguez, Jr.

House Bill No. **6457**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The West Philippine Sea, crossed by some of the world's busiest sea-lanes, has rich fishing grounds and is believed to have vast energy reserves, is home to a myriad of competing territorial claims including those involving the Spratly Islands and the Scarborough Shoal.

These islands are being claimed by the Philippines, China, Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia and Taiwan as these islands, reefs and coral outcrops are believed to be rich in oil and gas and these overlapping claims have long been feared as Asia's next source of tension which could lead to armed conflict.

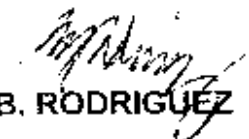
As early as April, 2012, a Philippine Navy surveillance plane spotted eight Chinese fishing vessels anchored in a lagoon at Scarborough which prompted the military to deploy its largest warship, the BRP Gregorio del Pilar, which was recently acquired from the United States; and upon boarding the Chinese fishing vessels for an inspection, Filipino sailors discovered large amounts of illegally collected coral, giant clams and live sharks inside the first boat which only shows that the Chinese fishermen had been engaged in illegal fishing and harvesting of endangered marine species.

This incident brought about the current stand-off between the Philippines and China in the Scarborough Shoal which is causing increased tension between the two countries involved.

The Philippines relation with China is starting to plunge with both sides pressing their conflicting claims not only to the Panatag (Scarborough) Shoal but also the Spratly Islands group. And aside from China, we should also be cautious and be prepared to defend our territory against the claims of other countries over the islands and areas in the West Philippine Sea.

It is therefore imperative that a government office be created dedicated exclusively to the West Philippine Sea. It will focus on studying our claims and propose measures on how to defend and prosecute such claims. It will also propose measures on how we can develop the area and all the natural resources there for the benefit of our country.

In view of the foregoing, immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.



RUFUS B. RODRIGUEZ



MAXIMO B. RODRIGUEZ, JR.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Representative Maximo B. Rodriguez, Jr.

House Bill No. **6457**

AN ACT

CREATING THE CENTER FOR WEST PHILIPPINE SEA STUDIES
ATTACHED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines
in Congress Assembled*

SECTION 1. Declaration of Policy – It is the policy of the State to preserve its sovereignty over the islands that it owns in the West Philippine Sea and its territorial sea, contiguous zones, exclusive economic zone and continental shelf in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

SEC 2. Creation – There is hereby created a Center for West Philippine Sea Studies attached to the Department of Foreign Affairs under the Office of Special and Ocean Concerns.

SEC 3. Duties and Responsibilities – The Center on the West Philippine Sea shall have the following duties and responsibilities:

- a) Study the basis of the claims of the Philippines over the waters and the islands in the West Philippine Sea under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, international law, local laws and historical data;
- b) Propose actions and measures in order to defend and prosecute our claims against claims of other neighboring countries;
- c) Prepare concrete plans on how to develop and fully utilize all the natural resources in the area; and
- d) Perform such other duties and responsibilities that would strengthen our sovereignty and other claims over the area.
- e) Perform other functions as may be directed by the President of the Philippines in relation to concerns over the West Philippine Sea

SEC 4. Organizational Structure – The Center for West Philippine Sea Studies herein created shall be headed by an Assistant Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs. He shall exercise supervision and control of said Center.

The Center on the West Philippine Sea shall prescribe and define its position structure and staffing pattern subject to existing civil service laws, rules and regulations. The positions subsequently created herein shall be filled by the regular appointments. Provided, that appointments must comply with the qualifications standards set by Civil Service Commission.

SEC 5. Appropriations – The amount of Fifty Million Pesos (P50,000,000) not otherwise appropriated shall be initially appropriated out of the funds of the National Treasury for the purpose of funding the creation of the Center on the West Philippine Sea. Subsequent appropriations shall be provided by Congress in the Annual Budget of the Department of Foreign Affairs under the General Appropriations Act.

SEC 6. Separability Clause – If any provision of this Act or the application thereof is declared unconstitutional or invalid for any reason, the same shall not affect the validity of the other provisions.

SEC 7. Repealing Clause – All laws, presidential decrees and issuances, executive orders, rules and regulations or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC 8. Effectivity Clause – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its full publication in the Official Gazette or newspaper of general circulation in the Philippines, whichever is earlier.

Approved,