



UPDATES

19 June 2009

PHILIPPINE-U.S. SECURITY COOPERATION:

SECURING THE PEACE AND BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE



Philippine and US soldiers prepare medical supplies for a humanitarian mission in Indanan, Sulu.



Philippine and US soldiers train in marksmanship.



Leaders of the Bangsa Moro Women Peace and Development Foundation in Zamboanga accept donation of 176 sewing machines for livelihood projects from representatives of the Philippine Armed Forces, US military and the U.S. Embassy.

ISSUE FOCUS: REAFFIRMING PHILIPPINE-US PARTNERSHIP IN DEFEATING TERRORISTS AND EXTREMISTS

GATES REAFFIRMS CONTINUED PHILIPPINE-US SECURITY PARTNERSHIP

Defense Secretary Robert Gates recently reaffirmed the continued commitment of the US to further strengthening security and defense ties between the Philippines and the US in a visit to Manila to meet with his Philippine counterpart, Secretary Gilberto Teodoro.

“We are partners,” Secretary Gates said at a news conference following his meeting with Secretary Teodoro. “We will continue to strongly support their efforts to defeat terrorists and extremists threatening their country and the region. Together, we will not relent until this threat is eliminated.”

Secretary Gates visited Manila on 1 June 2009 after joining other high defense officials from Asia and around the world at the annual Asian Defense Conference in Singapore. It has been a decade since a U.S. Defense Secretary has visited the Philippines and this is the first Cabinet-level visit to the Philippines under the new U.S. administration, signaling a renewed emphasis on relations with the Philippines.

During his visit, Secretary Gates met with his counterpart, Philippine Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro, to discuss the way ahead for military cooperation between the two countries. Secretary Gates was also given a briefing on the counterterrorism training and support



U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates being accorded military honors by members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines upon his arrival in Manila to meet with Philippine Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro.

being provided by the US for Filipino forces. He also visited the American Military Cemetery to pay respects to the more than 17,000 World War II troops buried there.

During his visit to Manila, Secretary Gates said the two countries’ relationship should evolve into a broader, more strategic one as the Philippines is taking on a larger security role on the world stage in combating international terrorism. “The Philippines can play an important role in regional peace and security,”

PHILIPPINES: A MODEL FOR SUCCESSFUL COUNTERTERRORISM TRAINING AND PARTNERSHIP

The US considers its operations in the Philippines, particularly in the southern island of Mindanao, a model of successful counterterrorism training and partnership with local forces.

Although US troops do not engage in combat, they provide training and advice to Filipino soldiers.

The U.S. arrived in 2002 because terrorists associated with the September 11 attacks and Bali bombings, including Muslim extremist group Abu Sayyaf, were centrally located in the southern Philippines’ Sulu

Archipelago and the large island of Mindanao.

“They were able to set up safe havens and terrorist camps down there,” said US Col. Bill Coultrup, commander of the Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines.

Roughly 600 US troops are stationed in the Philippines. Their work is done largely out of the media spotlight. But seven years out, where fighters and funding once flowed directly from Afghanistan, those connections – and the number of terrorist acts – have significantly

declined. Philippine forces are carrying out counterterrorism operations on their own, Col. Coultrup said, often with minimal US guidance or indirect support.

This year, the US military is working closer with the US Agency for International Development to revitalize trouble spots in Mindanao through military-civilian humanitarian projects that seek to improve security and living standards.

“I help the Filipino military target enemy sanctuaries down there,” said Col. Coultrup. “We

GATES AFFIRMS . . .

the secretary said. "There is a lot we can do together, and I think we will be looking for those kinds of opportunities to continue ... to broaden and deepen the relationship."

Secretary Gates and Secretary Teodoro talked about how to best to proceed in terms of cooperation to build the capacity of the Philippine armed forces, which Gates said is a fundamental tenet of Ameri-



Philippine Secretary of Defense Gilberto Teodoro and U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates at a joint press conference at the Department of National Defense at Camp Aguinaldo

can foreign policy in the new administration. The secretary said he has shifted hundreds of millions of dollars into the fiscal 2010 budget for such partner-nation capacity building.

"The stronger the foundation we can build under these partner relationships, the longer they're likely to last and the more effective they'll be," he said. ☪

PHILIPPINES: A MODEL FOR SUCCESSFUL...

use our civic action and humanitarian projects to help shrink down those sanctuaries."

A new road, he said, allows travel to and from isolated communities and provides intelligence about terrorist groups in the area.

US Defense officials said the Philippine experience was "a very good model for counterinsurgency," but cautioned against making direct comparisons to operations in other



Philippine and U.S. soldiers on joint military training exercises in Crow Valley military reservation in Tarlac

countries.

When asked if those lessons could be applied to Pakistan, Defense Secretary Robert Gates said building partnerships and capacity around the world would be "one of the fundamental tenets of American foreign policy under the Obama administration, as well as the Department of Defense itself. We will move with these varying countries at a pace that is comfortable to them," he said. ☪



Ambassador Willy C. Gaa
FROM THE CORNER OF
BATAAN AND MASSACHUSETTS

As nations that share common values such as freedom, liberty and democracy, and as treaty allies who have fought side by side in defense of these values, the Philippines and the United States remain committed to working with each other in facing today's security challenges.

During his recent visit to Manila, Defense Secretary Robert Gates made it clear that this commitment continues and remains important to the current administration in Washington.

In clear and uncertain terms, Secretary Gates pointed out that the US government is committed to continue supporting the Philippines, particularly in our efforts to address and eliminate both domestic and regional threats to security and development.

As pointed out by Secretary Gates during his visit, the Philippines continues to be a key strategic partner of the US in the region.

Discussions by both the Philippine and US Defense Secretaries on the way forward for Philippine-U.S. security relations indicate that both our countries' policies with regard to addressing the threat of terrorism and extremism continue to be in synch and have proven to be quite successful and effective.

During his campaign for the White House and in policy speeches after getting there, President Barack Obama had emphasized that he would place greater emphasis on diplomacy and smart power and less stress on the war on terror.

Those who interpreted this as an indictment of the effective cooperation between the Philippines and the US in fighting terrorism were proven wrong.

In fact, this cooperation would broaden under the Obama Administration.

The current shift in US defense strategy as elaborated upon by Secretary Gates at the Asia Security Dialogue in Singapore this month, that of employing both elements of "hard" and "soft" power in a comprehensive whole, fits seamlessly into what the Philippines and the US have been doing since 2001.

It is therefore not surprising to hear Secretary Gates state during his recent visit to Manila that the US government under the leadership of President Barack Obama will not only continue to assist and support the Philippines in its efforts to address domestic and regional threats, but will also seek to further strengthen and broaden this relationship. ☪

The visit of the honorable secretary today is one step further toward that goal, the goal of increasing, enduring cooperation between and among the armed forces and defense departments and our governments, [to] combat common threats of international terrorism and suffering of human beings when natural calamity strike

Gilberto Teodoro
Secretary of Defense
Philippines

We will continue to strongly support their efforts to defeat terrorists and extremists threatening their country and the region.

Robert Gates
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