

# Arroyo thanks Bush

By PAGLO ROMERO

President Arroyo has thanked outgoing US President George W. Bush for his administration's continuous assistance to the Philippines, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said yesterday.

Ermita said the President wrote Bush a letter thanking him for also furthering ties between the Philippines and the United States. Bush will step down on Jan. 20 after finishing two terms as president.

"Mrs. Arroyo sent a letter to congratulate President Bush for the good relationship of two countries and for the support the United States is providing the Philippines in terms of economic and security assistance," Ermita said.

Ermita said he expects the same strong relations to continue between the two coun-

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of President-elect Barack Obama, who will be sworn into office on Jan. 20.

Ermita also said Mrs. Arroyo cited in her letter the important role of US Ambassador to the Philippines Kristie Kenney in fostering strong ties and facilitating various assistance to the country. He pointed out the Philippines and the US continue to implement the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty through the annual joint military exercises in the country.

More recently, the US has reselected the Philippines as eligible for more multi-million dollar grants to combat corruption and improve governance, Ermita said.

The grant is under the Millennium Challenge account, an initiative of Bush to reward countries showing good governance through a development aid.

Mrs. Arroyo, in a recent radio interview in Maguindanao, cited US' assistance in fighting terrorism and poverty, particularly in southern Philippines through the training of troops and conducting civic projects.

"We have a long partnership with

the Americans in counter-terrorism, training, sharing of intelligence, military exchanges and most of all, in civic works. These civic projects isolate terrorists and bring progress to the people," she said.

President Arroyo made several trips to the US, meeting Bush on the bilateral and economic ties between the two countries. President Bush, for his part, visited the Philippines in 2003.

Under the Bush administration, specifically shortly after Sept. 11, 2001 attacks, the US has dramatically increased its military aid to the Philippines. The US also opened up a front against terrorism in the Philippines to prevent extremism in Southeast Asia.