



ISSUE FOCUS: WINNING THE FIGHT AGAINST TERROR

MAJOR VICTORIES AGAINST TERRORISTS:

- Leaders of Abu Sayyaf terrorist group killed:
  - \* Abdujarak Janjalani - (founder) killed in 1998
  - \* Khadaffy Janjalani - killed in 2006
  - \* Abu Solaiman - killed in 2007
- From a peak strength of 1,200 in 2000, reduced Abu Sayyaf terrorist group to 400 in 2006
- From a peak strength of 25,200 in 1987, reduced communist terrorist movement to 7,160 in 2006
- Assisted in capture of Ramzi Yousef, planner and leader of 1993 World Trade Center bombing
- Capture of Fathur Rahman Al-Ghozi, mastermind of plot to bomb US, Israeli, British, Australian Embassies in Singapore
- Arrest, capture or deaths in combat/law enforcement operations of more than 88 terrorists and recovery of 900 kilos of explosive materials in 2006
- Successfully foiled efforts of regional terrorist group Jemaah Islamiyah to establish safe haven in Southern Philippines

PHILIPPINES AT THE FRONTLINES IN THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM

The U.S. State Department 2006 Report on Terrorism highlighted Philippine victories scored by Philippine military and security forces against terrorist groups operating in the country. It also highlighted the success of continuing U.S. cooperation and assistance in Philippine counterterrorism efforts.

In particular, the report noted how development and civil military affairs projects have undermined public sympathy for the terrorists and boosted popular support for the Philippine government (see related story).

It may be recalled that the Philippines was among the first nations in Asia to express its support for the U.S. government following the 9/11 terrorist attacks on U.S. soil. Such expression of support is not surprising considering the long shared history between the Philippines and the U.S. As treaty allies, the Philippines has stood and fought beside the U.S. and its allies in almost every major conflict since World War II.

As the Philippines also faces threats from terrorist groups such as the communist New People's Army and the Al - Qaeda linked Abu Sayyaf Group and Jemaah Islamiyah, it therefore shares a common



Philippine Ambassador-at-Large for Counterterrorism Benjamin Defensor briefs members of the diplomatic corps on preparations undertaken for a Counterterrorism Experts Conference hosted by the Philippine government on 21-22 April 2006. The Conference was attended by representatives from 50 countries.

interest and objective with the U.S. and other allies in the war against terrorism. Recognizing that terrorism is a global problem that requires a global response from freedom-loving nations, current Philippine national security policy is characterized by a robust and comprehensive counterterrorism strategy that involves operational, development and international cooperation aspects.

WAGING PEACE TO DEFEAT TERRORISM

The mission is counterterrorism, and the targets are the Abu Sayyaf terrorist group and the Southeast Asian terror cell Jemaah Islamiyah.

The area of operations is in the southern Philippine island of Mindanao where both groups operate and take advantage of the impoverished conditions of remote communities to conduct recruitment, training and to find sanctuary .

In line with the Philippine Government's national security strategy to address the threat of terrorism through a combination of security and development efforts, counterterrorism cooperation between Philippine and U.S. military forces have been successful in not only severely degrading the operational capabilities of the Abu Sayyaf, but also in decreasing its political influence in its former bulwarks in the Basilan - Sulu area in southwestern Mindanao.

The core of the strategy is to deprive terrorists of their sanctuary, source of support and provide people with an alternative to lawlessness and violence.

Security operations are conducted to establish a secure and stable environment to allow nongovernmental agencies and private businesses to come in, stimulate development and improve people's



Filipino and U.S. military engineers working at a construction site for a 3 room school building to be added to an existing high school in Sulu, located in the province of Jolo in southwestern Mindanao

lives.

In its implementation, U.S. forces shares information, techniques and tactics with the Philippine military, but is not directly involved in combat operations.

While the Philippine military engages the terrorists in direct combat, U.S. forces follows through on the Philippine military's operational successes with the initial delivery of valuable and much appreciated humanitarian assistance such as free medicine;

PHILIPPINES AT THE FRONTLINES . . .

Philippine successes in counterterrorism is attributable to its ability to effectively integrate international cooperation and assistance with security operations and poverty alleviation programs that clear conflict areas of threats and allows economic development to take root in poor communities that are vulnerable to terrorist recruitment and organizational activities.

The designation of the Philippines as a Major Non-NATO Ally by the US government is an acknowledgement of Philippine success in counterterrorism and of the value of the Philippine - US strategic alliance to US security interests. In addition, US officials have characterized the Philippines as a frontline state in the war on terrorism and a dependable ally of the United States in this global struggle.



Members of the US trained and equipped Light Reaction Company (LRC) of the Philippine Army Special Operations Command on training exercises. Highly trained, well equipped and mobile, the LRC is at the forefront of Philippine counterterrorism operations, ready to do battle with terrorists in a wide range of environments and conditions.

*Working together, America and our allies are training local forces to conduct counterterrorism activities in their own regions. We are helping key nations stop terrorists from establishing safe havens inside their borders -- including Indonesia and the Philippines and Yemen.*

President George W. Bush

WAGING PEACE . . .

free medical treatments; building of schools, primary health-care centers, recreation centers; digging of wells; veterinary services for livestock; etc. This ini-

tial effort is then followed by a more comprehensive effort involving nongovernmental organizations, the local government and other relevant government agencies.



A five room school building built by Filipino and U.S. military engineers

Classic "hearts and minds" at work. The fact that the Abu Sayyaf and the Jemaah Islamiyah have failed to establish safe havens in Mindanao is proof of the effectiveness and success of a strategy aimed at waging peace by eradicating the root causes of conflict and violence.



Villagers from Tiptipon town in Sulu pose with Filipino and US troops during the recent conduct of a joint medical mission in the area

*There had been specifically successful steps taken against terrorism by the Philippines. Working very closely with Australia and other countries, we think real major progress has been made. It is not easy but the numbers had been contained and many areas reduced. And my general impression is that the Philippines has been quite successful in recent times in the fight against terrorism.*

Prime Minister John Howard  
Australia



FROM THE CORNER OF MASSACHUSETTS AND BATAAN

Its long and difficult experience dealing with armed groups and its status as a developing country allow the Philippines to have good and firm understanding of the environment in which terrorism thrives and prospers.

This understanding has been instrumental in helping the Philippines adopt policies and strategies that seek to defeat terrorism by attacking the root causes that fuel this problem.

Allied governments and partners in the fight against terrorism have acknowledged the success and effectiveness of these counterterrorism policies and strategies

The symbiosis of security and development in the fight against terrorism is a key aspect of the Philippine counterterrorism strategy. This strategy is given important boosts when supported by foreign cooperation and assistance programs, particularly in the areas of security, development and poverty alleviation.

The synergy of all these elements of the Philippine counterterrorism strategy - security; development; international cooperation and assistance, is best exemplified by the high levels of cooperation between the Philippine and U.S. governments, as it is pursued under the framework of the strategic alliance of our two countries.

On the ground, USAID and the

U.S. military have been working closely with their Filipino counterparts, particularly in the island of Mindanao in the southern Philippines, implementing programs and pursuing objectives that are highly attuned and responsive to the operational environment.

I believe the results of this engagement could very well speak for the effectiveness of the policy adopted and the strategies implemented.

Philippine counterterrorism efforts have been successful. Terrorism is being uprooted in Mindanao. The people of that region can once again hope and dream of peace.

The enduring partnership between the Philippines and the United States, with the strong support of the US Congress is helping us drive the terrorists into the ground. With terrorists on the run and unable to strike, both the Philippines and the United States are made safer.

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