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THESIS

**THE STRATEGY-LEGITIMACY PARADIGM: GETTING
IT RIGHT IN THE PHILIPPINES**

by

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December 2008

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**THE STRATEGY-LEGITIMACY PARADIGM:
GETTING IT RIGHT IN THE PHILIPPINES**

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ABSTRACT

Political legitimacy is at the heart of any conflict or war. Based on the idea that wars cannot be won without establishing and maintaining political legitimacy, this thesis examines how the COIN strategies developed in Basilan, Bohol, and Sulu address the legitimacy problem. It also offers recommendations for developing a COIN strategy for Mindanao. The thesis uses Ted Gurr's theory of relative deprivation as a framework to explain the factors that lead a society to revolt. It also underscores the importance of providing a long-term solution to the insurgent problems by correcting the underlying issues of poverty, deprivation, and lawlessness. In Basilan, Bohol, and Sulu, the Philippine government and its U.S. allies successfully engineered what Borer describes as the "strategy-legitimacy nexus." By promoting the legitimacy of the Philippine government, the insurgent capabilities and influence were substantially reduced by isolating them from the population. Using the same framework, the three case studies demonstrate that while conditions in Mindanao are very different, the case studies offer valuable lessons. These are applied to conducting COIN in the region utilizing an Indirect Approach strategy and are based on McCormick's Diamond Counterinsurgency model that promotes legitimacy through good governance, improved security, and socio-economic conditions.

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I. INTRODUCTION: THE STRATEGY-LEGITIMACY PARADIGM: GETTING IT RIGHT IN THE PHILIPPINES

So long as the insurgency maintains popular support, it will retain all of its strategic advantages of mobility, invisibility, and legitimacy in its own eyes and the eyes of the people. So long as this is the situation, an insurgency essentially cannot be defeated by regular forces.

— Liddell Hart

As the faint silhouette of Sulu Island came into view, the 2nd Light Reaction Company (LRC) made last-minute preparations. Aboard the U.S. Army High Speed Vessel (HSV), the LRC, the Philippines' elite counterterrorism unit began to load small landing craft for their journey to the beach. At 0001 hrs, under the cover of darkness, they reached the beach on the western side of the island. In less than a few minutes, they were across the beach and en-route to their target, the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) safe haven, Camp Timahu in Indanan.¹ It was 1 August 2006. This same scenario was playing out simultaneously further North on another Sulu beach: the Philippine Marine Corp Special Operations Platoons landed were destined for another ASG camp and safe haven at Tabora Hill.² These beach landing assaults represented the first phase of what would become known as Operation Ultimatum. The ASG safe havens at Camp Timahu and Tabora Hill were only two of five targets that the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) planned to raid simultaneously. The other three targets fell to battalions of the AFP's 104th Army Brigade. By 0530hrs, as planned, all five ASG camps had been secured. Unfortunately, the ASG had slipped away. The raids resulted in a few minor skirmishes and the killing of a medium value target, Isman Sahiron. More importantly, they marked a significant achievement for the AFP in planning, coordinating, and executing joint AFP operations. Operation Ultimatum followed an exhaustive 11-month effort to prepare both the Sulu population and environment. Despite the failure to capture or kill the

¹ Personal experience by Major Hastings as a member of the JSOTF staff during the preparations for and execution of Operation Ultimatum.

² Joint Special Operations Task Force – Philippines, Operation Ultimatum Operations Brief, 24 July 2006. Document stored in the NPS DA department CORE lab archives.

ASG/Jamaah Islamiya (JI) high value targets that first day, the operation continued for 8 months. It ultimately succeeded in diminishing the population's support of the ASG, improved the security situation on Sulu, and killed several high level ASG members. This included the group's leader, Khadafy Janjalani; the ASG number two man, Abu Solaiman; and the sub-leader known as "Black Killer."³ Aided by the United States Joint Special Operations Task Force – Philippines (JSOTF-P) through capacity building, intelligence sharing, logistics assistance, and information operations support, the AFP achieved what they had failed to do just 20 months before during Operation Shadow.

Shadow and Ultimatum were very different in their objectives. While Shadow attempted to decapitate the ASG, Ultimatum served as a supporting effort to the Indirect Approach (IA) strategy. This was designed to promote the legitimacy of the Philippine government and attract the people of Sulu away from supporting the ASG.⁴ Operation Shadow had been launched in January 2005 with the objective of destroying the ASG hiding in a cave complex near Mt Tumatangas.⁵ No preparation of the environment had been done in the local area prior to the offensive. The JSOTF was not yet assisting AFP forces on Sulu, but was instead focused on Central Mindanao at the request of the AFP.⁶ There had been no CMO in the affected areas on Sulu. There were also no information operations to make the population aware of the upcoming offensive or to inform them that the operations were meant to improve their lives by destroying the ASG and, thus, improve security. The AFP offensive met with heavy ASG resistance. Artillery and air strikes were directed against suspected ASG positions, but the effects on the ASG were

³ Congressional Research Service. "CRS Report to Congress: Abu Sayyaf — Target of Philippine-U.S. Anti Terrorism Cooperation," CRS, Washington D.C., 26 July 2007, 9.

⁴ D. Maxwell, JSOTF - P Commander's Overview Brief, Ft Bragg, NC, February 2008. Document stored in the NPS DA department CORE lab archives.

⁵ Interview with LTC Don Hilt (pseudonym), Former JSOTF J3, Nov. 2004 – May 2005, by Major Hastings, 13 September 2008, Camp Aguinaldo, Manila, PI. Audio and other documents stored in the NPS DA department CORE lab archives. Hereafter referred to as the Hilt interview.

⁶ Interview with COL Greg Wilson, Former JSOTF-P Forward Commander, 2005, Commander, 2/1 SFG(A) 2002-2004 and Senior Fellow, Defense Analysis Department, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, 11 September 2008, Interviewed by Majors Hastings and Mortela. Audio and other documents stored in the NPS DA department CORE lab archives. Col. Wilson is also the author of *"Anatomy of a Successful COIN Operation: OEF-Philippines and the Indirect Approach."*

minimal. Damage to civilian villages and property, however, was high.⁷ After just 12 days, the AFP offensive collapsed as the strain on the AFP logistical supply lines forced AFP units to return to their bases.⁸

When Operation Shadow is compared side by side with Operation Ultimatum, one begins to get a true sense for the tremendous improvement in both tactical and logistical capacity the AFP experienced during the eight months of combined operations on Sulu with the JSOTF-P. Yet a comparison of merely the tactical aspects of Shadow and Ultimatum do not tell the whole story. While this account of Ultimatum describes the AFPs improved capacity to conduct joint military operations, it does nothing to describe the 11 months of intense work that led up to the execution of Ultimatum. Neither does it describe the successful Indirect Approach (IA) strategy that made it all possible.

According to political analyst Douglas Borer, “irregular wars cannot be won without establishing and maintaining political legitimacy, and the type of military strategy chosen will have a direct impact on the dynamics of legitimization.”⁹ This thesis will examine Borer’s proposition by focusing on the COIN strategies developed for Sulu, Basilan Island, and Bohol Island. While the U.S. advised and assisted the AFP in conducting operations on both Basilan and Sulu, the COIN strategy to defeat communist insurgents on Bohol Island in 2004 was a Philippine unilateral operation. Despite the lack of JSOTF-P involvement in Bohol, the Bohol COIN strategy reflected the indirect approach of the McCormick Diamond Counterinsurgency Model – specifically, as it was applied on Basilan and how it was capitalized, i.e., the valuable lessons learned. The success of the Indirect Approach strategy in countering communist insurgents demonstrates the versatility of the Diamond Model’s indirect approach. It also reinforces the theory that insurgencies are best countered by appealing to the population through

⁷ Hilt interview.

⁸ Interview with Major (P) Steve Mossberg (pseudonym) by Major Jonathan P. Hastings, 28 April 2008. Audio and other documents stored in the NPS DA department CORE lab archives. Hereafter cited as Mossberg interview.

⁹ Douglas A. Borer, *The Strategy-Legitimacy Nexus: Why America Wins or Loses at Irregular War*. Unpublished book manuscript under contract for Stanford University Press. Forthcoming, 2010.

good governance, improved security, and socio-economic conditions.¹⁰ The study of these three campaigns offers valuable lessons for conducting COIN in the Southern Philippines against both Muslim and communist insurgents. In these cases, the Philippine government and its U.S. allies successfully engineered what Borer describes as the “strategy-legitimacy nexus.”¹¹

The promotion of GRP legitimacy was the primary objective of the COIN strategies of Basilan, Bohol, and Sulu. GRP and SOCPAC planners believed that to provide a long-term solution to the insurgent problems in the Southern Philippines, they would have to correct the underlying issues of poverty, deprivation, and lawlessness. This makes the population the main effort while counterterrorism actions would take a supporting role.¹² Using Ted Gurr’s theory of relative deprivation as a framework for explaining the factors that lead a society to revolt against the state, this thesis will discuss the existing conditions in the Southern Philippines. It will also outline how the GRP/U.S. addressed these issues through the application of COIN strategy. Armed with this knowledge, SOCPAC and AFP planners developed highly effective COIN strategies based on the framework of the McCormick Diamond Counterinsurgency Model. Using the Diamond Model and the lessons learned from Basilan, Bohol, and Sulu, this thesis offers recommendations for developing a successful COIN strategy in Mindanao.

Bringing peace and prosperity to Mindanao is a daunting task. The sheer size of the region augmented with the complex social and economic issues and resources required mandate a long-term GRP and partner nations’ commitment to bring lasting change. The complex political situation at both the local and national level makes the involvement of partner nations, such as the U.S., difficult. Continued U.S. assistance,

¹⁰ J. Fishel, M. Manwaring, *Uncomfortable Wars Revisited*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 2006. The authors state that their research shows that, “*the moral right of a regime to govern is the most important single dimension in an uncomfortable war. Thus, a politically strong and morally legitimate government is vital to any winning strategy. The rectitude and legitimacy of the incumbent regime is the primary target – the primary center of gravity – as far as the internal adversary is concerned.*” 22.

¹¹ Borer, *The Strategy-Legitimacy Nexus: Why America Wins or Loses at Irregular War*, to be published in 2010.

¹² Interview with LTC Eric Haider, former JSOTF-P Forward Commander, 2005, by Major Hastings, 25 May 2008, Camp Smith, HI. Audio and other documents stored in the NPS DA department CORE lab archives. Hereafter cited as Haider interview.

while highly valued by the PSF and Arroyo administration, is strongly opposed by other sectors of the local and national government.¹³ As this thesis will discuss, the issue of U.S. involvement in Mindanao is highly sensitive. As suggested by Secretary Hermogenes Esperon, Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (2005-2007) and the current Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, U.S. involvement, “may require a change in character.”¹⁴ Despite the difficult road ahead, if they hope to stabilize the region and to create an environment where Mindanao contributes to the prosperity of the Philippines — instead of representing a threat to its sovereignty — the GRP must address the underlying causes of unrest in Mindanao.

¹³ Interview with Rommel Banlaoi, Chairman and Executive Director, Philippine Institute for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, by Majors Hastings and Mortela, 15 September 2008, Camp Aguinaldo, Manila, PI. Audio and other documents stored in the NPS DA department CORE lab archives. Hereafter referred to as the Banlaoi interview.

¹⁴ Interview with Secretary Hermogenes C. Esperon Jr, Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, Office of the President of the Philippines and former Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines(2006 -2008), conducted by Majors Hastings and Mortela, 17 September 2008, Manila, PI. Audio and other documents stored in the NPS DA department CORE lab archives. Hereafter referred to as the Esperon interview.

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II. A NATION'S LEGITIMACY: THE UNDERPINNINGS OF AN EFFECTIVE COIN STRATEGY

The more illegitimate the system is, the more likely it is that people will organize to overthrow it. – Sabrina P. Ramet, The Three Yugoslavias

A. THE COMPONENTS OF A DEMOCRATIC LEGITIMACY

To develop an effective COIN strategy, it is imperative to first understand the role of the population and their perceptions of the political legitimacy of their government. A state's legitimacy can be measured in many ways. There are many different theories on the origination of a state's legitimacy — whether it stems from policies of good governance and inclusion of the population in the political process or from the state's coercive control measures. While this thesis will discuss the notion put forward by some scholars that political legitimacy can be derived from state coercion and control measures, it will assert that establishing a democratic legitimacy based on good governance is a more effective and enduring strategy — one that is appropriate for use in the Southern Philippines.

To fully understand this research's use of the term legitimacy, it is important to make a distinction between the definitions of democratic legitimacy and coercive authority. Democratic legitimacy is a positive term that reflects the population's support for the regime as a result of its equitable political policies, application of justice, and appropriate use of control measures to safeguard the population. This thesis defines coercive authority as not "legitimate" because of the negative definition of the term coercion, i.e., to restrain or dominate through force or the threat of force.¹⁵ While control is a necessary and important characteristic of any state, the democratically legitimate state maintains legitimacy with the population through the discriminate use of control measures to maintain justice and order while the coercive state is viewed by its population as using an excessive amount of control. This excessive control is most often

¹⁵ Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, Springfield: Merriam-Webster, 1987.

directed against the population. A dictatorial state may effectively control its population with surrogates deployed down to the village or block level. This does not, however, produce democratic legitimacy; rather, it produces coerced authority. Goodwin points out that these “exclusionary” regimes are more likely to incubate revolutionary movements. Although, if they are strong enough, they do not necessarily succumb to the challenge.¹⁶ The indiscriminant or overwhelming violence of a state against its citizens can have the effect of creating insurgencies by driving the people targeted by state coercive measures to seek shelter within the protective influence of an insurgency.¹⁷ Goodwin suggests that revolutionary groups may prosper not because of the popularity of their ideology, but simply because they offer people some protection from violent states.¹⁸ These states, although lacking popular support, may be viewed as firmly in control. To maintain that control they must expend significant state resources in the form of coercive instruments (surveillance, informant networks, secret police, etc). Arguably, the level of these coercive instruments is much greater than a state which maintains control through good governance (good governance being defined, at its essence, as being non-coercive). In short, this thesis concurs with Rodney Barker’s assertion that, “a state which can only coerce its subjects is not governing the people; it is at war with them.”¹⁹

As Douglas Borer suggests, *political legitimacy is more closely aligned with the principles of good governance*, “political legitimacy is the basis of social unity, cohesion, and stability within any given polity, with the polity comprising the ruling state apparatus and the citizenry of a given territory. Legitimacy is a function of the state’s ability to govern effectively a society in which citizens see the state’s power over them as being correct and just.”²⁰ This perception by the population of correct and just rule is reflected in the degree of satisfaction the citizens feel in their security, opportunity, and prosperity.

¹⁶ Goodwin, 30.

¹⁷ Ibid., 47.

¹⁸ Ibid., 48.

¹⁹ Rodney Barker, *Political Legitimacy and the State*, (New York, Oxford Press, p 138. Douglas Borer uses this reference and the work of Barker to describe the importance of popular support for the regime or state in establishing and maintaining the perception, both domestically and internationally, of the state’s legitimacy.

²⁰ Borer, *Superpowers Defeated: Vietnam and Afghanistan Compared*. Portland: Frank Cass Publishers, 1999.

Borer also suggests that for a polity to survive in the long-term, the ruling state must have political legitimacy. He suggests that “states that fail to acquire legitimacy at their inception and to maintain it over time will eventually fail. States can rule without legitimacy, but not well and not for long”.

In *Superpowers Defeated*, Borer defines legitimacy as, “a function of the state’s ability to govern effectively a society in which citizens see the state’s power over them as being correct and just.”²¹ The idea of just rule and the method by which a state establishes it is the basis for numerous philosophical theories on government. Plato, Locke, and Weber all described the interdependent relationship between the state and the people: how political legitimacy is one of the essential conditions that a state needs to govern effectively and to prevent challenges to its rule.²²

The concept of “just rule” and the characteristics of what constitutes a legitimate rule have been widely explored throughout history. In *The Republic*, Plato examines the meaning of justice, why men behave justly, and the effects of social punishment on the behavior of men.²³ In the late 1600’s, John Locke described the relationship between government and the people they govern. These thoughts would later influence the development of the Social Contract Theory. It is the belief that social order is maintained by implied agreements between the people and government to form nations and preserve social order.²⁴ Locke also suggested that legitimate state authority must be derived from the consent of the governed.²⁵

1. Legitimacy through Coercion

In the early 20th century, Max Weber, widely regarded as the preeminent social theorist of the twentieth century, wrote an essay called, “Politics as a Vocation.” Originally delivered as a speech to students at Munich University in 1919, Weber defines the state and describes the relationship between rulers and the ruled. He describes three pure types of political authority: traditional domination (based on the sanctity of tradition,

²¹ Borer, 1999, xix.

²² Ibid., xviii. Borer discusses the long running debate over where political legitimacy comes from.

²³ Plato, *The Republic: Translation and Commentary by Alan Bloom* (New York: Basic Books, 1968).

²⁴ Locke, et al., *Social Contract: Essays by Locke, Hume and Rousseau*, (Oxford: Oxford Press, 1962).

²⁵ Ibid.

patriarchs, and feudalism), legal domination (modern law, state, and bureaucracy), and charismatic domination (the appeal of leaders for allegiance based in familial, heroic, or religious virtuosity). Weber theorizes that a natural progression or “rationalization” occurs over time where resistance to the traditional rule causes a state to inevitably move towards a ‘rational-legal structure of authority using a bureaucratic structure.’²⁶

Weber also stated that the effectiveness of a state’s coercion and control over its people has a direct correlation to its legitimacy.²⁷ Based on this theory, Weber asserted that a state is that institution that monopolizes the means of coercion over the society.²⁸ This definition proved incomplete: because the existence of another organization within the same borders, which possesses significant coercive power, say an insurgency, does not make it a legitimate state. This definition also did not fully explain the existence of authoritarian states that are viewed as illegitimate by large numbers of their people, yet they remain in power through coercive measures.²⁹ Goodwin offers a more refined coercion-based definition of a state as, “an organization, or set of organizations, that attempt, and claims the right, to monopolize the legitimate use of violence in an extended territory.”³⁰ This definition is useful in describing how authoritarian states, or those that lack popular support, maintain control, but it does not incorporate the concept of good governance. It only uses just rule or other traits often associated with the popular support of a state or “democratic” legitimacy.

2. The Paradigm of Good Governance

Manwaring makes an important distinction in defining a strategy for promoting legitimate governance through political engagement. He suggests that, if there is to be hope that other nations will embrace democracy and free market economies, the United

²⁶ Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation." (<http://www2.selu.edu/Academics/> . 1 October 1919. <http://www2.selu.edu/Academics/Faculty/jbell/weber.pdf>, Accessed 4 May 2008).

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Jeff Goodwin, *No Other Way Out; States and Revolutionary Movements, 1945-1991*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, 12.

³⁰ Ibid.

States, having won the Cold War, must move forward to a “legitimate governance” strategy of engagement.³¹ Manwaring defines this legitimate governance as

*governance that derives its just powers from the governed and generates a viable political competence that can and will effectively manage, coordinate, and sustain security, as well as political, economic, and social development. Legitimate governance is inherently stable because it has the political competence and societal support to adequately manage internal problems, change and conflict that effect individual and collective well-being.*³²

3. A Definition of Democratic Legitimacy

By combining the ideas of Weber, Manwaring, Goodwin and Borer a definition for democratic legitimacy that explains a state’s need to both solicit the support of the population and enforce legal authority can be developed.

*The legitimacy of the state is determined by the effectiveness with which the polity applies both good governance and control in the appropriate proportions. A legitimate state provides its population with an environment in which citizens are secure and can prosper while exercising its legal authority to protect the population and prevent challenges to its supremacy. The citizens within this society identify themselves with the polity, participate in the political process, and recognize the state’s right to rule over them.*³³

Using Weber, Manwaring, Goodwin, and Borer, this thesis creates assumptions relating to democratic legitimacy:

1. Based on non-coercive measures, democratic legitimacy is illustrative of the degree of influence and control that the state has over the population.³⁴

2. Improving the democratic legitimacy of a state requires that the state improve the basic conditions of security and the availability of food, shelter, and opportunity for social and economic advancement within society. These factors also apply to non-

³³ Manwaring, 57.

³² Ibid.

³³ Borer, 1999, xix.

³⁴ Weber, "Politics as a Vocation." (<http://www2.selu.edu/Academics/>. 1 October 1919. <http://www2.selu.edu/Academics/Faculty/jbell/weber.pdf>, Accessed 4 May 2008).

democracies. Because they lack coercive measures, however, democracies are comparably more reliant on these measures.³⁵

3. The expectations and perceptions of the citizens determine the legitimacy of the democratic state more so than the non-democratic state.³⁶

4. The power ‘potential’ of internal opposition groups is inversely related to the legitimacy of a state and the state’s need to negotiate with them.³⁷

Using this thesis’ definition of legitimacy and these four assumptions as a guide, planners can begin to develop strategies to improve a nation’s legitimacy. They may also counter the growth of opposition or insurgent groups that threaten to overthrow that nation.

B. THE STRATEGY- LEGITIMACY PARADIGM

Whether it is a state addressing its own internal issues or an external actor developing a strategy to assist another nation in defeating a domestic insurgency, it is essential that building democratic legitimacy be the primary goal of any counterinsurgency strategy. A key to the success of an external state developing and supporting the execution of a COIN strategy in another state is that the external state must avoid the appearance of propping up the host nation government. As Borer points out, if the endemic population views their government as an instrument of the external actor, it could have a severe negative effect on the state’s legitimacy. As illustrated in the cases of the U.S. in Vietnam and the U.S.S.R. in Afghanistan, both the Vietnamese and Afghan governments were viewed by their people as creators of foreigners.³⁸ This fact, combined with their inability to provide security and stability, contributed significantly to

³⁵ Manwaring, 17.

³⁶ Borer, 1999, xix. Borer explains that legitimacy is a function of the state’s ability to govern effectively a society in which citizens see the state’s power over them as being correct and just.

³⁷ Goodwin, 46. Goodwin suggests that the degree of radicalization of mobilized groups against the state is largely attributed to the group’s perception of their chances of attaining some significant share of state power or influence. He suggests that the political ‘incorporation’ of mobilized groups has typically served to ‘de-radicalize’ them. Political inclusion also discourages the sense that the state is unreformable or an instrument of a narrow class or clique and accordingly, needs to be fundamentally overhauled. He refers to e.g., Mann 1993: ch. 18; and Bendix 1977 [1964].

³⁸ Borer, 233.

the failure of both states and the ultimate defeat of the superpowers.³⁹ Borer also suggests that legitimacy is not something that can be forced on an unwilling or incompetent state by an external actor. Even with the assistance of a superpower, such as the United States, victory is not assured. The state must have the desire and determination, as well as a reasonably capable state infrastructure and security apparatus, to successfully defeat an insurgency.⁴⁰ Manwaring also emphasizes this point, saying that a threatened government usually needs outside political help to deal with a given stability threat, but that, ultimately, the targeted state must reform and strengthen itself.⁴¹ As this thesis will discuss later in this chapter, Manwaring's idea has played out in the Philippines as they accepted U.S. assistance in defeating terrorist and insurgent groups in the Southern Philippines.

Within all societies, controversy over legitimacy and support for and opposition to a government or government policy, is at the core of all political discourse. It is, however, not the purpose of this thesis to discover any single truth about legitimacy. Rather, it is this thesis' intent to seek and explore the nature of legitimacy in the Philippines. This proceeds from the assumption that the foundations for legitimacy in the Philippines are unique and vary widely — even within different regions of the nation. As a result, the strategy developed to defeat different insurgent groups across the country will also vary greatly.

C. LEGITIMACY IN THE PHILIPPINES

As the Philippines contends with lingering communist and secessionist insurgencies, problems of legitimacy hound the state. A recurring problem that impinges on legitimacy in the Philippines is the public perception that the state and its institutions are corrupt. It is not enough that a president is legitimately elected. He must also exercise effective leadership and governance. When he, or members of his administration, fails to deliver, or worse, are implicated in corrupt practices, his popularity decreases and, with it, the perceived legitimacy of his administration. This scenario has played out more than

³⁹ Borer, 234.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Manwaring, 48.

once in the Philippines — most recently with President Joseph Estrada who was forced from office in January 2001 on charges of corruption. He was replaced by his running mate and current Philippine President, Gloria Arroyo.⁴²

This perception is related directly to the perceived strength or weakness of the state government apparatus.⁴³ When the state and its institutions fail to deliver basic goods and services and address issues of poverty, unemployment, injustice, and security — as is the problem in Mindanao — the population begins to question the legal authority of the state and their perception of the state's legitimacy decreases. This decrease can lead to feelings of injustice and anger among the population as well as a sense of relative deprivation.⁴⁴

Looking into the roots of the insurgencies in the Philippines, one can infer that the number and size of threat groups seems to increase as the state fails to build its legitimacy among its population.⁴⁵ In other words, there is a direct correlation between the rise of opposition groups and the perception of deprivation and injustice in the Philippines.⁴⁶ Thus, it is important that the conditions that lead to a lack of legitimacy be addressed to preempt the rise of challengers to the Philippine democracy. Max Weber says that “without legitimacy, a ruler, regime, or government system will be hard-pressed to attain the conflict management capability essential for long-run stability and good government.”⁴⁷ According to Weber, an optimal harmonious relationship occurs when the ruled accepts the rightness of the ruler's superior power.⁴⁸ Obedience could come from coercion. Weber's point, however, is that it is not optimal. He echoes Barker's assertion that states which rule by coercion alone will not likely endure. Weber also suggests that the state is often defined as that institution that monopolizes the means of

⁴² C. Walley, “A Century of Turmoil: America's Relationship with the Philippines,” *Special Warfare*, September 2004, 10.

⁴³ J. Fishel, M. Manwaring, 46.

⁴⁴ Ted Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 58.

⁴⁵ Stated during the author's interview with Rommel Banlaoi, Manila, Philippines, 15 September 2008.

⁴⁶ Goodwin, 47.

⁴⁷ Max Weber, *The theory of social and economic organization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), 124-126.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

coercion over the population.⁴⁹ This premise is problematic as will be discussed later, but can also be useful in examining the correlation between under-governed areas and conflict.

D. RELATIVE DEPRIVATION: SETTING THE CONDITIONS FOR CONFLICT

Ted Gurr, in his book “Why Men Rebel,” argues that “men are quick to aspire beyond their social means and quick to anger when those means prove inadequate, but slow to accept their limitations.”⁵⁰ He views relative deprivation as a tension between one’s actual state and what one feels he should be able to achieve.⁵¹ He adds that there is a “perceived discrepancy between value expectations and value capabilities.”⁵² Normally, deprivation occurs when one’s value expectations exceed one’s value capabilities. These values include welfare, security, self-actualization, and self esteem. The intensity and scope of relative deprivation strongly determine the potential for collective violence. In his long review of psychological research on aggression, Gurr concludes that frustration-aggression is the “primary source of the human capacity for violence.”⁵³ One can deduce then that the more intense and prolonged a feeling of frustration, the greater will be the probability of aggression.

Fathali Moghaddam suggests that relative deprivation and an individual’s feelings of injustice can lead them up a proverbial staircase to terrorism. In Moghaddam’s “The Staircase to Terrorism,” the author describes the ascension of an individual from a disillusioned citizen to a terrorist as being achieved through the climbing of steps.⁵⁴ He suggests that a strategy of targeting only the terrorists who have already ascended the steps is an ineffective plan. To be successful, he suggests that the best long-term strategy is prevention at the ground floor level.

⁴⁹ J. Goodwin, *No Other Way Out* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 12.

⁵⁰ Gurr, 58.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 37.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁵⁴ F. Moghaddam, “The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Exploration,” *American Physiologist Magazine* (February – March 2005), 161-165.

At the ground floor of his model, individuals believe that they have no voice in the society and feel neglected and deprived of opportunity. Leaders encourage these individuals to displace their aggression onto out-groups. Through this influence, individuals begin to see the terrorist group as legitimate and the state as illegitimate.⁵⁵ This phenomenon can be seen in many under-governed areas of the world — particularly in the Southern Philippines where a minority Muslim population lives in an environment of insufficient government infrastructure and security with little hope of improvement. This situation has led to armed conflict and demands for self determination.

Moreover, the 2005 Philippine Human Development Report reveals that armed conflicts should be expected to occur and to persist in areas that are the most deprived. This is where deprivation is broadly measured by such variables as poverty incidence, inequality, or some aggregate or component measure of human development.⁵⁶ For example, the presence or absence of basic services, such as electric power, education, reliable water supply, and road transport, is an important component that feeds into whether communities regard themselves as deprived. Moreover, it can be argued that deprivation breeds discontent and a sense of injustice which, in turn, leads to armed conflict. Along this line, Marx pointed out that a “revolution is likely to attract a following when its promised changes are at least plausible.”⁵⁷

E. REVOLUTIONARY CONSCIOUSNESS: LIGHTING THE FUSE OF AN ANGRY POPULATION

If a population’s sense of relative deprivation sets the conditions for revolution, the concept of revolutionary consciousness gives legs to the social movement and helps to organize the revolt. The concept of “revolutionary consciousness,” or “class consciousness,” was developed by Karl Marx to explain the “awakening” of a population to its situation and potential for self determination. As Dirlik explains, “Marx conceptualized consciousness in its dialectical relationship with history, with the

⁵⁵ Moghaddam, 2005.

⁵⁶ “Peace, Human Security and Human Development in the Philippines,” Philippine Human Development Report 2005, Human Development Network. 25-31.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

proletariat as its concrete reference. Revolutionary consciousness represented the development of proletarian consciousness as the proletariat became aware of itself as a class by comprehending itself in history.”⁵⁸

Mao also wrote extensively on the subject and further developed the concept of revolutionary consciousness by suggesting that for the revolution to be successful, the revolutionary consciousness had to reflect and incorporate elements of the culture of the population. If the call for revolution was not put into a proper context that the population would relate to or did not reflect their traditions, beliefs, and concerns, the population would view the revolution as alien and not representative of their goals.⁵⁹

As a Maoist organization, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) fully understood Mao’s principles and has employed his ideas on revolutionary consciousness successfully in organizing the poor. This same process of organization can be seen in the Muslim insurgent groups in Mindanao. It is less clear, however, if they were following the teaching of Marx and Mao or if “revolutionary consciousness” was a result of the scholarship program sponsored by the Philippine, Libyan, and Egyptian governments in the 1960s. These programs were the initiative of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and were intended to provide Muslims from Mindanao with first rate education. The hope was that this program would begin to repair the perceived gap between the opportunities Christian Filipinos were afforded and those afforded to Muslim Filipinos. Egypt and Libya sponsored similar programs in Mindanao and brought hundreds of youths to Madrassas and Universities in Egypt, Libya, and the Middle East. Many of the students studied law and, upon returning to Mindanao, began working through the legal system to effect change in Mindanao. This period was a turning point in the history of Mindanao. The combination of becoming intellectually empowered and the exposure to other Muslim cultures, such as Egypt and Libya, had a significant effect on many Muslims in Mindanao. It is reflected in the renewed call for independence in the

⁵⁸ A. Dirlik, *Marxism in the Chinese Revolution* (Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 132.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 137.

1960s and 70s.⁶⁰ Led by Nur Misuari of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), the Muslims of Mindanao, and the Sulu Archipelago were organized into a popular revolt that threatened to wrest control of Mindanao from the GRP. This combined group declared Mindanao as an independent Muslim nation.⁶¹ Reflecting Mao's belief that the call to revolution must be presented in a populations' cultural context, the MNLF coined the term "Bangsamoro" to describe the Muslims of the region as one people.⁶² Emphasizing the poverty, inequality, and destitution of the Muslim population in Mindanao, the MNLF personalized the need for revolt and interpreted the goals of the revolution in terms that the Bangsamoro people could relate. In doing so, the MNLF lit the fuse of revolutionary consciousness among tens of thousands of Muslims in Mindanao.⁶³

Borer says that the inability of the government, for example, to address the widening gap between the rich and poor could ignite the fuse of revolutionary consciousness.⁶⁴ He points out that the classic notions of Marxism, which initially shaped the struggle of the CPP, portends the need to address the inequalities in a society.⁶⁵ Questions of unfairness, he notes, could lead to revolutionary consciousness. He believes that the concept of revolutionary consciousness is present in many revolutionary movements outside of communist-based groups. Appealing to the concerns of a society by framing the conflict in terms that they can relate has proven to be a highly effective way of motivating people — whether it is a social movement or revolution. Since the majority of areas in Mindanao are poor, the moral question could be linked to poverty. This could open up revolutionary consciousness as depicted in the ideological struggles

⁶⁰ Z. Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia: the Crucible of Terror* (London: Rienner, 2003,) 37.

⁶¹ Fortunato U. Abat, "*The Day We Nearly Lost Mindanao: The CEMCOM Story*," Manila: SBA Printers Inc., 1993, 169.

⁶² Interview with Rommel Banlaoi by authors in Manila, Philippines, 15 September 2008. Banlaoi explained that prior the MNLF movement in the 1970s, the term "Moro" was actually a derogatory term used to describe the Muslims of the Southern Philippines. The word Moro comes from the original term Moor, which was used to describe the Muslims of Spain.

⁶³ Abuza, 42.

⁶⁴ Douglas Borer, Professor at the Defense Analysis Department, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California (Interview dated 07 October 2008).

⁶⁵ Borer, lecture during Directed Study seminar on Conflict Resolution in Southeast Asia, 14 August 2008, Attended by Majors Hastings and Mortela.

of the MNLF, MILF, and the Abu Sayyaf. As the Philippines struggles to improve the socio-economic conditions and welfare of the people in Muslim communities, abject poverty, in a sense, factors into the Muslim question of identity. General Mendoza, the recently retired Intelligence Chief of the Philippine National Police (PNP), asserts that revolutionary Islam in the Philippines has become internationalized over the years. This is because it is easy to package it as a global struggle supported particularly by Islamic states in the Middle East that sympathize with the sufferings of Muslims in Mindanao.⁶⁶

F. THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF A COIN STRATEGY

Understanding why a particular insurgency developed and the context in which it operates is critical in the conceptualization of any COIN strategy. It is essential that COIN strategies are tailored to fit the specific situation. This strategy may vary greatly within an area of operation, from region to region, or even from village to village based on a number of factors. These factors are determined through a careful and detailed analysis of the situation, population, enemy, history, root causes of the conflict, politics, socio-economic conditions, strength/capacity of HN government, and external influences. COIN strategy is a combination of direct and indirect approaches. The difficulty of developing an effective strategy is accurately determining the necessary degree of each. As Manwaring points out, “the balance of persuasive and coercive measures will determine success or failure in the achievement of a just civil society and a durable peace.”⁶⁷

The next section examines the principles of a successful counterinsurgency strategy. These principles and the strategic framework presented in Gordon McCormick’s Mystic Diamond offer a formula for developing a Counterinsurgency strategy easily adaptable to the context of the insurgency. These principles and the concepts outlined in the Mystic Diamond Model were used by the AFP and SOCPAC planners to develop the

⁶⁶ General Rodolfo Mendoza, former Intelligence Chief of the Philippine National Police, interviewed by the authors in Camp Aguinaldo in 17 September 2008.

⁶⁷ Fishel, Manwaring, 63.

COIN strategy for Basilan Island, Bohol Island, and Sulu Island in the Southern Philippines. To date, this has been proven highly effective.⁶⁸

1. The “Nesting” of Mack, Arreguin-Toft, and McCormick

In applying the principles of Mack, Arreguin-Toft, and McCormick, they should be viewed as being rank ordered or “nested” ideas. Mack provides a sort of litmus test for the state in deciding if it has the will to win. Mack’s theory is useful in demonstrating that superior commitment, political will, and possibly sacrifice will be necessary to defeat the opponent. Once the decision to fight is made, Arreguin-Toft’s theory is useful in determining what type of strategy will bring the desired outcome. Arreguin-Toft relies heavily on Mack’s principles as he describes his Theory of Interaction. This theory helps strategists in determining what type of strategy they will assemble to counter the foe — direct or indirect. Once the need for an indirect approach is identified, the Mystic Diamond next step is to provide the framework for a Counterinsurgency strategy that recognizes the population as the center of gravity (COG). This type of analysis will present the state with a clear understanding of the type of threat it is facing and provides effective options to generate a favorable outcome.

2. Mack’s Theory

Mack’s theory is relevant as it provides the basis for understanding the role commitment plays in support of a strategy.⁶⁹ In the Philippines, it is assumed that the government security apparatus is more powerful than any insurgent movement. This is the focus of Mack as he examines the power asymmetry between two contending

⁶⁸ Interviews by the authors with planners from the Basilan operations, Bohol operations, and Sulu operations showed that the concepts explained by Mack, Arreguin-Toft, and McCormick were considered when developing the counterinsurgency strategies for each conflict. Several of the SOCPAC planners involved with the development of the strategies for both Basilan and Sulu were graduates of the Defense Analysis Department at the Naval Postgraduate School where Gordon McCormick developed the Mystic Diamond Model for counterinsurgency and, also, lectures on the merits of the works of both Mack and Arreguin-Toft. The 2004 Bohol operations were planned and conducted without the involvement of the U.S., but still reflect the concepts of Mack’s ‘Principles of Asymmetric Conflict’ and Arreguin-Toft’s ‘Strategic Interaction Theory’ and closely resemble the framework of the Diamond Model.

⁶⁹ A. Mack, “Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars” (*World Politics* 27, no. 2, January 1975), 175-200.

forces.⁷⁰ He argues that the analysis should focus on the differentials in the political will to fight which is rooted in different perceptions of the stakes at hand.⁷¹ He also says that power asymmetry translates to interest asymmetry. Normally, the materially weaker insurgent is more politically determined to win because he has more vested interest in the outcome of war than the stronger external power whose stakes are lower.⁷² For example, he observes that post-1945 successful rebellions against European colonial rule, as well as the Vietnamese struggle against the United States, all had one thing in common: the weaker actor is more committed to win the war.⁷³

Furthermore, since the weak insurgent fights for his survival, he considers the war “total” while the stronger may only view it as “limited.”⁷⁴ As a consequence, it is politically impossible for the stronger power to mobilize its total military resources. Not only is full mobilization impossible politically, it is also not thought to be necessary.⁷⁵ Mack emphasizes that it is the actors’ relative resolve or interest that explains the success or failure in asymmetric conflicts. In essence, the actor with the most resolve, regardless of material power resources, wins. As the gap in relative power widens, the strong actor is less resolute and, thus, becomes politically vulnerable.⁷⁶ On the other hand, the weak actor is more resolute and less politically vulnerable. The weaker actor’s superior strength, in terms of commitment, compensates for his military inferiority. The weak actor fights harder because its existence is at stake. He also displays more willingness to incur losses. This is something the strong actor cannot bear. Just as in Iraq with the U.S. as the strong actor, its home population demands its pullout if it incurs a lot of casualties — even though victory has not yet been achieved.⁷⁷

⁷⁰ Mack, 178.

⁷¹ Ibid., 177.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Jeffrey Record, “Why the Strong Lose.” *Parameters* (Winter 2005-06), 16-31.

⁷⁴ Mack, 182.

⁷⁵ Record, 18.

⁷⁶ Mack, 185.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

3. Arreguin-Toft's Strategic Interaction Theory

This theory shows how an indirect strategy works. Arreguin-Toft argues that the likelihood of victory and defeat in asymmetric conflicts depends on the interaction of the strategies of weak and strong actors. For example, a strong actor is supposed to win against a weaker opponent by utilizing an indirect strategy against the indirect strategy of the enemy. All other things being equal, Arreguin-Toft contends that the stronger side is most likely to lose when it attacks with a direct strategy and the weak side defends using an indirect strategy. Any indirect strategy should seek to destroy the enemy's will to fight.⁷⁸ Arreguin-Toft, using statistical and in-depth historical analyses of the history of conflicts that spanned two hundred years, contended that independent of regime type and weapons technology, the interaction of similar strategic approaches favors the strong actors. On the other hand, the use of different strategic approaches favors the weak. The case of the United States winning its war in Afghanistan in 2002 within a few months shows what happens in a direct-direct confrontation. The opposite, however, occurred when the Soviet Union lost after a decade of brutal war by using a direct strategy against the Afghan indirect strategy.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Jeffrey Record, Why the strong lose, *Parameters*, Winter 2005–2006, http://www.army.mil/professionalwriting/volumes/volume4/january_2006/1_06_3.html, accessed 13 August 2008.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

		Weak-Actor Strategic Approach	
		Direct	Indirect
Strong-Actor Strategic Approach	Direct	Strong Actor	Weak Actor
	Indirect	Weak Actor	Strong Actor

Figure 1. Expected Effects of Strategic Interaction on Conflict Outcomes.⁸⁰

4. Mystic Diamond Counterinsurgency Model

Because it uses a holistic approach to the problem of insurgency, Dr. Gordon McCormick's Diamond Model of Insurgency (Figure 2) is particularly useful.⁸¹ By placing the population at the apex of the diamond and representing both the state and the counter-state as engaging in direct competition for their support, the people are the center of gravity for both sides.⁸² The battle is over legitimacy and who controls the population. Legs 1 and 2 represent the state's efforts to work through the population. This improves the state's legitimacy and provides for the people's needs to gain their help in identifying the insurgents. Leg 3 represents the state efforts to strike the insurgents directly.⁸³

⁸⁰ Ivan Arreguin-Toft, *How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, December 2005.

⁸¹ G. Wilson, "Anatomy of a Successful COIN Operation: OEF-Philippines and the Indirect Approach." *Military Review*, Combined Arms Center, Military Review, 2006: 2-12.

⁸² Gordon McCormick (2007 August). The McCormick Diamond Counterinsurgency Model. Monterey, CA: Lecture presented during Dr. McCormick's Seminar on Guerrilla Warfare.

⁸³ Wilson, 5.

The role of external actors is represented as the fourth point (bottom) of the diamond. Legs 4 and 5 represent the involvement of external actors. Leg 4 represents diplomatic measure taken by the state with external actors to gain assistance in defeating the counter-state. Leg 5 represents the state's efforts to cut off outside assistance and supplies going to the counter-state. The dynamics between the external actors and the state involve the state working to improve its legitimacy in the eyes of foreign actors to receive aid while also limiting the amount of aid that external actors can supply to the counter-state.⁸⁴

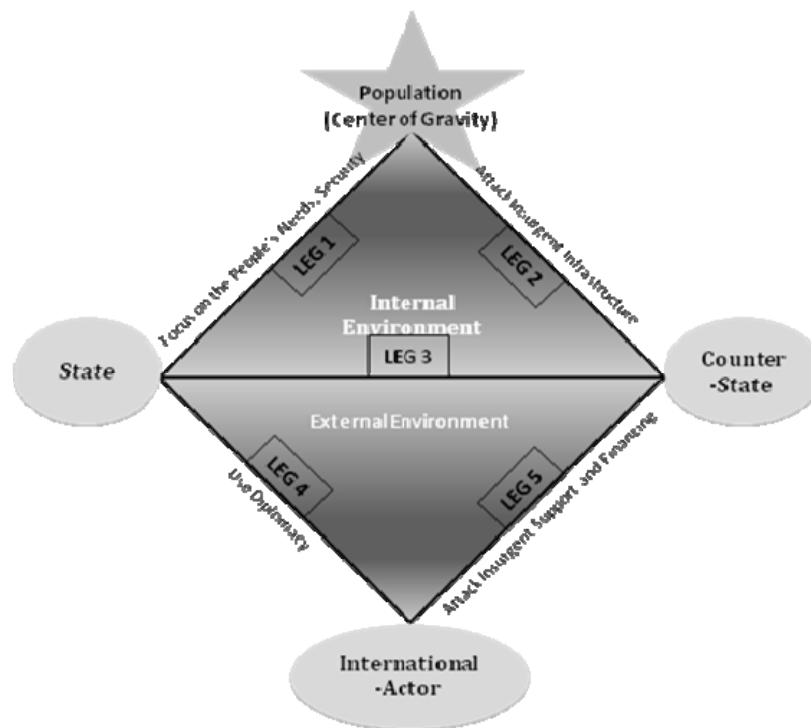


Figure 2. Basic Diagram of the Mystic Diamond Counterinsurgency Model⁸⁵

Figure 3 illustrates in greater detail how the diamond can be used to illustrate the dynamics between the state and the counter-state. Both the state and the counter-state must gain the support of the population, but for different reasons. The state, marked by a 1 in Figure 3, is not immediately threatened militarily by the insurgent because it is

⁸⁴ Wilson, 6.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

insulated by a force advantage over the insurgent force. The state, however, lacks the information advantage to quickly identify and destroy the insurgency. It must get this information from the population within which the insurgency is hiding. The insurgency, marked by a 2, is also insulated. This insulation, however, is an information advantage providing it anonymity and protection from the state security forces. What the insurgency lacks is a force advantage with which to attack and defeat the state. The insurgency must rely on the population to maintain its anonymity and to provide information on the activity of the state, resources, and members elicited through recruitment.

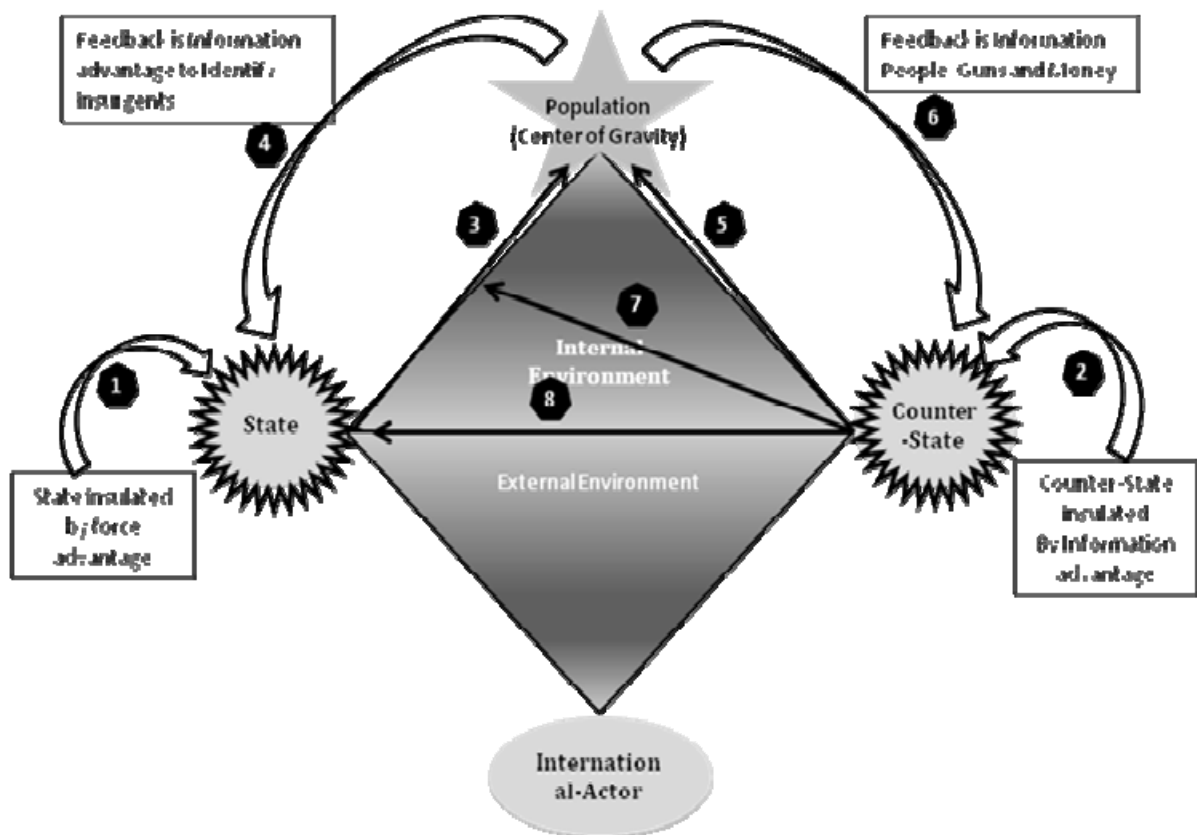


Figure 3. Illustration of the application of the Diamond Counterinsurgency Model in describing the dynamics of an insurgency⁸⁶

⁸⁶ This diagram is a combination of points made by both Col Wilson and Col Wendt in their illustrations of the diamond Model.

Number 3 indicates the state's efforts to improve its legitimacy among the people by extending its control over the population. If done properly, this has the effect of decreasing the legitimacy and coercive control that the insurgency has over the population. It also increases the amount of actionable intelligence that the state can then use to target the insurgents. This is shown by the arrow returning to the state at number 4.

The difficult task that the state faces lies in differentiating between the non-state actors and members of the populations. The problem of using the right amount of coercion is a measurement that both the state and counter-state must try to formulate. Too much coercion from either side can force the population in the opposite direction. As such, too much coercion can prove disastrous and costly — not only through the loss of popular support, but also of legitimacy.⁸⁷ Number 5 in the diagram indicates the efforts of the insurgency to illicit the support of the population to provide information on the state, attract new recruits, and gain money and resources (supplies and weapons) annotated by the arrow at number 6.

At number 7, the insurgency targets the state control measures affecting the states ability to exert control. The state can do the same if and when it is able to identify the insurgent control measures. At number 8, the insurgency targets the state directly once it has sufficiently rolled back enough of the state's control measures and weakened its force advantage that insulates it. The state can also do this to the insurgency if it is able to overcome the insurgency's information advantage which insulates it. As McCormick argues, "the winner of this contest is the one who can most quickly overcome his disadvantage."⁸⁸

5. The Three Stages of the Insurgencies Bid to 'Roll Back' the State's Control

The steps represented by numbers 5, 7 and 8 also represent stages that the insurgency goes through as it becomes more influential and effective:

Stage 1: The insurgency spreads its control over the population as it grows and pushes back the state's influence or 'control measures' (indicated by the arrow at number

⁸⁷ Fishel, Manwaring, 63.

⁸⁸ McCormick lecture on the Diamond Model attended by the authors, 13 September 2007.

5 in Figure 3).⁸⁹ This period can take a long time and is highly dangerous as the insurgency is vulnerable to targeting by the state if they become visible (known) to the state.

Stage 2: As the insurgency ‘rolls back’ the state’s control measures (as indicated by the arrow at number 7 in Figure 3), it can begin to target the state’s control surfaces (the state’s methods of control, i.e. security forces and government infrastructure).⁹⁰ The degree to which the insurgents can do this is in direct correlation to the success they have had with gaining the support of the population.⁹¹ By targeting the state’s control measures, the insurgency begins to affect the state’s ability to exert control. The insurgency gains additional support from the population by demonstrating that the state cannot effectively target the insurgency or that the state can no longer provide control and security to the population.⁹² If the state retaliates and lashes out at the population in an attempt to strike the insurgency, they may further alienate members of the population and unwittingly push them towards the insurgency.⁹³ This is a difficult position for the state: if they do not react with enough force, it risks appearing weak and ineffective; if they respond with too much, it appears reckless and oppressive. Either end of the spectrum results in the state losing legitimacy with its population and that result could strengthen the insurgency. As Manwaring points out, “[the state] response to direct or indirect threats must be primarily political and psychological. The blunt force of military formations supported by tanks and aircraft could be irrelevant or even counterproductive. The more subtle use of political, economic, psychological, and moral instruments of power – supported by public diplomacy, careful intelligence work, and surgical precision in ‘law enforcement efforts’- within a society would be imperative.”⁹⁴

Stage 3: Once the insurgency has sufficiently weakened the state’s force advantage by “rolling back” the state’s control surfaces, it can target the state directly (as

⁸⁹ McCormick lecture on the Diamond Model attended by the authors, 13 September 2007.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Fishel and Manwaring, 76.

indicated by the arrow at number 8 in Figure 3).⁹⁵ If the insurgents attempt to do this too early, they risk being destroyed by the state's superior force advantage.

To fully understand the role of the population as the center of gravity, it is vital to understand how population control is reached and its role in supporting state (or insurgent) control. As this thesis will discuss in the next section, a state's control over its population can greatly affect the ability of an insurgency to develop. This control is the result of a mix of the state's control measures and its policies of attraction or "good governance" that leads the population to view the state's right to rule them as correct and just.⁹⁶

6. The Fine Balance between Control and Cooperation

The experience of many states demonstrates that social movements often begin where there is a lack of legitimacy. The lack of state legitimacy facilitates the insurgent's efforts to arouse, organize, and mobilize the population to not only change the status quo, but to overthrow the government system. The state must use control measures, such as laws and a police force, to compel people to abide by the laws. This creates social stability. Isn't the assumption of the legal system that the vast majority of people are law abiding? How could the small number of police in most states ever control the population? The police are configured on the assumption that few people break the law. The application of force by the state requires a fine balance between creating the right level of control for the sake of security and stability and meeting the expectations of the population for freedom and rights. If the state increases the amount of force, exceeding the level perceived by the population as appropriate, the state's legitimacy can be damaged. Sometimes the state must employ its military to maintain order. An example is after a natural disaster or during periods of social unrest. Goodwin argues that, "the

⁹⁵ Fishel and Manwaring, 76.

⁹⁶ Borer, xviii. It should be noted that under certain conditions strong coercive measures can result in public support when the alternative to those coercive measures is perceived as being worse. For instance, Thomas Hobbes' notion of the Leviathan is based on the idea that "the state of nature" is a state of chaos with a constant struggle for power amongst all individuals. Hobbes asserts the first order legitimacy of the state (his Leviathan) is based solely on imposing order over that chaos. Hobbes' experience was based on the English Civil War, which has modern parallels to the state of Afghanistan following the departure of Soviet Forces. The Taliban's government was considered legitimate by many Afghans despite its heavy-handed coercive practices simply because order was preferable to chaos.

degree to which the state must use force to control the population is directly related to the population's view of the state's right to rule."⁹⁷ For example, a high degree of consensus among a citizenry in favor of the state translates to a high degree of government control. If the state, however, begins to experience a decrease in the support of the population, then the state must increase its control measures or change its policies to regain support or risk increased unrest. If the state increases its control measures or level of force too much, it risks alienating affected segments of the population and pushing them into the arms of the insurgency.⁹⁸ This dynamic was also illustrated in the Diamond Model in describing how the insurgency works to 'roll back' the state's control surfaces.⁹⁹ This is the critical point Fishel and Manwaring discussed: the battle for the population was one of politics and psychological efforts targeted to reinforce the elements of good governance and surgical law enforcement operations as opposed to military formations that risk alienating the population.¹⁰⁰

The state may also attempt to co-opt or entice the population into supporting state objectives by making concessions or promises to the population. An example is agreeing to negotiate land reform measures desired by the target population.

The ability of the government to establish control over a population and a territory enhances its legitimacy. When the state is perceived as legitimate, it is very difficult for an insurgent group to diminish that legitimacy.¹⁰¹ As Mao describes in explaining Revolutionary Consciousness, the insurgents must work to develop support and consensus among the population often by exploiting their grievances and appealing to their cultural beliefs and social context.¹⁰² In this way, the insurgency attempts to sway the support of the people from the government to the insurgent group.¹⁰³

The next chapter will explore the case studies of Basilan, Bohol, and Sulu. It will also discuss the conditions that led to the conflicts in terms of the population's sense of

⁹⁷ Goodwin, 2001, 47.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ McCormick lecture on the Diamond Model, 13 September 2007.

¹⁰⁰ Fishel, Manwaring, 76.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 22.

¹⁰² Dirlik, 137.

¹⁰³ McCormick lecture, July 2007.

relative deprivation. It will also examine how the Diamond Model, nested in the principles of Mack and Arreguin-Toft, was successfully employed in defeating the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) on Basilan and Sulu Island and the NPA on Bohol. Through the careful application of good governance measures and the careful application of control measures to improve the security situation, the insurgencies were separated from their population support base and defeated. This mixed methods approach, now commonly referred to as the 'Indirect Approach,' produced significant improvements in the Philippines' southern region. This improved the legitimacy of the Philippine government and created an environment for lasting peace.

III: BASILAN, BOHOL AND SULU CASE STUDIES: WINNING THE WAR OF IDEAS IN THE SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES

If the insurgent manages to dissociate the population from the counterinsurgent, to control it physically, to get its active support, he will win the war because, in the final analysis, the exercise of political power depends on the tacit or explicit agreement of the population or, at worst, on its submissiveness. Thus, the battle for the population is a major characteristic of the revolutionary war. — David Galula (p 4) ¹⁰⁴

How did the COIN models used in the Philippines tackle the issue of legitimacy? How does an indirect COIN strategy based on McCormick's Diamond Model deal with the relative deprivation that breeds insurgency? This section addresses these questions while examining the indirect approaches employed by the Government of the Philippines (GRP) with the support of the U.S. to address threat groups in the Southern Philippines.

Against the class-based struggle of the Communist Party of the Philippines/ National Democratic Front/ New People's Army (CPP/NPA/NDF), the Bohol local government proved the effectiveness of the Indirect Approach in dealing with their particular issues of relative deprivation, unrest, and insurgency. The local government's convergence of the military and other security forces with the local and national government sectors throughout the crisis, focused on the active involvement of civil organizations and the support role of the military while working with local government units. This approach was a radical departure from other recent government campaigns against the CPP/NDF/NPA. In the case studies of Basilan and Sulu, the Philippine government, assisted by the United States, faced an ideology-based insurgency waged by Muslim separatists and terrorist organizations. These case studies will examine how Special Operations Command – Pacific (SOCPAC) partnered with the Armed Forces of the Philippines and a considerable interagency effort to successfully prosecute campaigns against the Abu Sayyaf. The insurgencies on Bohol and Basilan/Sulu involved different

¹⁰⁴ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, Praeger Security International, Westport, Connecticut, 2006, 4.

threat groups with different ideological goals, but the root causes were similar. The analysis of the case studies will demonstrate how the Indirect Approach, employing the framework of the Diamond Model, proved effective in addressing the issues of relative deprivation as a main effort and direct military action as a supporting effort. This thesis will discuss how each strategy employed the principles of Mack, Arreguin-Toft, and McCormick's Diamond Model to promote Philippine legitimacy and good governance. It will also examine how effective they were in achieving the objective of diminishing the threats of insurgency and terrorism in the Southern Philippines.



Figure 4. Map of the Southern Philippines with Basilan, Bohol and Sulu identified. The highlighted area is the Joint Operations Area¹⁰⁵

A. TROUBLE IN THE SOUTH

Development of an effective counterinsurgency strategy for the Southern Philippines required an in-depth understanding of the history of the region and the roots of its internal problems. A clear understanding of the beliefs and goals of the multiple insurgent groups was critical to developing a COIN strategy that would support the legitimacy of the GRP and siphon away the insurgent's population support base.

¹⁰⁵ Wilson, G., "Anatomy of a Successful COIN Operation: OEF-Philippines and The Indirect Approach," *Military Review*, November–December 2006, 3.

Influenced by their knowledge of the works of Mack and the principles of Arreguin-Toft's Strategic Interaction Model, SOCPAC planners employed McCormick's Diamond Model as a framework on which to develop a plan that they believed was appropriate for the complex political and social environment of the Southern Philippines.¹⁰⁶ Planners understood that much of the battle for the population's support would be won through the improvement of their socio-economic condition. They also determined that a sophisticated information strategy would be required to synchronize actions and messages to promote the principles of good governance and the rule of law to counter the message of the opposition groups.¹⁰⁷ As this chapter will discuss, these are just a few of the factors considered by SOCPAC planners as they developed the strategy for both Basilan and Sulu. The resulting strategies were highly flexible and a mix of direct and indirect approaches.¹⁰⁸ The McCormick Diamond Model offered the right combination of direct and indirect strategy. It took advantage of opportunities to target the insurgency directly with Philippine Security Forces through a relentless pursuit campaign. It most often worked through the population with a highly targeted civil military and information operations strategy to change the conditions that provided the ASG safe haven.¹⁰⁹

1. Reestablishing the U.S.-GRP Relationship

By 2001, the Philippine government was facing several serious challenges. Already home to two of the world's longest running insurgencies, its Southern province of Mindanao had become a training ground and transit point for international terrorist

¹⁰⁶ Interview with LTC Haider, former JSOTF-P Forward Commander, 2005, by Maj. J. Hastings, 25 May 2008, Camp Smith, HI, hereafter cited as Haider interview. SOCPAC planners were well versed in counterinsurgency theory and historical examples of successful COIN and unsuccessful COIN operations. Some of the planners, like Col Wendt, were also recent graduates of the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) and they had studied Mack and Arreguin-Toft. Professor McCormick is the Chairman of the Defense Analysis department at NPS and teaches the Guerrilla Warfare Seminar where he explains several theories on counterinsurgency that includes Mao, Guevara, Mack, and Arreguin-Toft. He also introduces his COIN model known as the "Mystic Diamond."

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Major (P) Steve Mossberg (pseudonym) by Major Jonathan P. Hastings, 28 April 2008, hereafter cited as Mossberg interview.

groups.¹¹⁰ Philippine intelligence documents show that throughout the 1990s, thousands of Islamic militants, Filipinos, and aspiring terrorists from all over the world had been traveling to Mindanao to train in more than twenty-seven camps run by the MILF.¹¹¹ The presence of Al Qaeda in Mindanao had also become a growing concern to PACOM and SOCPAC. These two began to look at training and assistance options to improve the capability of the AFP to combat terrorism.¹¹² Planning, however, would be complicated by some significant constraints.

The first major hurdle that PACOM and SOCPAC planners had to overcome was to reestablish U.S./Philippine military relations severed in 1992 after the closure of U.S. military bases in the Philippines. Beginning in 1991, the U.S. drastically reduced its security assistance funding to the Philippines. It tapered from \$350 million in 1991 to \$5 million by 1993.¹¹³ This drastic cut in funding, combined with the reduction of exchange training to less than one exercise per year (the Balikatan exercise was held intermittently between 1992 and 1999), resulted in a measurable decline in Philippine military readiness.¹¹⁴ Also, as a result of the long presence of U.S. forces in the Philippines in the past, the Philippine government had written an article into their Constitution to outline any future U.S. presence. The 1987 Philippine Constitution specifically states, under Article XVIII, Transitory Provisions: Section 25, that “after the expiration in 1991 of the Agreement between the Republic of the Philippines and the United States of America concerning military bases, foreign military bases, troops, or facilities shall not be allowed in the Philippines except under a treaty duly concurred in by the Senate and, when the

¹¹⁰ M. Ressa, *Seeds of Terror: An Eyewitness Account of Al Qaeda’s Newest Center of Operations in Southeast Asia*, New York: Free Press, 2003, 9.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹¹² C. H. Briscoe, “Balikatan Exercise Spearheaded ARSOF Operations in the Philippines.” *Special Warfare*, September 2004, 16.

¹¹³ Interview with Undersecretary Edilberto P. Adan, Executive Director for the Office of the President, Presidential Commission on the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFACOM), interviewed by Majors Hastings and Mortela, 16 September 2008, Manila, Philippines. Hereafter cited as the Adan interview.

¹¹⁴ C. Walley, “A Century of Turmoil: America’s Relationship with the Philippines.” *Special Warfare*, September 2004, 10.

Congress so requires, ratified by a majority of the votes cast by the people in a national referendum held for that purpose, and recognised as a treaty by the other contracting state.”¹¹⁵

In February 1999, the Philippine government ratified the Visiting Forces Agreement. It restored protections to U.S. military personnel deployed to the Philippines.¹¹⁶ This was the first step in renewed cooperation between the U.S. and GRP and was essential in paving the way to reestablishing U.S./RP military exchange training.¹¹⁷

The next step was to coordinate the legal justification for U.S. assistance. To reinforce and demonstrate U.S. respect for Philippine sovereignty, the GRP would need to lobby for and justify the assistance of the U.S. Fortunately, the U.S. and RP had previously signed a Mutual Defence Treaty (MDT). The U.S. is the only country with which the RP has a MDT. As planning progressed, this document became the framework on which the future strategy would be built.¹¹⁸ The importance of this document cannot be overstated. The MDT was the cornerstone document that supported U.S. military assistance to the Philippines, but there was a problem. The MDT was written to address outside threats and the Philippines was facing internal threats of insurgency and terrorism.¹¹⁹ Opponents to U.S. involvement within the GRP were adamant that U.S. involvement was not supported by the Philippine Constitution or the MDT.¹²⁰ In response, PACOM representatives and the Arroyo administration drafted the Terms of Reference (TOR) for Balikatan 02. It outlined and clarified the extent of U.S. assistance.¹²¹ The TOR stated that the U.S. presence in the Southern Philippines would not exceed six months; U.S. forces would not participate in combat operations although they were authorized to defend themselves if attacked; all operations would be AFP-led;

¹¹⁵ Philippine Constitution, 1987, Article XVIII, Transitory Provisions. The full Constitution can be found at <http://philippines-archipelago.com/contents.html#politics>, accessed 9 August 2008.

¹¹⁶ Adan interview.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

and U.S. personnel would always be accompanied by AFP personnel.¹²² In 2001, the TOR was signed by the Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Teofisto Guingona. This completed a critical phase in U.S./RP efforts to combat terrorism.¹²³ This U.S./RP partnership would later be supplemented with a Mutual Logistics Support Agreement in November 2002. It outlined the storage of U.S. materials and resources on Philippine bases. As this thesis will discuss in the Sulu case study, this agreement was further clarified in July 2006 in a document known as “Kapit Bisig.”¹²⁴ These agreements are essential to the continued presence of U.S. forces in the Philippines and are frequently used by the VFA Commission to answer legal challenges to U.S. involvement in the Southern Philippines.¹²⁵

Another constraint facing SOCPAC planners was the requirement for a small U.S. presence in the Philippines. Size was a constraint for several reasons. The first was that a primary goal of the U.S. task force was to promote the legitimacy of the Philippine government, but planners agreed that a large U.S. presence would likely detract from that goal. It would, instead, give the appearance of U.S. unilateral operations leaving locals with the impression that the GRP was just a puppet of the U.S.¹²⁶

There was also tremendous pressure on President Arroyo from other members of the GRP to deny, or at least strictly limit, the number of U.S. forces deployed to the Philippines.¹²⁷ After long negotiations with the PACOM and SOCPAC Commanders, permission was granted and a “force cap” was placed on the number of U.S. personnel (660 task force members).¹²⁸

Additionally, SOCPAC had ordered assessments as the first step in developing a strategy for Basilan.¹²⁹ Assessments of the local populace indicated a lingering

¹²² Adan interview.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Mossberg interview.

¹²⁷ Briscoe, 16.

¹²⁸ C. Walley, “Impact of the Semipermissive Environment on Force-Protection in Philippine Engagements” (*Special Warfare*, 2004), 37. The force cap for Balakatan was established in the December 2001 TOR – 500 personnel for the JTF Headquarters and 160 SF soldiers on Basilan Island.

¹²⁹ Wilson, 6.

resentment over the U.S. counterinsurgency operations conducted in the early 1900s.¹³⁰ Although nearly one hundred years had passed since Generals Pershing and Leonard Wood had fought in the Archipelago, locals recalled the conflict like it had occurred yesterday.¹³¹ Insurgent propaganda themes spoke of past U.S. betrayal of the Moro people and accused the U.S. of planning to steal what little that local people possessed.¹³² A large U.S. presence would likely inflame a population who was already distrustful of the intentions of the United States.¹³³

Limited U.S. resources also created a constraint for planners. U.S. commitments in Afghanistan and the build-up to Operation Iraqi Freedom left little in the way of men and resources to commit to OEF-P.¹³⁴ A small advisor force had always been the goal of SOCPAC Commander, MG Wurster, 1st Special Forces Group Commander, David Fridovich, and the SOCPAC planners. This constraint helped them achieve that goal. If OEF-P had been the “only show in town” or the only U.S. military combat zone, the U.S. military would likely have been much more interested in beefing up the size of the task force with conventional units and equipment. This constraint is now viewed as having contributed to the success of the operation because it allowed PACOM/SOCPAC to develop a strategy that was less intrusive and focused on a through, by, and with method as apposed to a U.S. unilateral operation. The relatively small operation also drew little attention from Washington when compared with operations in Afghanistan, which

¹³⁰ Briscoe, 2004, 20.

¹³¹ Interview with Major (P) Dan Howard (pseudonym) by Major Jonathan P. Hastings, 10 October 2008, Camp Aguinaldo, Manila, PI, hereafter cited as Howard interview. Although many residents of Mindanao and the Archipelago had had positive experiences with U.S. personnel in the past, many were suspicious of the true intentions of the U.S.. MILF, MNLF, and ASG propaganda also played on previous U.S. combat operations, particularly on Sulu, bringing fear and distrust to the surface.

¹³² Interview with Major Jeff Martin (pseudonym) by Major Jonathan Hastings, 28 May 2008, SOCPAC HQs, Camp Smith, HI, hereafter cited as Martin interview.

¹³³ Mossberg interview.

¹³⁴ Haider interview.

allowed SOCPAC a degree of freedom to plan and execute the operation without significant influence or interference from Washington.¹³⁵

SOCAP and GRP planners also had to consider the reaction of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) forces present on the island.¹³⁶ Planners had to figure out a way to target the ASG without inciting hostilities with either the MILF or Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).¹³⁷ As will be discussed in Chapter 4, there was a tenuous ceasefire in place between the GRP and MILF forces in Mindanao. After decades of fighting, the ceasefire was a result of a mutual agreement between the GRP and the MILF to discuss terms for a peaceful resolution to MILF ancestral rights claims. The deployment of U.S. and GRP forces to Basilan could threaten the ceasefire and bring thousands of MILF fighters into the conflict. The GRP sent envoys to discuss the upcoming operation with the MILF. It explained that the AFP was targeting the ASG because they were engaging in criminal and terrorist activities. The GRP requested that the MILF Central Committee declare the outlaw status of the ASG and deny them support or safe haven in MILF camps. In return, the GRP would continue negotiations of a peace treaty with the MILF and possible concessions to MILF claims of ancestral domain rights in Mindanao.¹³⁸ The MILF agreed and remained neutral, at least publicly, throughout Balakatan 02.¹³⁹

2. The First Steps in Assisting the Philippines in Their Fight Against Terror

By 2000, PACOM and SOCPAC had developed a plan to assist the Philippines in addressing their growing terrorist threat, but when it was offered to the Philippine

¹³⁵ Haider interview. Hy Rothstein also discusses this situation in his article, “*Less is More*” (Third World Quarterly, Vol. 28, No. 2, 2007), 275–294. He describes the lack of interest of the DoD during both OEF-P and the U.S. operations in El Salvador in the 1980s. He also suggests that if the U.S. had not been involved in both Iraq and Afghanistan at the time and the RP was willing to accept a large contingent of U.S. forces, DoD may have displaced the “right-minded” SOCPAC command and sent large numbers of U.S. forces creating a magnet for Jihadist.

¹³⁶ Interview with Major General Ben D. Dolorfino, Commandant, Philippine Marine Corps, by Majors Hastings and Mortela, Marine Barracks, Manila, PI. 18 September 2008. Hereafter referred to as the Dolorfino interview.

¹³⁷ Dolorfino interview.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

President Joseph Estrada, it was rejected. It was only after Estrada was forced out of office on corruption charges and Gloria Arroyo took office as President that the U.S. offer of assistance was accepted.¹⁴⁰ With the kidnapping of several U.S. citizens by the ASG and an overall increase in attacks by terrorist and insurgent groups, President Arroyo approved a SOCPAC plan to address the threat. The plan included improving the counterinsurgency capacity of the AFP as well as establishing a counter-terrorism capability. It also included a Joint Special Operations Group (JSOG) to coordinate the efforts of Philippine Counter Terrorism Forces.¹⁴¹

Initial Security Assistance (SA) programs focused on creating a Counter-terrorism (CT) capability and improving other capabilities to support CT missions. Specifically, the plan included:

- Establish the 3 Light Reaction Companies (LRC). Responsibility would fall to 1/1SFG(A) to train and equip these new companies.
- Establish and train the first Joint Command in the Philippine Military. The Joint Special Operations Group (JSOG) was designed to command and control the LRCs and LRB (Light Reaction Battalion).
- Train and equip 6 light infantry battalions and conduct non-commissioned officer leadership training.
- Train and equip 12 Naval Special Operations Unit (NAVSOU) teams and develop an instructor cadre.
- Develop night vision capability among Philippine UH-1H pilots and train 6 instructor pilots and co-pilots.
- Support Philippine intelligence modernization.¹⁴²

In May 2001, the need for a Philippine counter-terrorism capability was reinforced with the ASG kidnappings of Martin and Gracia Burnham from a resort on Palawan Island.¹⁴³ This kidnapping was just the latest in a series of kidnappings perpetrated by the ASG and served to demonstrate their ability to operate with a high

¹⁴⁰ Briscoe, 16.

¹⁴¹ Mossberg interview.

¹⁴² Haider interview.

¹⁴³ Ressa, 104.

degree of impunity in the Southern Philippines. The perpetrators of this latest kidnapping were quickly traced back to Basilan Island where they took refuge in MILF camps deep in the interior jungles of the island.¹⁴⁴ This event and the launching of other kidnappings and attacks by the ASG served to underscore the lawless environment present in the Southern Philippines and served to convince President Arroyo to accept the U.S. offer of military assistance.¹⁴⁵



Figure 5. Map of Basilan Island ¹⁴⁶

B. BASILAN

Influenced by the principles of the theories of Mack and Arreguin-Toft, SOCPAC planners began developing a strategy that would employ McCormick's Diamond Model as a COIN framework to address the underlying causes of insurgency and promote the legitimacy of the Philippine government. It would also concurrently improve the AFP's ability to provide security and defeat ASG forces of Basilan.¹⁴⁷ Understanding that promoting legitimacy was the key to successfully assisting the GRP, SOCPAC

¹⁴⁴ Kaplan, 145.

¹⁴⁵ C. Walley, "A Century of Turmoil: America's Relationship with the Philippines." (*Special Warfare*, 2004, 37.

¹⁴⁶ Map of Basilan, FETEC Geographic Information System, http://map.primorye.ru/raster/maps/asia/basilan_island_tpc_1984, accessed 14 September 2008.

¹⁴⁷ D. Fridovich, F. Krawchuk, "Winning in the Pacific: The Special Operations Forces Indirect Approach," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Issue 44, 2007, 24.

considered the challenge of removing the ASG and Jemaah Islamiyah terrorist threat from Mindanao without igniting hostilities with the MNLF and MILF.¹⁴⁸ The ASG differed from the MNLF and MILF in that they acted more as a criminal organization than as an insurgency. The ASG seemed uninterested in mobilizing the population to oppose the GRP, but instead focused on criminal activities and targeting the Philippine population with intimidation and violent attacks.¹⁴⁹ To visualize these three groups based on the types of activities they commit, refer to Freeman's Action Based Definition (Figure 3). The ASG falls within the center section under terrorist groups. Due to the nature of the tactics and techniques used by the ASG and the lack of an ideological goal of independence, this is along the left edge towards crime. The MNLF, on the other hand, with the signing of the peace treaty with the GRP and the assumption of control of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), has moved into the 'politics' segment with a bit of overlap into the 'insurgency' segment. This is due to the threat of armed conflict with GRP forces and continued support of the ASG. Since entering into negotiations with the GRP, the MILF has moved away from the 'terrorist' segment into the 'insurgent' segment. As it makes progress towards a negotiated peace agreement with the GRP, it becomes more moderate and closer to functioning as a legitimate political organization and, hence, moves more to the right.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Z. Abuza, *"Militant Islam in Southeast Asia: The Crucible of Terror."* London: Rienner, 2003, 113.

¹⁴⁹ Ressa, 107.

¹⁵⁰ Abuza, 40-48.

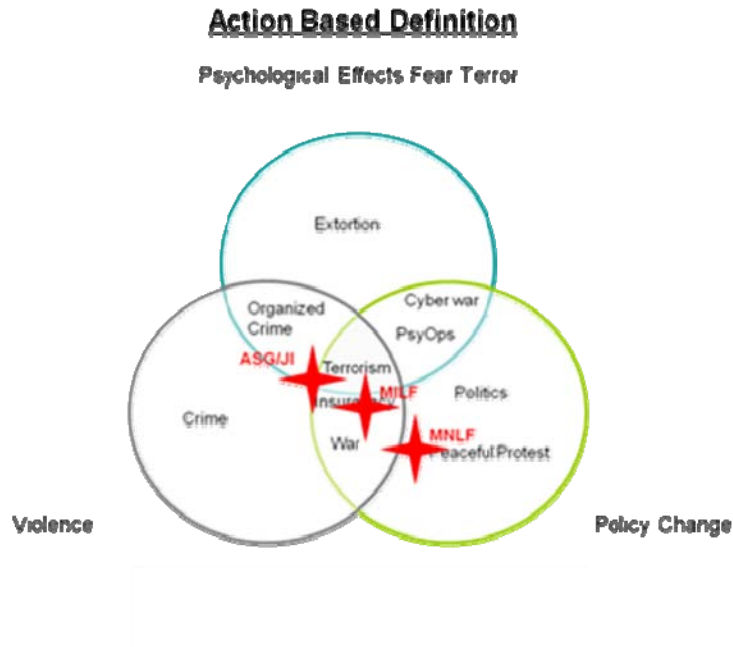


Figure 6. Location of Mindanao insurgent groups on Freeman's Action Based Definition of Terrorism¹⁵¹

To keep them out of the fighting, the GRP and the U.S viewed negotiating with the MNLF and MILF as key to the success of the strategy. This difficult task was accomplished through GRP negotiations with the MNLF and MILF.¹⁵² As Goodwin points out, government negotiations with mobilized groups has typically served to de-radicalize them as they anticipate the accumulation of greater influence and resources.¹⁵³ Negotiations and political inclusion also have an impact on the population by demonstrating that the state is “reformable” and interested in the concerns of its

¹⁵¹ Derived from lecture by Professor Freeman, 14 April 2008, on his Action Based Definition Model. The model is merely a tool used to visualize the classification of a threat group based on their actions. The ASG, MILF, and MNLF plots are the interpretation of the authors of this paper and are estimated based on information available at the time this paper was published. Groups can change there position on the model based on their behavior. An example would be the MILF and its move to the right closer to legitimate political group as they make progress in negotiation with the GRP. The ASG has begun to move back to the terrorist area as a result of the leadership of Yasser Igasan and the belief that he is re- introducing ideological goals to the ASG. Lecture attended by Major Jonathan Hastings.

¹⁵² Haider interview.

¹⁵³ Goodwin, J., *No Other Way Out: States and Revolutionary Movements 1945-1991*, New York, Cambridge Press, 2001, 46.

people.¹⁵⁴ Negotiations with the state can also serve to bolster the insurgency. The mere fact that the state is officially recognizing the group creates legitimacy and credibility that can assist the insurgency in recruiting members and resources.¹⁵⁵ In this case, the negotiations organized by the GRP with the MNLF and MILF were successful in motivating the two groups to deny support to the ASG and JI (at least publicly) and acknowledge them as criminal elements suitable for targeting by Philippine Security Forces.¹⁵⁶ The lead Philippine negotiator was then Colonel Benjamin Dolorfino, a Philippine Marine, Muslim, and native of Sulu.¹⁵⁷ The success of the negotiations was a tremendous achievement by the GRP and contributed significantly to the overall success of their operations against the ASG. While there were clear signs that the MNLF and MILF were still supporting the ASG and providing safe haven, the groups maintained neutrality in public or did not openly support the ASG.¹⁵⁸ The agreements were successful in keeping these groups and the approximately 17,000 fighters they command out of the conflict while allowing the AFP to pursue the ASG and JI.¹⁵⁹ If the GRP had not sidelined the MNLF and MILF, Mindanao and the Archipelago would likely have deteriorated to full-scale war.¹⁶⁰

Understanding that the MNLF was heavily supporting the ASG, President Arroyo also suspended Nur Misuari as the Governor of the ARMM in November 2001. This sent Misuari into hiding and sparked attacks in both Sulu and Zamboanga by a splinter group of the MNLF calling themselves the Misuari Breakaway Group (MBG). These attacks were repelled by the AFP. Casualties were high on both sides.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁴ Goodwin, 46.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 47.

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Rommel Banlaoi, Chairman and Executive Director, Philippine Institute for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, by Majors Hastings and Mortela, 15 September 2008, Camp Aguinaldo, Manila, PI.

¹⁵⁷ Dolorfino interview.

¹⁵⁸ Operation Ultimatum Assessment, Armed Forces of the Philippines, Headquarters, Western Mindanao Command, Camp, After Action Report, Zamboanga City, PI, 29 March 2007.

¹⁵⁹ Dolorfino interview.

¹⁶⁰ Banlaoi interview.

¹⁶¹ C. Walley, 18. MBG fighters attacked the airfields on Sulu and Zamboanga resulting in 60AFP killed and 100 MBG members killed. The fighting lasted one week.

1. Assessment of the Population and Atmospherics

Analysis of the Basilan population and environment began before U.S. forces actually deployed to the Island. This assessment became the starting point or “baseline” for planning and was critical in determining how the Indirect Approach (IA) strategy was developed.¹⁶² To develop a strategy that would effectively separate the population from the insurgent, it was imperative that the RP/U.S. identify the areas that supported the insurgency.¹⁶³ The assessments focused on determining the enemy situation, Philippine military training requirements, local demographics, condition of infrastructure, and socio-economic conditions or relative deprivation.¹⁶⁴ The purpose of the assessments was to aid planners in building a “map” of disenfranchisement to identify where likely active and passive support for the ASG would develop.¹⁶⁵ As the operation continued, successive assessments were done regularly to evaluate the effect that the strategy was having in the area.¹⁶⁶ From these evaluations, more effective initiatives were recommended.¹⁶⁷ A similar assessment was also done on each AFP unit to determine resource requirements and to track progress in building capacity.¹⁶⁸ This “effects-based” measurement was used by SOCPAC to closely monitor the return on investment regarding the operation and activities with host nation partners.¹⁶⁹ The assessments and measurement of effectiveness were also necessary to SOCPAC in demonstrating mission progress when reporting to U.S. military and civilian leadership. The long duration nature of the IA means that progress is often incremental and difficult to quantify. The assessments and measurements of effectiveness assisted SOCPAC in demonstrating progress as well as requirements for additional resources. Assessments were also critical in the development

¹⁶² Eric Wendt, Col., author of “Strategic Counterinsurgency Modeling” (*Special Warfare*, September 2005), 10. Col. Wendt was also one of the key planners involved in developing the Basilan strategy. He also served as Deputy Commander, Army Special Operations Task Force during Balikatan 2002, Commander of 1/1 SFG(A) and Commander 1st SFG(A). Col Wendt is also both a graduate of the Defense Analysis Department, Naval Postgraduate School and a Senior Fellow of the department.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Wilson, 6.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Wendt, 10.

¹⁶⁷ Fridovich, 27.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

of the Information Operations (IO) strategy.¹⁷⁰ An accurate understanding of the local population facilitated the development of information products and the targeting of civil military projects that would have the greatest positive effect.¹⁷¹

2. The Diamond Model in Basilan

The assessments conducted on Basilan found significant levels of relative deprivation with high levels of poverty, illiteracy, low school attendance, and little government infrastructure.¹⁷² These were issues that affected the legitimacy of the GRP and needed to be addressed through leg 1 of the Diamond Model.¹⁷³ The assessments did not, however, find significant signs of an ideological alignment between the population and the ASG. In other words, the population was supporting the ASG out of necessity because of the lack of government infrastructure and security. While the assessments indicated that planners were facing an insurgency, the root causes were correctible with the application of good governance and a secure environment.¹⁷⁴

To sever the relationship between the insurgent and the population, the next step was to address leg 2 of the Diamond Model.¹⁷⁵ Support for the ASG had been attained largely through coercion and intimidation with just a small percentage of the locals categorized as ideological supporters. The in-depth analysis of the local population allowed the SOCPAC planners to determine that physical security was the single greatest need on Basilan.¹⁷⁶ They predicted that if the GRP could provide security, as well as begin to improve the socio-economic conditions on the island, the GRP should be able to

¹⁷⁰ Martin interview.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Wilson, 6.

¹⁷³ Wendt, 9.

¹⁷⁴ Mossberg interview.

¹⁷⁵ Wendt, 9.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 10.

sever the population's support of the ASG. SOCPAC planners began to develop a strategy to counter the terrorist/insurgent ideology by promoting a different ideology — one of good governance.¹⁷⁷

Leg 3 of the model represents the effort by the state to target the insurgents directly when they can be identified.¹⁷⁸ Capacity building efforts aimed to improve the capability of the PSF to effectively target the insurgents.¹⁷⁹ While kinetic operations would be a necessary and prudent aspect of the strategy, SOCPAC planners estimated that the majority of the battles would be information-based and non-kinetic.¹⁸⁰ Concentrating on countering the insurgency by attracting the populace towards an ideology of good governance, shaped an “Indirect Approach” that consisted of two distinct but mutually supporting campaigns.¹⁸¹ The first campaign was the counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy, designated as the “main effort” that would erode the population's support of the stateless networks and promote an ideology of good governance.¹⁸² The second campaign and the “supporting effort” was the counter terrorism (CT) campaign that would defeat key nodes of stateless networks within the Southern Philippines that would render them ineffective.¹⁸³

The result of this analysis was illustrated in what SOCPAC planners called the Basilan Model. Built on the McCormick Diamond Model, the Basilan Model (Figure 4) depicted the specific struggle in Basilan and the basic SOCPAC strategy.

¹⁷⁷ Wendt, 10.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Mossberg interview.

¹⁸⁰ Haider interview.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Haider interview.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

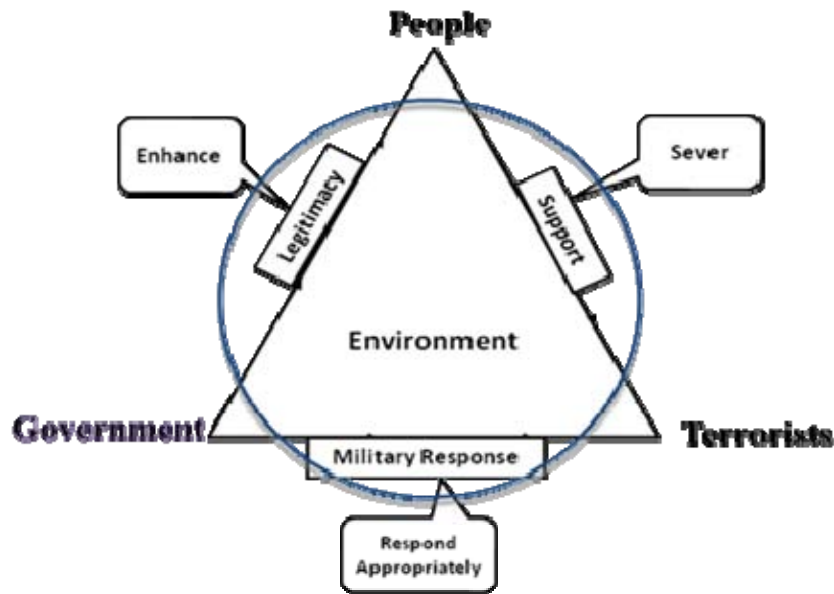


Figure 7. The Basilan Model¹⁸⁴

Planners also had to address the external political environment affecting the insurgency. This step is illustrated by the bottom half of McCormick's Diamond Model which defines the influence of external actors on the conflict.¹⁸⁵ In this case, support from the U.S. and other nations coming into the GRP to help them in their counterinsurgency fight is represented by leg 4. Efforts of external actors to support the insurgency are represented by leg 5.¹⁸⁶ Partnered with the U.S. Country Team in Manila, SOCPAC planners developed a plan to assist the GRP in disrupting outside resources in the form of guns, money, and resources from getting to the insurgency.

With the COIN strategy focused on the population and the CT strategy focused on the stateless networks, each was designated as a center of gravity.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁴ Taken from a presentation given by LTG Donald Wurster, former SOCPAC Commander and Commander of JTF-510: Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines to the Defense Analysis Department, NPS, Monterey, CA. and attended by the authors, February 2008.

¹⁸⁵ Wilson, 5.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

3. The Ideology of the Indirect Approach

Using the McCormick Diamond Model as a framework to develop their strategy, SOCPAC planners began with the premise that the Indirect Approach must promote an ideology of Philippine Government legitimacy rather than trying to directly counter the insurgent ideology¹⁸⁸. The Indirect Approach, in short, promotes a core democratic ideology – locally applied – that good governance is of, for, and by ‘the people’ and that a government is obligated to provide basic needs, i.e., security, infrastructure, rule of law, and economic opportunity.¹⁸⁹ The planners recognized that all elements of the strategy must demonstrate this ideology.¹⁹⁰

Recognizing that DoD was just one of the many stakeholders in the Philippines, SOCPAC planners developed a strategy that proposed a division of labor which scoped the role of DoD in general, and SOF in particular, within a broader host nation (HN) and interagency environment.¹⁹¹ Finally, the planners articulated the need for patience. Success in the IA meant changing the perceptions of a population and improving the capacity of its government to expand its infrastructure and provide security. They described the IA process as requiring a long-term view of accepting measured developments and incremental results.¹⁹²

The IA strategy developed for Basilan was made up of three major interconnected efforts or “Lines of Operation:”¹⁹³

- The first line of operation was operations and intelligence fusion support to AFP units. This meant that the U.S. would provide assistance in planning and

¹⁸⁸ Interview with COL Greg Wilson, Former JSOTF-P Forward Commander, 2005, Commander, 2/1 SFG(A) 2002-2004 and Senior Fellow, Defense Analysis Department, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, 11 September 2008, Interviewed by Majors Hastings and Mortela. Col. Wilson is also the author of *“Anatomy of a Successful COIN Operation: OEF-Philippines and the Indirect Approach.”* hereafter referred to as the Wilson, Interview.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Haider interview.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

synchronizing AFP operations as well as provide logistics support. U.S. forces would also provide intelligence to support AFP forces.¹⁹⁴

- The second line of operation was capacity-building. U.S. forces would train, equip, advise, and assist AFP forces through long-term Security Assistance and direct U.S. military engagement. The objective was to assist Philippine Security Forces in improving the physical security situation and in effectively countering terrorist and insurgents. Improved security will demonstrate to the people that the Philippine government is capable of protecting them from the insurgency and make them more likely to assist the AFP in targeting the lawless elements. Improved capacity would increase effective targeting of lawless elements and minimize civilian injuries.
- The third line of operation was to conduct strategic communications and humanitarian action efforts to rehabilitate and develop communications away from the terrorist or extremist ideology.¹⁹⁵ Strategic communications or information operations were designed to enhance the legitimacy of the Philippine government by promoting the successes of the first two lines of operations.¹⁹⁶ The term “strategic communications” referred to many different informational efforts including building rapport and trust with the local leaders and population, properly framing U.S./AFP operations to the media and other entities external to Basilan, and developing themes to discredit the terrorist ideology of the ASG.¹⁹⁷ Effective strategic communications were essential to mission success. Upon the deployment of U.S. forces to Basilan, all SF detachments began to communicate and interact with local leaders and government officials.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁴ Haider interview.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Colonel David Maxwell, “1/1SFG(A) Battalion Commander’s OEF-P Unclassified Operation Summary (OPSUM),” 5 May 2002. As the commander of 1/1SFG(A) and SF forces Assigned to Balikpapan 2002, then LTC Maxwell wrote this summary of operations on Basilan. OPSUM is included as an Annex to this chapter.

Information themes also targeted the insurgents. For example, playing card-sized handouts were circulated that offered cash for information leading to the capture of ASG members.¹⁹⁹ Civil military operations targeted areas where ASG had developed a support base and had a measurable effect on improving the socio-economic conditions of the local population.²⁰⁰ The investment in infrastructure, improved medical care, and education was targeted to demonstrate the commitment of the Philippine government to its people and to improve their quality of life.²⁰¹ Improved economic conditions would also encourage the non-radical elements of the population to seek safer work rather than fighting government security forces.²⁰²

These lines of operation complimented the efforts of the U.S. country team to improve the legitimacy of the GRP and strengthened GRP efforts along legs 1 through 3 of the Diamond Model. SOCPAC and what would later become the Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines (JSOTF-P) worked closely with the U.S. Embassy country team, GRP officials, and key members of the PSF to develop a combined strategy. This strategy would ensure that PSF forces were the lead on all operations and the U.S. would remain in a strictly supporting role. This involvement of other “stakeholders” was essential to the SOCPAC strategy.²⁰³

4. Important Lessons from Basilan

This section discusses some of the significant accomplishments of Balikatan and the Basilan Model. By all measures, the IA strategy used on Basilan was highly effective in denying ASG terrorists safe haven on Basilan Island and improving GRP legitimacy, security, and the socio-economic situation on Basilan.

a. Operations and Intelligence Fusion and Capacity Building

By the end of Balikatan 2002, there were clear indicators that the Basilan strategy had been effective. Initially, it had taken 15 AFP battalions to establish a secure

¹⁹⁹ Martin interview.

²⁰⁰ Haider interview.

²⁰¹ Wilson, 6.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

environment. By 2004, that number had been reduced to 2 AFP battalions and a small contingent of Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU) and a lightly armed and under-resourced village civil guard service.²⁰⁴ ASG operations on Basilan and throughout the Archipelago had been significantly disrupted by the loss of the island safe haven as well as the ASG sub-leader, Abu Sabaya.²⁰⁵ In August 2007, according to the Congressional Research Service Report, the operation reduced Abu Sayyaf's strength from an estimated 1,000 active fighters to an estimated 200-400 in 2005.²⁰⁶

JTF-510 efforts to build the capacity of the AFP subsequently resulted in improved security on the island.²⁰⁷ SF advisor teams had focused on military skills that improved the AFP's capacity to track and defeat the ASG. The JTF had partnered U.S. advisors at each level of Philippine command from Headquarters, Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), to the Task Group Headquarters and to the AFP battalions.²⁰⁸ U.S.SF advisors also accompanied Philippine units on combat missions but remained with the Battalion Commander of the Philippine unit out of direct enemy contact and in a strictly advisory role.²⁰⁹ Figure 5 outlines the task organization and relationship of the JTF-510 with its AFP counterparts. Red lines denote coordination and synchronization nodes at each level of AFP command to provide advice and assistance.²¹⁰ JTF Comet was the AFP task force headquarters and was supported by the USJTF staff and Civil Military Operations Cell (CMOC) through the Joint Psychological Operations Group.²¹¹ The SF companies or "AOBs" were collocated with the AFP task groups or brigade headquarters.

²⁰⁴ Mossberg interview.

²⁰⁵ The effect of the JTF-510 operations on the ASG was described by MG Wurster when he visited the Naval Postgraduate School to brief the Defense Analysis Department of the operation. He placed particular emphasis on the effect the CMO operations or "Indirect Approach" had on separating the population from the ASG, February 2008.

²⁰⁶ T. Lum, L. Nicksch, *"CRS Report for Congress: The Republic of the Philippines: Background and U.S. Relations,"* Congressional Research Service, Washington DC, August 2007, 9.

²⁰⁷ Wilson, 7.

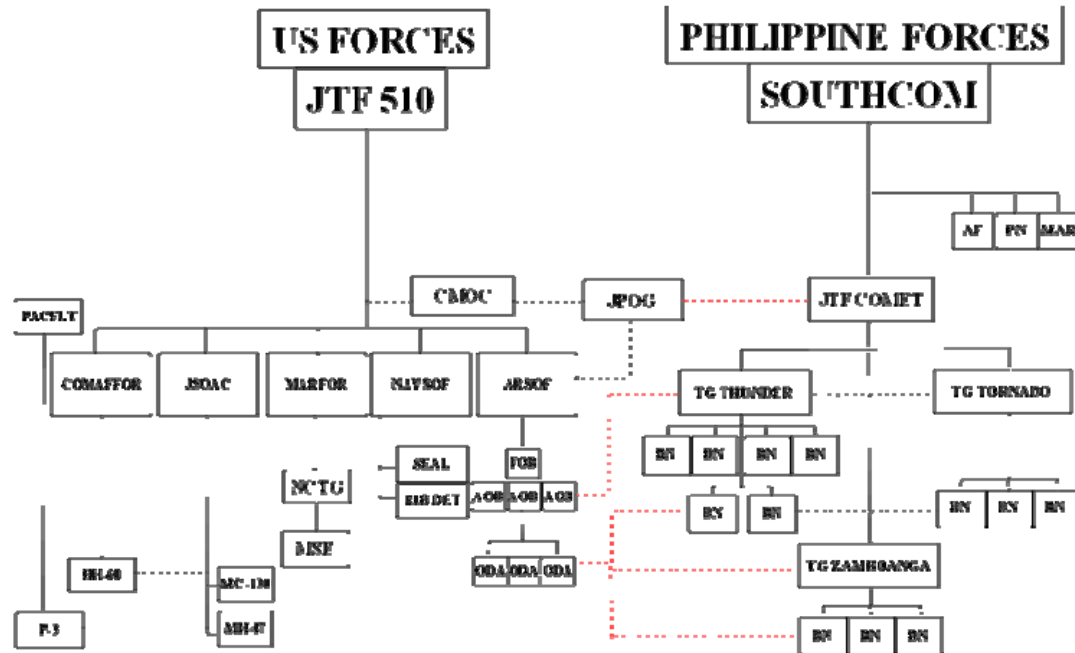
²⁰⁸ Wurster, 2008.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

At the battalion level, typically, one SFODA was assigned to advise and assist each AFP battalion to conduct capacity building as well as to advise and assist during combat operations.²¹²



Legend: ARSOF, Army Special Operations Forces; AOB, Special Forces Company; BN, Battalion; COMAFFOR, Commander, Air Force Forces; CMOC, Civil Military Operations Cell; FOB, Special Forces Battalion Forward Operating Base; JPOG, Joint Psychological Operations Group; JSOAC, Joint Special Operations Aviation Cell; JTF, Joint Task Force; ODA, Army Special Forces Operational Detachment – Alpha; MARFOR, Marine Forces; MSE, Marine Security Element; NAVSOF, Naval Special Operations Forces; NCTG, Naval Construction Task Group; PACFLT, Pacific Fleet; PN, Philippine Navy; RIB DET, Naval Special Boat Detachment equipped with 11 meter rigid inflatable boats; SEAL, U.S. Navy Special Operations Forces, SOUTHCOM, Philippine Southern Command; TG, Task Group.

Figure 8. Task Organization Chart for JTF-510 Depicting Advise and Assist Relationship with AFP Counterparts²¹³

b. CMO and Improving GRP Legitimacy

At the outset of Balikatan 2002, most of the GRP infrastructure and services were located in the Northern, predominantly Christian, part of the island. On the Eastern and Southern sides of the island, which were predominantly Muslim, there were

²¹² Wurster, 2008.

²¹³ Ibid.

few government facilities and a weak or nonexistent government security presence.²¹⁴ By the conclusion of the Balikatan 2002, that situation had changed dramatically. The construction of 80 kilometers of roads, four bridges, and two piers on the island had dual benefits: improved security on the island (allowed PSF forces to respond quickly to emergency situations) and improved economics (made it possible for remote villages — some of them had previously supported the ASG) to get their goods to market.²¹⁵ Completed civil military projects by the end of Balikatan 2002 included 16 schools, 7 medical facilities, 25 fresh water projects, and over 20,000 local patients treated during medical civic action programs.²¹⁶

In 2004, an assessment team visited Basilan and observed several other indicators that the GRP/JSOTF initiatives were continuing to have a significant impact on the security situation.²¹⁷ When compared to the situation in 2002 to 2004, a clear change in the behavior of the local population was evident. Children who lived on Basilan were now attending school in large numbers. Prior to Balikatan 2002, the ASG had closed the islands' schools and hospitals by kidnapping and executing several teachers and nurses.²¹⁸ Children were also observed playing outside. This was something that had stopped during the ASG's reign of terror. Parents brought their children inside at night to get a good night's sleep in preparation for school the next day.²¹⁹ This was a marked change from 2002 when many children did not attend school and often stayed out late into the night.²²⁰

When the assessment team toured the facilities that had been constructed during the Balikatan 2002 exercise, they found that they had been well maintained by the local people.²²¹ The schools, medical facilities, wells, and roads built during Balikatan

²¹⁴ Kaplan, 166.

²¹⁵ Wurster, 2008.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Kaplan, 166.

²¹⁹ Mossberg interview.

²²⁰ Haider interview.

²²¹ Wurster, 2008.

were protected and maintained by the population.²²² In the two years since Balikatan 2002, the ASG had attempted to reestablish a presence on Basilan but the population had refused to support them.²²³ Indications demonstrated that the people of Basilan valued the alternative to supporting the ASG and had chosen instead to support the GRP.²²⁴

The improved security situation on Basilan also had a positive effect on the overall economic conditions on the island. Initial investment had been provided largely by U.S. AID through the Growth with Equity in Mindanao (GEM) program. By 2004, however, Basilan was also experiencing an increase in corporate investment. With the installation of the new road system, farmers and craftsmen were now able to get their goods and products to merchants in the larger towns and cities where they could be processed and exported for sale all over the Philippines.²²⁵ The lucrative rubber plantations were also active once again. This provided much needed revenue and jobs. Refrigerated warehouses and export facilities had also been constructed reestablishing Basilan's once thriving export industry.²²⁶ Philippine corporations also recognized the dramatic change in the security and socio-economic conditions on Basilan. One very visible indicator of this was the construction of a "Jollibee" franchise in Basilan's capital city, Isabela. Jollibee is similar to the McDonalds' franchise in the United States. The decision by the Jollibee Corporation to open a franchise on Basilan was made based not only on an assessment that the environment was secure enough, but also that the population had the disposable income to support the restaurant. This had not been the case two years earlier when Basilan held one of the lowest Human Development Indices (HDI) in the Philippines.²²⁷

²²² Wurster, 2008.

²²³ Mossberg interview.

²²⁴ Wurster, 2008.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ In 2003, Basilan ranked fourth from the bottom in terms of Human Development Index (HDI). This evaluation of Philippine provinces considered not just economic poverty, but also literacy, life expectancy, and other indicators. The other three provinces making up the lowest in HDI were the other 3 provinces of the ARMM, in descending order, Maguindanao, Tawi Tawi, and Sulu. "Philippine Human Development Report 2005," *Peace, Human Security and Human Development in the Philippines 2nd Edition*, Published by the Human Development Network (HDN) in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID); available from http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/nationalreports/asiathepacific/philippines/Philippines_2005_en.pdf, accessed 5 November 2008.

c. Information Operations

The strategic communications or information strategy also had a significant effect on establishing local confidence in the GRP. In his 2002 Summary of Operations, then LTC David Maxwell, commander of 1/1SFG(A), described the U.S. efforts to establish a dialogue with Basilan locals and leaders:

“Initial actions by all elements were to immediately establish rapport both with military counterparts and in the local communities. The reception by the citizens on Basilan was generally excellent. Although at first very apprehensive and wary, the local citizens quickly warmed to the presence of U.S. forces.” “Immediately upon arrival all units began interaction with the local governments (from Provincial to Barangay levels). Many municipalities including the Basilan Provincial Council passed unanimous resolutions supporting the deployment of U.S. troops under the auspices of Exercise Balikatan. Many SF personnel were able to speak at various democratic forums to answer questions about the U.S. mission and intentions. These meetings were instrumental in putting the local government officials as well as the local citizens at ease and turned their opposition or apprehension to support.” “The local governments and citizens of Basilan have embraced the U.S. presence. They have passed unanimous resolutions initially supporting U.S. forces presence and then later requesting extension of the presence past the original six months in the terms of reference. Many officials and citizens describe how peace and order has returned to most areas. Evidence can be seen in such events as the return of civilians to Upper and Lower Mahayhay (a usual ASG stronghold), the return of 1000 displaced civilians in the Sumisip area, and the conduct of celebrations such as the 28th Anniversary of Basilan and the First Anniversary of Isabela as an incorporated city. Numerous outdoor events supposedly could not have been conducted just months ago but now are conducted with confidence. School graduation ceremonies in Sumisip had been suspended for five years but were held again this March (2002) with AFP and U.S. presence. These are indicators that the combined U.S. and AFP presence is improving the lives of the citizens of Basilan.”

The GRP and the U.S. have been successful in the short term in denying the ASG safe haven on Basilan. The challenge now is to maintain security on the Island and continue improvements in governance and socio-economic conditions and infrastructure.

5. Challenges Amid the Success on Basilan

While the ASG had not been completely defeated or driven from the island, most of the ASG leaders had been either killed or forced to flee the island. Those that remained were able to blend into the MILF forces or general population and await another opportunity to revive their lawless activities.

The strategy used by the GRP and JSOTF was successful in making the environment untenable for the ASG, but the lack of good governance practices and poor socio-economic conditions that first created the insurgency still exist on Basilan. If continued improvements are not made in this area, Basilan could once again become a safe haven to the ASG or other groups offering an alternative to poverty. Despite improvements since 2002, Basilan remains one of the poorest provinces in the Philippines.²²⁸ If it hopes to maintain peace there, the Philippine government must continue to expand government infrastructure and encourage investment on Basilan both from corporations and non-governmental organizations.²²⁹ Money alone, however, will not solve the problems in Basilan. According to Rommel Banlaoi, Chairman and Executive Director of the Philippine Institute for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (PIPVTR), 80% of foreign aid given to the Philippines since 2001 has been spent in Mindanao, yet it still includes the poorest provinces in the country.²³⁰ Banlaoi believes that the issue is a lack of good governance and that where poor governance persists, so will terrorism.²³¹

²²⁸ Philippine Human Development Report, 2005.

²²⁹ Banlaoi interview.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid.

One of the greatest challenges for U.S. Special Operations forces to overcome during Balikatan 2002 was the restrictions placed on them by theater and national-level leaders who lacked an understanding of unconventional war.²³² The combatant commander and Secretary of Defense had imposed restrictions on Special Operations forces that severely limited their ability to effectively advise AFP forces prosecuting the fight against the battalion level had been based on a misunderstanding of the Philippine Constitution and poor coordination with the GRP in establishing the limitations of the U.S./RP partnership.²³³ A more effective information strategy would also have helped to counter Philippine media misinterpretation of their Constitution.²³⁴

As AFP operations shifted to Sulu, Tawi-Tawi and Mindanao, the JSOTF was faced with another significant challenge: their ability to continue to provide assistance and capacity-building to AFP forces on Basilan. The JSOTF is constrained in terms of personnel and resources and must prioritize areas where Special Forces detachments are deployed. In July 2007, 14 Philippine Marines were killed and 10 beheaded in an engagement with what was, at first, thought to be the ASG, but later was determined to have most likely been MILF members from the 103rd brigade.²³⁵ This engagement reinforced other assessments that the security situation was deteriorating on Basilan. With the end of Balikatan 2002, the U.S. presence on Basilan had been reduced to occasional short duration Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) events. Concerned that progress made on Basilan was in jeopardy, the U.S. and GRP quickly developed a plan to “re-enter” Basilan. In response to the killing of the 14 Marines, President Arroyo, now confident in the effectiveness of the Indirect Approach, announced to the media that the

²³² D. Maxwell, “Operation Enduring Freedom- Philippines: What Would Sun Tzu Say?” U.S. Army Professional Writing Collection, http://www.army.mil/professionalwriting/volumes/volume2/june_2004/6043.html, accessed 24 April 2008.

²³³ Specifically, U.S. advisors had been restricted to operate no lower than the AFP battalion level. This restriction implied that there was some safety for U.S. advisors with the AFP battalion headquarters. It was based on the misconception by theater and national leaders that there was a definable front line that the battalion headquarters would stay well behind. Repeated requests by Special Operations forces to advise GRP troops at the AFP company level or lower were denied for the first 6 months of Balikatan 2002. Once permission was granted, this new authority still severely restricted the Special Forces’ ability to advise AFP forces effectively in combat.

²³⁴ Banlaoi interview.

²³⁵ Associated Press, “14 Philippine troops killed in clash with rebels,” MSNBC, 11 July 2007, accessed 5 November 2008.

GRP would launch a “humanitarian offensive on Basilan” in retaliation for the beheadings.²³⁶ The JSOTF deployed a small contingent of U.S. Army and Navy Special Operators to the island to assist the AFP in maintaining the progress that had been made there.

The Marine killings highlighted the tenuous ceasefire in effect with the MILF. A breakdown in the ceasefire could be disastrous — not just for Basilan, but for the region as demonstrated by the recent failure of the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) and the subsequent fighting between elements of the MILF and AFP in Mindanao.²³⁷

Another shortcoming of the operation is the failure by the U.S. and the GRP to properly market the Basilan success story to the Filipino people.²³⁸ Rightfully touted as a success story in the United States, among Philippine citizens the operation and its outcome have gone largely unrecognized.²³⁹ Rommel Banlaoi and recently retired Philippine National Police (PNP) Intelligence Chief, General Rodolfo Mendoza, explained that if the story of Basilan success was advertised to the Philippine people, there would be much less suspicion as to what the U.S. military was doing in the Philippines.²⁴⁰ They also believe that if other local government leaders in the Philippines learned of the success of the Indirect Approach, they would likely be more supportive of GRP efforts to improve governance in their home districts.²⁴¹

With the success on Basilan, U.S. and AFP planners now set their sights on Sulu Island and other islands that made up the Sulu Archipelago. With indications that some of

²³⁶ Telephone interview with COL David Maxwell, former Commander JSOTF-P, Oct 2006 to Oct 2007 and Battalion Commander 1-1SFG(A). Col Maxwell was also one of the original planners of the Basilan strategy and commanded the SF soldiers who executed the early SOCPAC initiatives of training the LRC and executing Balikatan 2002. Interview by Maj Hastings.

²³⁷ Interview with Secretary Hermogenes C. Esperon Jr, Presidential Peace Advisor, Office of the President of the Philippines and former Commander of Philippine Armed Forces (2006 -2008) by Majors Hastings and Mortela, 17 September 2008, Manila, PI.

²³⁸ Banlaoi/Mendoza interviews.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

the ASG leadership had escaped Basilan and were now on Sulu, SOCPAC began considering how they would modify the strategy to fit the more complicated and contentious environment on Sulu Island.

C. PHILIPPINE EXPERIENCE IN FIGHTING THE COMMUNISTS: THE BOHOL COIN MODEL

Bohol derived its name from the word “Bool.” Bohol hosted the signing of the treaty of friendship in 1565 between Datu Sikatuna, a native chieftain, and Miguel Lopez de Legaspi of Spain. That event became known as the blood compact or “Sandugo” in Tagalog. To honor this occasion, then Pres. Elpidio Quirino established the Order of Sikatuna, a presidential decoration conferred upon diplomats. By virtue of Act 2711 on 10 March 1917, Bohol became a province and is the 10th largest island of the Philippines.²⁴² Located in central Philippines, the province comprises one city, 47 municipalities, and 1,109 villages which are divided into three congressional districts.²⁴³ It has a land area of 411,726 hectares and a population of 1,101,600 people.²⁴⁴ Recently, one of the counterinsurgency successes in the Philippines was prosecuted in the province of Bohol. The strategy which coincidentally adheres with McCormick’s Diamond Model by building legitimacy on the population became known as the “Bohol model.” Initially, the strategy was not a part of the national strategy, but was soon adopted nationwide. This was due to the innovative programs developed that enabled the Philippine government to regain its legitimacy and to isolate the insurgents from the populace.

²⁴² Overview of the Province of Bohol, www.bohol.gov.ph (Bohol provincial government website), accessed 11 September 2008.

²⁴³ Abe Cerojano, Bohol’s priority: Population management now, progress next (1), GMA News.TV. 18 February 18, [http://www.gmanews.tv/story/80988/Bohols-priority-Population-management-progress-next-\(1\)](http://www.gmanews.tv/story/80988/Bohols-priority-Population-management-progress-next-(1)), accessed 21 October 2008.

²⁴⁴ 302nd Brigade Unit History (Excerpt copy), 2004, on file in the NPS CORE lab database.



Figure 9. Map of Bohol (in Central Philippines)²⁴⁵

1. Relative Deprivation in Bohol

Poverty and hunger fed the insurgency on Bohol. The poor only earn an average of P600 a month (\$15).²⁴⁶ Poverty incidence was high at 53.6 percent in 2000.²⁴⁷ Also at that time, Bohol consistently languished at number 16 among the country's poorest provinces, popularly known as Club 20.²⁴⁸ Relative deprivation is seen as a lack of access to a level of goods and services that are required for meaningful participation in society, a level which can and does change over space and time as circumstances evolve.²⁴⁹ Apart from abject poverty, deprivation in Bohol is widespread due to lack of

²⁴⁵ Map derived from Travel Philippines website, www.travelph.com/resorts/Bohol/images/bohol_map.jpg, accessed 12 September 2008.

²⁴⁶ Avigail Olarte, War and Peace in a Bohol barangay, Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, 1 May 2007, <http://pcij.org/i-report/2007/sevilla.html>, accessed 7 September 2008.

²⁴⁷ Overview of Province of Bohol, 2008.

²⁴⁸ Erico B. Aumentado, Together we can build a greater Bohol, Aumentado reports accomplishment as of 2005, 30 December 2005.

²⁴⁹ Income poverty and inequality in the Philippines, Chapter 3, 33, <http://www.adb.org/Documents/Books/Poverty-in-the-Philippines/chap3.pdf>, accessed 9 September 2008.

employment and livelihood opportunities, non-participation in the political process, injustice, and human rights violations that all facilitated the conditions for insurgent recruitment.²⁵⁰

To help analyze the level of deprivation, Bohol developed the Provincial Development Monitoring System (PDMS). Twelve indicators determine the level of deprivation of basic, social, and other services that a local government unit down to the household level should offer. Here, however, the local is suffering. The 12 poverty indicators are: water source, sanitation, malnutrition, housing, income threshold, land tenure status, school dropouts, child mortality, crime incidence, unemployment, food threshold, and meals threshold.²⁵¹ From these indicators, the Bohol government prioritized the most deprived indicators and matched them with the "expertise" and forte of funders.²⁵²

In the case of hinterland barangay San Vicente in Ubay municipality, for example, the village chief reported that during his first year in office there was no water, no electricity, and that economic hardships were due to poor agricultural yield. According to him, people in the barangay were forced to join the revolutionary movement because of poverty and the absence of any government intervention in the form of basic social services. These, he added, were even aggravated by the rebels' promise of economic benefits if the people joined the movement.²⁵³

Amid the poverty afflicting the province, the people kept on working themselves to the bone, but nothing happened. Frustration developed and, through the years,

²⁵⁰ Military force sans anti-poverty component won't solve insurgency problem – Aumentado, National Defense, 22 August, 2007, <http://www.gov.ph/news/default.asp?i=18659>, accessed 9 September 2008.

²⁵¹ Juanito G. Cambangay, "*EcoBUDGET and Poverty Alleviation*," World Congress 2006 for cities and local governments, 27 February - 3 March 2006, Capetown, Africa, http://www.iclei-europe.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ITC/worldcongress2006/programme/SM1_Cambangay_Juanito.pdf, accessed 10 September 2008.

²⁵² Freeing Bohol from poverty? <http://onlyinphilippines.blogspot.com/2008/10/freeing-bohol-from-poverty-how-about.html>, accessed 21 October 2008.

²⁵³ Eli C. Dalumpines, "Government's 'left hand' approach vs. insurgency yields positive results," PIA Press Release, 22 August 2007, <http://pia.gov.ph/?m=12&sec=reader&rp=9&fi=p070822.htm&no=84&date=08/22/2007>, accessed 20 September 2008.

hopelessness.²⁵⁴ The government is perceived to be incapable of providing their needs, such as essential services and security. This lack of legitimacy provided the conditions ripe for recruitment by the communists. They also magnified the people's grievances and dissatisfaction of the government. As a result, in early 2002, there were about 283 armed men organized into four fronts in the province. About three of every ten villages in Bohol became hotbeds for conflict.²⁵⁵ Subsequently, the local communists launched violent attacks against government forces and facilities. They also conducted massive extortion on businesses and organized a propaganda campaign to discredit the government.²⁵⁶

2. Development of the Bohol Strategy

According to Erico Aumentado, the governor of Bohol, "all poverty reduction efforts are tied in with Peace and Development efforts. Poverty breeds unrest, and to address insurgency, one must first address poverty and deprivation."²⁵⁷ Anchored on this belief, in 1998, the Bohol local government initiated poverty alleviation programs in the province. As such, the programs would be perceived as anti-insurgency solutions rather than poverty reduction.²⁵⁸ Subsequently, in July 2001, the Bohol government created the Bohol Poverty Reduction Program to address the worsening situation.²⁵⁹ It was a crisis of some sort that provided the Bohol leaders an opportune time to build consensus. They knew that military intervention alone would not solve the communist insurgency problem.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁴ Avigail M. Olarte, "War and peace in a Bohol barangay," Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, 1 May 2007, <http://pcij.org/i-report//2007/sevilla.html>, accessed 11 October 2008.

²⁵⁵ Erico B. Aumentado, Poverty Reduction for Peace and Development: The Bohol Initiatives, A Paper Presented during the Local Peace and Security Assembly in Tagbilaran City, 23 August 2007, <http://www.bohol.gov.ph/LPSA.html>, accessed 10 October 2008.

²⁵⁶ Situation Report in Bohol (2001-2005), Armed Forces of the Philippines.

²⁵⁷ Erico Aumentado, Sharing Bohol's Official development assistance (ODA) experience, Tagbilaran City, 23 November 2006.

²⁵⁸ Michael Canares, Achieving "Peace" Through Poverty Reduction: Evidence from the Philippines, <http://www.peace-building.de/12-0-Panel-6-Transforming-Local-Practices-in-the-Wake-of-Conflict.html>, accessed on 20 October 2008.

²⁵⁹ Cerojano, Bohol's priority: Population management now, progress next.

²⁶⁰ Aumentado, 2007.

The first situation map that became the basis for the strategy coincidentally was an insurgency map depicting the level of communist influence in the country side. Like other poorer provinces, Bohol put up an innovative Local Peace Reduction Action Plan. This tracked the areas needing immediate government intercession and allowed the province to focus on the 41 insurgency-influenced barangays in 20 towns within the CPP/NPA/NDF's four guerilla fronts.²⁶¹

The collaborative approach in waging a war versus the evils of communism gave birth to Team Bohol: all government units and agencies shared and took part by integrating in their respective plans, peace-promoting, and conflict-sensitive programs and projects. As part of the strategy on building alliances and bridges in poverty reduction and anti-insurgency drives, they were also supported by the private sector and churches of various denominations.²⁶²

Resources to support the programs came from both internal and external sources. Led by the church and the military authorities who embodied the peace culture, the local government channeled development funds into conflict-affected areas in far-flung barangays to regain government presence. About P100M has been taken from the development funds to leverage for foreign funding from 2002 to the present.²⁶³ This strategy was called "counterparting."²⁶⁴ Bohol has to expend resources, too, and not rely purely on external support.

Bohol thrives on agriculture and eco-tourism. Thus, boosting these industries was the challenge. Since Bohol was then overflowing with economic potentials, the provincial government worked for peace and development to ease poverty and put the insurgents out of "business." They formed the Bohol Poverty Reduction Management Office and

²⁶¹ Rey Anthony Chiu, Commentary: Bohol poverty reduction is key to insurgency solution, PIA Press Release, 18 August 2007, <http://www.pia.gov.ph/?m=12&r=R07&y=08&mo=11&fi=p070818.htm&no=07>, accessed 14 September 2008.

²⁶² Aumentado, 2007.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Sharing Bohol's ODA Experience (By Gov. Erico B. Aumentado, National President, League of Provinces of the Philippines & Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines), Keynote Address delivered before the Philippines Development Forum on Enhancing Cooperation and Management of Official Development Assistance (ODA) by LGUs, Bohol Tropics Resort, Tagbilaran City, 23 November 2006, 5.

designated community development workers in conflict areas that were once a no man's land for sponsors of the Official Development Assistance projects. Under the program alone, they channeled its 20% development fund, amounting to P531.2 million, to deal with poverty.²⁶⁵

The approach to poverty reduction is strategic. It is further guided by Bohol's new focus towards economic growth through Aumentado's Ten-Point Agenda: agriculture, tourism, infrastructure, managing population growth, improving health and social well-being, attaining environmental sustainability, expanding economic opportunities, fostering creativity, peace and development in the communities, and better governance.²⁶⁶

3. The Diamond Model in Bohol

Congruent with McCormick's model that emphasizes the value of building legitimacy on the population, Galula argues that the key terrain in an insurgency is not a physical space, but the political loyalty of the people who inhabit that space.²⁶⁷ In the case of Bohol, re-establishing legitimacy required that the people be actively involved from the planning to the implementation of programs. Recognizing that the problem is multi-faceted, the population became the anchor on all decisions to ensure a solid political will that was built on consensus. Relative to this, the Bohol government employed the strategies of alliance building, convergence, community organizing, capability building, and reinvigorating the collective spirit and self-reliance.²⁶⁸ Due to this broad representation of the people and massive consultations, the policies and programs generated support this consensus.

To further empower the people, community organizations were used to facilitate the needs of the populace and, thus, further building the people's trust in the government.

²⁶⁵ Cerojano, Bohol's priority: population management now, progress next.

²⁶⁶ Freeing Bohol from poverty? October 21, 2008, <http://onlyinphilippines.blogspot.com/2008/10/freeing-bohol-from-poverty-how-about.html>, accessed 28 August 2008.

²⁶⁷ Galula, David, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, Praeger Security International, Westport, Connecticut, 2006, ix.

²⁶⁸ Bohol's success vs. insurgency a model for other regions to emulate – PGMA, National Defense, 24 August 2007, <http://www.gov.ph/news/?i=18673>, accessed 24 October 2008.

The whole strategy is founded on the “concept of ownership”, i.e., since the people have a stake in the issues, their involvement is a must. In a sense, the Bohol Model became a human security framework that leads to people-centered development. Cagoco-Guiam says that when the process of development is centered on the people, such development is just, sustainable, inclusive, and authentic.²⁶⁹ She further stresses that such a vision of development is empowering, rather than enslaving. It respects the people’s inherent capacities to make their own decisions and choices to achieve a quality of life consistent with their own aspirations. Four aspects of people participation include informing, meeting, consulting, and dialoguing.²⁷⁰

Apart from the concept of ownership, Bohol improved governance through the delivery of essential services and respect to basic rights of the people. Specifically, Bohol put up an innovative Local Peace Reduction Action Plan which focused on the 41 insurgency — influenced barangays. Led by the church and the military authorities who had the culture for peace, the local government channeled development funds into these conflict-affected barangays to regain government presence.²⁷¹ The Bohol government reported in 2005 that through its trailblazing program on poverty, peace, and development, 16,928 new jobs were said to have been created; child malnutrition was addressed; and access to sanitary toilets, potable water sources, and education increased.²⁷² The implementation of several projects supported by local and national governments and international donors is testament to the commitment of the state to address the problems in Bohol. These mega projects which are strategic to Bohol’s economic development include the (a) The P2.1 billion upgraded Leyte-Bohol Interconnection Project Phase II (LBIP II) which can generate an additional 80 megawatts to complete the 100 megawatts power generation for Bohol, (b) the P2.380

²⁶⁹ Rufa Cagoco-Guiam, *Toward a people-centered peace and development framework: some lessons from conflict-affected communities in Mindanao*, Tambara (University journal of the Ateneo de Davao University), Volume 24, November 2007, 83.

²⁷⁰ Simon Fisher, Abdi Dekha Ibrahim, Jawed Ludin, Richard Smith, Steve Williams, and Sue Williams, 2000. *Working with conflict; Skills and strategies for action*, Birmingham, UK; Zed Books Ltd.

²⁷¹ Philippine Information Agency press release (11 August 2007), *Bohol poverty reduction program solves insurgency*.

²⁷² Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, *War and peace in a Bohol barangay*, 01 May 2007.

billion Bohol Irrigation Project Stage II (BHIP II) that can irrigate 5,300 hectares of Riceland, and (c) the P1.5 billion Bohol Circumferential Road Improvement Project Phase II (BCRIP II).²⁷³

Bohol also modified the military's Special Operations teams (SOT) by including civilian community organizers and immersing them in areas to immediately facilitate the needs of the communities.²⁷⁴ The goal was to regain the trust and confidence in government. As a non-kinetic approach, the Special Operations Team (SOT) concept supports the Philippines' Strategy of Holistic Approach (SHA). It serves as the main COIN tool. The strategy entails the immersion of soldiers in communist-influenced communities to conduct wide-ranging activities designed to address people's grievances. It also achieves military objectives to dismantle enemy politico-military structure, set up counter organizations, and introduce developmental projects.²⁷⁵ The new SOT activities included the monthly civic-action activities, quick response teams, fact finding missions, and the local monitoring board for the implementation of the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL).

To address the problem of non-participation on substantial issues affecting the province, the local government of Bohol also provided the venue for the discussion of issues to mitigate the grievances and the perceived political repression. Through the Local Peace Forum (LPF), dialogues are being held to thresh-out local issues and concerns from both the leftist groups and the government side.²⁷⁶ This initiative is in line with the presidential directive providing for the mechanics and operational structure for

²⁷³ Erico Aumentado (Governor, Bohol), Rising above the challenges, 2002 State of the Province Address, 2 January 2002.

²⁷⁴ Armed Forces of the Philippines, "Success Stories on Combat and CMO," Manila, 10 April 2008, <http://www.afp.mil.ph/0/articles/cmo.php>, accessed 14 April 2008.

²⁷⁵ Adolfo Espuelas, (Major, Philippine Army), Examining the capacity of the Philippine Army's Enlisted Corps to accomplish the government's counterinsurgency strategy: sharpening the tool, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, U.S.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

the localization of peace efforts to address the communist insurgency.²⁷⁷ The purpose is to enable the rebels to participate in the democratic process of peace and development in the community.

Other projects in Bohol convey the message that the government cares for the welfare of the populace. These include programs for the rehabilitation and reintegration of rebel returnees to enable them to become partners for reforms. To date, there are 185 accounted rebel returnees organized into the cooperatives and farmers associations who are supported by the government in terms of housing, cooperatives, and livelihood training.²⁷⁸ Furthermore, to better propagate social justice, the government facilitated the deployment of fact-finding missions immediately after receipt of reports of insurgency-related incidents that involve government troops and the local communist movement. In addition, the provincial government provided assistance to the people in the prosecution of cases against violators. It also provided for the defense of the law enforcers when they are charged of offenses relating to the performance of their duties.²⁷⁹ In contrast to previous insurgency models, the military in Bohol notably performed the support role.²⁸⁰ As such, apart from the military providing security, it was involved in non-traditional missions. This included immersion into the population through dialogues and information patrols to build legitimacy for the government. This contrasted combat operations that result in human rights' violations and collateral damages on the civilian population.²⁸¹

The need to inform the public about the government's programs and the progress of their implementation, as well as the importance of enlightening the people on the nature of the communist struggle, are essential components of the Bohol strategy. In terms of information operations (IO), the local government also launched a massive media campaign to increase public awareness with focus on the extortion attempts of the

²⁷⁷ Executive Order # 115, 21 June 1999 (taken from *Milestones: Policy Journey to Peace* published in 2006 by the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process).

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Aumentado, 2007.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

insurgents. ²⁸² To be more credible and effective, the local government formed a speaker's bureau composed of former rebels and militants who went from one village to another to expose the evils of the NPA. ²⁸³ In this case, the IO campaign sought to obtain the support of the local population and its leaders. The emphasis on IO was made possible because the government recognized that IO ensures better control of the AO. It was also made possible because it contributed to a safe and stable environment while showing a clear resolution to subdue the adversary.²⁸⁴ Part of the IO campaign was to expand the development of a culture of peace. For example, the military launched the Provincial Caravan for Peace and Unity. Local government officials, non-government organizations, and other peace-oriented groups in the province of Bohol actively participated. ²⁸⁵

4. The Miracle in Bohol

In just a few years of implementation, the poverty reduction programs generated positive results. This can be gleaned from the generally improved security situation in the province which is marked by substantial and continuing decreases in rebel-sightings and insurgent activities. This is also an increase of rebel returnees alongside a significant decrease in the incidence of poverty. ²⁸⁶ By 2005, Bohol had climbed out of "Club 20" and became the No. 2 best performing province in poverty reduction — from 52.6 percent to 29.2 percent.²⁸⁷ There was a sharp reduction, correspondingly, of the rebel-infested villages — from 305 to 46. The armed NPA members went down from 283 in 2001 to 64 in 2005. ²⁸⁸ And 3 out of 4 fronts in the province were dismantled. ²⁸⁹ More importantly, the people have realized that the government is sincere in helping them out

²⁸² Aumentado, 2007.

²⁸³ Ben Cal, "How to prevent poverty, rebellion," Manila Times, Philippine News Agency, 3 December 2006.

²⁸⁴ Rodriguez Roca Raimundo, Information Operations during counterinsurgency operations: essential option for a limited response, U.S. Army general Staff College, 14 February 2008.

²⁸⁵ 302nd Infantry Brigade History, 3rd Infantry Division, Philippine Army.

²⁸⁶ Michael Canares, Achieving "Peace" Through Poverty Reduction.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Aumentado, 2007.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

of poverty and that the military has a more humane face in the campaign.²⁹⁰ This was a sure formula to bring back trust and confidence in the government and, ultimately, to reduce the conditions that led to relative deprivation and revolutionary consciousness.

In a sense, the efforts of poverty alleviation efforts and strategy paid well. In 2003, Bohol became a first class province and was listed as the 34th richest province in the Philippines. In addition, the insurgents were hardly making a dent. A Bohol survey last year showed that 26% in the province say that their lives would further improve in the next 12 months. Eight out of every 10 Boholanos (84%) have their own houses. As many as 63% own lots. Eight out of every 10 households enjoy electricity; 55% have running water; 67 have TV sets; and 80% own radios. Smooth roads, clean environs, and generally smiling Boholanos would greet visitors on the island.²⁹¹ An anonymous email sent to the Philippine Information Agency tells about the improved security environment in Bohol:

I'm from Bohol and would like to say that I do not want to see what was happening in the 1980's when the peak of insurgency - more number of NPA elements- was high. This time, my fear of military-NPA encounters subsided. At least, I could say, we have peace time. Unlike before, frequent presence of NPAs in our barangay made me think that clashes is more-likely to happen. I know there are still few of them here but it's not like before. On the other aspect, influx of foreign tourists in Bohol is an international sign of a favorable peace situation in the province.²⁹²

On the national front, the success of the strategy in Bohol is being replicated in other areas heavily influenced by the communist insurgents. Based on national combat statistics, the number of the CPP/NPA/NDF guerilla fronts, which peaked in 2005 at 107 fronts and 100 in December 2006, has been scaled down to only 67 fronts. The strength of the NPA is down to 5,470. Compared to their estimated numbers in 2001, this is less

²⁹⁰ Aumentado, 2007.

²⁹¹ Rey Anthony Chiu, Commentary: Bohol poverty reduction is key to insurgency solution, PIA Press Release, 18 August 2007, <http://www.pia.gov.ph/?m=12&r=R07&y=08&mo=11&fi=p070818.htm&no=07>, accessed 6 October 2008.

²⁹² Ibid.

than half.²⁹³ Similarly, their influence is waning: their presence is seen in only 1,615 barangays or 3.8% of the country's 41,995 barangays.²⁹⁴

So the questions now are: How did Bohol quell the threat of communist insurgency in so short a period? What were the essential features of the Bohol approach? Aumentado attributed the success of Bohol's anti-NPA campaign to carefully crafted programs on poverty-alleviation, social justice, government social services, and efficient governance.²⁹⁵ Through these programs, the Bohol, as well as the national government, slowly built their legitimacy in the local population. This is the substance of the Diamond Model. To show that the government cares for its people and that its presence is felt at the grassroots, the local government prioritized its efforts according to the basic needs of the people. This includes roads, electricity, water, health facilities, jobs and security as part of a people-centered framework to address poverty and insurgency simultaneously. While poverty is not yet totally eradicated, re-establishing governance and making the government accessible to its population, diminishing the insurgent's appeal, reducing the perception of deprivation, and decreasing the conditions that breed revolutionary consciousness have regained the people's trust in the government.

Notably, there is limited involvement of the U.S. in Bohol. In 2002, Secretary of State Powell placed the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its military wing, the New People's Army (NPA), on the U.S. top list of terrorist organizations (since the NPA has committed terrorist acts in its 39-year history), but it is purely a domestic organization without an international terrorist operation. The communists, however, receive foreign financial support so their placement on the terrorist list is intended to dry up the public and private foreign funding for the NPA insurgency. Sources in the United States indicate that Secretary Powell took the step in response to evidence of drug

²⁹³ James Mananghaya, "Yano takes over as AFP chief; Esperon says mission accomplished," Philippine Star news article, 13 May 2008.

²⁹⁴ Alexander Yano (Chief of staff of the AFP), Sustaining gains in internal security (Excerpts from a speech he delivered before the Manila Overseas Press Club) 8 July 2008, ABS CBN News Online.

²⁹⁵ Office of the Press Secretary, Bohol's success vs. insurgency a model for other regions to emulate – PGMA, 24 August 2007, <http://www.news.ops.gov.ph/archives2007/aug24.htm#Bohols%20success>, accessed 23 September 2008.

trafficking and money laundering by the NPA.²⁹⁶ Thus, the U.S. support in Bohol came in the form of U.S.AID funds and assistance in some projects.

5. Important Lessons from Bohol

While the conditions in Mindanao may be a different, a number of lessons can be picked up on how the indirect approach against the CPP/NPA/NDF was prosecuted in the context of insurgency in Bohol. The key to the success in Bohol is “ownership.” This sense of ownership can be made at the outset during the ‘shaping phase’ by initiating collective planning among all the stakeholders and ensuring collaborative task-organizing.²⁹⁷ If one pools all the stakeholders together to have a say in resolving their problems, there is no reason not to have legitimacy. Unlike a unilateral decision, involving all sectors of society that have stakes in the problem makes a case for a highly popular solution. In short, to build consensus and legitimacy, convergence with all sectors of society is important. Any solution should reflect the will of the populace. Enhanced interagency collaboration also facilitated the integration of decisions and the prosecution of essential programs in the whole province.

General Benjamin Dolorfino, Commandant of the Philippine Marines, believes that the government “should not impose solutions; it should work with the stakeholders.”²⁹⁸ A priority effort should be to build the trust of the population. At the outset, winning the hearts and minds of the people would appear so farfetched, but just building the people’s trust is do-able. Colonel Baker says that a major IO goal at the tactical and operational levels is getting the citizens in your AO to have trust and

²⁹⁶ Michael Billington, “U.S. utopians move in on the Philippines,” *Executive Intelligence Review*, 30 August 2002 issue, <http://www.larouchepub.com/other/2002/2933philippines.html>, accessed 9 October 2008.

²⁹⁷ NISP’s Operational Methodology, Handbook on the Handover Concept, Northern Command, Armed Forces of the Philippines, April 2008.

²⁹⁸ Major General Benjamin Dolorfino, Commandant, Philippine Marines (Interviewed by the authors on 19 September 2008, at the headquarters of the Philippine Marines in Fort Bonifacio, Makati City, Philippines).

confidence in you.²⁹⁹ Since people often begin to distrust in the military, it is imperative that the objective in any strategy is how to regain their trust.

It is a common knowledge that poverty and underdevelopment can lead to rebellion. In cases where it does, the best way to combat insurgency and rebellion “lies with implementing a sustained economic development program.” This would not only undermine the civilian support base of the insurgents, but would also remove both groups’ *raison d’être*.³⁰⁰ Further, the needs of the populace should be addressed — human rights, legal assistance, freedom to express grievances, and the need to participate in the community. Moreover, the needs of the insurgents should be addressed by helping rebel returnees to integrate into society. To prevent repression and human rights violations due to indiscriminate application of force, the military should be low key. The local government units and leaders in Mindanao can learn their lessons from Bohol, i.e., provide mechanisms to talk peace whether through peace negotiations or forums where the stakeholders communicate their solutions to reduce violence and to resolve the conflict. Once an armed group has been decimated, sustaining gains in a conflict should not cease. As long as the grievances stemming from relative deprivation and the issues that fuel revolutionary consciousness remain, any government should not stop and prematurely declare victory.

Further, there is a need to have an informed, knowledgeable population. The information must change people’s perceptions and beliefs and drive them into action. A sustained IO campaign anchored on truthful reporting of everything that the people need to know can build trust and legitimacy.

6. Challenges Amid the Success on Bohol

Comparing data on insurgency and deprivation concludes that not all areas where poverty incidence was high were affected by insurgency. For example, CP Garcia, the island municipality, was not identified as an insurgency area and it is the poorest

²⁹⁹ Ralph O. Baker (Colonel, U.S. Army). “The Decisive Weapon: A Brigade Combat Team Commander’s Perspective on Information Operations” (*Military Review*, May-June 2006), 20.

³⁰⁰ AFP’s participation in development (Sourced from the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, J3).

municipality in the island. A further analysis of available data in Bohol states that the same municipalities remained poor from 2001 to 2004. Given that poverty had been reduced, there is a possibility that the poorest individuals could have improved within this period. On the other hand, there is high probability that improvements in the province's poverty condition were not caused by improvements in the quality of life for those on the bottom rung, but by improvements in the lives of individuals already leading a better quality of life.³⁰¹

It may be too early to consider success in Bohol amid the possibility of the resurgence of insurgent activity in the island province. General Rodolfo Mendoza, one of the COIN and terrorism experts in the Philippines, assesses that the Bohol model was executed at a time when there was a leadership crisis in the Central Visayas Regional Party Committee. He says it is easier to win when the enemy is in shambles or disarray.³⁰²

Rommel Banlaoi echoes almost the same findings on the situation in Bohol. He notes that there is currently an attempt by the communists in the province to recover lost grounds, mass bases, and support networks. The recovery effort pursued by the enemy can be gleaned by the increase in their urban political, ideological, and organizational works.³⁰³ On the part of the government, this is a trigger or sufficient warning not to lower its guard. Rather, it should vigorously pursue efforts to address the roots of insurgency.

Along this line, the ability of the government to sustain its gains is of paramount concern. In the 1990s, amid its success at diminishing not only the influence, but also the politico-military infrastructure of the communists, the Philippine government terminated its Lambat Bitag campaign. It was the anchor of its strategy to move closer to winning

³⁰¹ Miko Canares, "Is Bohol really a model for peace and development," <http://www.boholanalysis.com/2007/09/is-bohol-really-model-for-peace-and.html>, accessed 20 October 2008.

³⁰² General Rodolfo Mendoza, former Intelligence Chief of the Philippine National Police interviewed by the authors in Camp Aguinaldo in 17 September 2008.

³⁰³ Rommel Banlaoi, Executive Director, Philippine Institute for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, Interviewed by Major's Hastings and Mortela on 15 September 2008 in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, Philippines.

the insurgency. Instead, it shifted its focus on external defense and towards the Moro conflict.³⁰⁴ This strategic failure allowed the enemy again to recover from the ravine of defeat and enhance its mass base-building and urban works. To the detriment of the government, it must contend later with a revitalized enemy that has learned hard lessons from its almost eventual defeat. Their rectification campaign proved to be vital in their recovery.

In addition, the case of solving the insurgency in Bohol could have been facilitated due to the unity of Boholanos. On that island, the people are more homogenous compared to the people in Mindanao who are of the tri-people — Christians, Muslims, and the indigenous tribes. Thus, transporting the entire template from Bohol to Mindanao would meet the challenge of building consensus on groups with different language, culture, beliefs, and political aspirations.

Currently, the Local Government Units (LGUs) are required to put up the equivalent counterpart fund for developmental projects, such as water, power, farm-to-market roads, small irrigation projects, housing, livelihood, job generation, health and sanitation, reforestation, sanitary landfill, and school buildings — amongst others. The LGUs' counterpart fund is embedded in their 2006 budgets. At present, the Provincial Development Fund alone cannot sustain the program: as more areas are now cleared of insurgents and, thus, more job generation and livelihoods have to be placed to prevent the return of the NPA-CPP-NDF forces and mass base. Resourcing the programs is critical. Thus, counterpart funds should be committed to allow sustainment operations to continue.³⁰⁵

³⁰⁴ Peace, Human Security and Human Development in the Philippines, Philippine Human Development Report 2005, Human Development Network, 86.

³⁰⁵ June S. Blanco, "ULAP to junk in '07 senators who scrap Kilos A, Kalayaan funds in GAA 2006," 30 May 2006, <http://www.bohol.gov.ph/news/news.php?newsid=246>, accessed 11 October 2008.

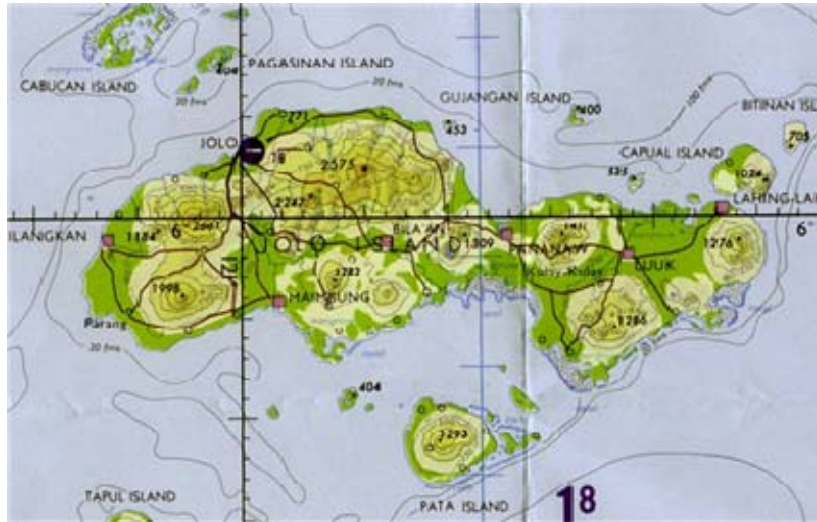


Figure 10. Map of Sulu Island³⁰⁶

D. SULU

1. The Road to Sulu

With the completion of Balikatan 2002, Basilan was enjoying peace and security it had not experienced in several years. To its south, however, the island of Sulu was heating up. ASG leader, Khadaffy Janjalani, along with several other ASG and JI members, escaped Basilan pursued by the AFP and fled to Sulu.

Sulu is comprised of 18 municipalities with more than 400 islands and islets stretching from the tip of Zamboanga to Borneo. The city of Jolo serves as its capital. The Tausug, the most populous tribe in the province, constitutes more than 85% of its population of 619,668.³⁰⁷ The Tausug tribe was generally viewed as a warrior culture and considered more aggressive than their Yakan neighbors on Basilan. On Sulu, the strength and importance of a man was based originally on his sword, but with the advent of firearms this was quickly replaced by the size or number of his guns.³⁰⁸ Janjalani was from the Yakan tribe of Basilan as were many of the other ASG members, but there were

³⁰⁶ Map provided by Major Stan Lane (pseudonym), 20 July 2008.

³⁰⁷ Philippine Marine Corp, Sulu Area Study, Marine Research and Coordination Center, PI Marine Corps, Zamboanga City, May 2003, 68.

³⁰⁸ Wilson interview.

also Tausug members. One of these members, former MNLF commander, Radullan Sahiron, is long time ASG member. In 2003, Sahiron invited the ASG leader and his band of criminals to Sulu and offered them safe haven. With the arrival of Janjalani and two JI bomb makers, Dulmatin and Umar Patek, the Sulu branch of the ASG became much more deadly. Their presence was felt almost immediately by the population. Indications of ASG presence in Central Mindanao also drew the attention of the AFP and U.S. forces.³⁰⁹ Although the original mission of the JTF-510 had been accomplished with the end of Balikatan 2002, a small U.S. contingent remained in the Southern Philippines. In late 2002, at the request of the GRP and with an operational extension signed by the U.S. Defense Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, the U.S. task force began planning for operations in both Central Mindanao and on Sulu Island.³¹⁰ JTF-510 officially ended and the U.S. forces in the Southern Philippines became known as a SOUTHCOM Liaison Element (SLE).³¹¹ The GRP gave the U.S. presence legal authority by creating “Project Bayanihan.” This extended the authorization of U.S. assistance for one year.³¹²

2. Operation Layas Pugad

The U.S. was now legally authorized to accept AFP requests to assist in the execution of an offensive operation in Central Mindanao. This was called Layas Pugad or “Running from the Nest.”³¹³ The August 2007 CRS Report to Congress states that there existed “indications of growing cooperation between Abu Sayyaf, several major MILF commands, and elements of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) on Mindanao.” JI, the Southeast Asian Muslim terrorist organization with ties to Al Qaeda, appeared to have made Mindanao a primary base for building up its cadre of terrorists. Moreover, this cooperation among the three groups appeared to be transforming Mindanao into a significant base of operations — rather than simply a training site. These operations appeared to increasingly target the

³⁰⁹ Mossberg interview.

³¹⁰ CRS Report to Congress, August 2007.

³¹¹ Interview with LTC Don Hilt (pseudonym), Former JSOTF J3, Nov. 2004 - May 2005, by Major Hastings, 13 September 2008, Camp Aguinaldo, Manila, PI.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Ibid.

Philippines for terrorist attacks.³¹⁴ This operation was conducted at great political risk to the Philippine Government for it was simultaneously conducting peace negotiations with the MILF.³¹⁵

The objective of this operation was to deny the ASG safe haven in Central Mindanao — specifically, in the Maguindanao region East of Cotabato known as the Liguasan Marsh.³¹⁶ This 2004 operation included many of the AFP forces recently trained and equipped through JTF-510 and the U.S. Security Assistance funding.³¹⁷ The Task Force included 15 Philippine Naval vessels; 9 battalions of the Philippine 6th Infantry Division; 1 Scout Ranger Battalion; and a Philippine Special Forces Company.³¹⁸ The newly-formed Joint Special Operations Group (JSOG) also participated deploying 3 Light Reaction Companies of which the national CT force was trained by 1/1SFG(A).³¹⁹ Supporting the operation were Philippine OV-10s and UH-1H helicopters. Some were equipped with night vision goggles.³²⁰ The U.S. Task Force provided intelligence and communications support to the AFP. This included the employment of U.S. P-3 surveillance aircraft and the deployment of Navy Seal and Special Forces advisors with AFP ground units.³²¹

Layas Pugad ended in July 2005. The operation had been successful in killing several ASG members, but, more importantly, it severely limited the support the MILF would provide to ASG and JI. Once again, the peace negotiation the GRP was conducting with the MILF played an important role in shaping AFP operations. The GRP had been successful in demonstrating its knowledge of MILF support to the ASG; by appealing to the MILF's desire to continue progress towards their desire for ancestral domain rights; and by convincing the MILF to evict the ASG and JI from MILF bases in the Liguasan

³¹⁴ CRS, 9.

³¹⁵ Hilt interview.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Mossberg interview.

³¹⁸ Hilt interview.

³¹⁹ Mossberg interview.

³²⁰ Hilt interview.

³²¹ Ibid.

Marsh.³²² Given only 72 hours by the MILF Central Committee to vacate MILF-held camps, the ASG escaped Mindanao and an AFP dragnet and successfully reached Sulu.³²³ The ASG would soon discover that the U.S. and GRP had anticipated this move and were already taking steps to remove the ASG support base on Sulu.³²⁴

3. Sulu Assessments Begin

Throughout Operation Layas Pugad, JSOTF planners in the Philippines continued to work with the Philippine SOUTHCOM Staff to develop a plan to deploy a Task Force to Sulu Island.³²⁵ The U.S. task force commander, then LTC Gregory Wilson, accompanied by SOUTHCOM Commander, LTG Braganza, met with Ben Loong, the Governor of Sulu, and several other Sulu government leaders. They discussed expanding AFP/U.S. operations to Sulu.³²⁶ Governor Loong told the U.S. and AFP commanders that “what you did on Basilan, I want on Sulu.”³²⁷ Several of the local Sulu leaders expressed concern that the U.S. was only coming to Sulu to search for and steal Japanese gold which was purported by urban legend to be located somewhere on the island or closely off shore.³²⁸ This accusation had been a common theme used by ASG propaganda and was emphatically denied by the AFP and U.S. commanders. Sulu leaders were invited to the SOUTHCOM headquarters at Camp Navarro in Zamboanga City to discuss the objectives of the AFP/U.S. task force. They ultimately agreed to the terms of the U.S. deployment to Sulu.³²⁹ Colonel Wilson also conducted several radio broadcasts on Sulu radio stations. This was part of the first phase of the strategic communications strategy to convince the Sulu population that AFP operations would bring security and prosperity to Sulu Island.³³⁰

³²² Banlaoi and Esperon interviews.

³²³ Wilson interview.

³²⁴ Hilt interview.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Wilson interview.

³²⁷ Wilson interview.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Martin interview.

³³⁰ Ibid.

In May 2005, the first ODA was deployed to Sulu for 10 days to begin an evaluation of the security and socio-economic conditions on the island.³³¹ This early beginning gave the JSOTF the advantage of beginning to diminish the ASG support base nearly three months before ASG leaders returned to Sulu from Mindanao.³³²

The assessments compiled by ODA 123 found significant problems on Sulu.³³³ Indicators showed that there were serious shortfalls in areas, such as availability of medical care, potable water, infrastructure, and education.³³⁴ The assessment also indicated that the indigenous tribe of Sulu, the Tausug, had some distinct differences from the Yakan, the indigenous tribe of Basilan. The Tausug, or “people of the current,” were a proud warrior culture, descended from seafaring people who had come from what is today Indonesia. In more recent times, the Tausug had been implicated in banditry and piracy and had traded in their Kris swords for rifles.³³⁵ In the early 1900s, Sulu had also been the site of heavy fighting between the U.S. Army and Muslim insurgents. Locals remembered this past experience as if it were yesterday. They were bracing for history to repeat itself.³³⁶ Sulu was also home to a large contingent of the MNLF who had fought a major war with the AFP in the 1970s and several other battles as recently as 2001.³³⁷ JSOTF and AFP planners agreed that for Sulu operations to be successful, the MNLF would have to be compelled to remain neutral and deny the ASG support. If the MNLF joined the ASG in fighting the AFP, the island could quickly deteriorate to full-scale war.

The assessments found widespread deprivation and confirmed both GRP and non-governmental organization (NGO) reports of extreme poverty. The assessments did not, however, find signs of organized dissent or other indications of a populace-based uprising developing on Sulu. As on Basilan, analysts did not interpret the population as supporting

³³¹ Martin interview.

³³² Ibid.

³³³ Ibid..

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Maxwell, 2007.

³³⁶ Hilt interview.

³³⁷ Interview with General (Ret) Fortunato Abat, Former commander of AFP forces and Commander of CEMCOM Forces during the 1970s war with the MNLF. He has documented the conflict in a book called, *The Day We Almost Lost Mindanao: The CEMCOM Story*, Manila: SBA Printers, 1993. 37. Interviewed by Majors Hastings and Mortela, 14 September 2008, Camp Aquinaldo, Manila, PI.

the ASG as a result of ideological motivation, but, instead, out of necessity due to the lack of a secure environment and economic opportunity.³³⁸

With the results of the assessments providing significant insight into the dynamics on Sulu, GRP, JSOTF, and SOCPAC planners began developing a strategy for the deployment of AFP and U.S. forces to Sulu Island. Unlike Basilan, where a large influx of USSF conducted capacity-building with AFP units, this offensive would lead with a small contingent of U.S. personnel to conduct civil military operations.³³⁹ This strategy was dictated by the need to counter the common perception on Sulu that U.S. intentions were hostile. This Indirect Approach would demonstrate the intent of the U.S. forces to improve the significant deprivation on Sulu. SOCPAC developed a strategy that consisted of four main objectives: 1) counter the terrorist/insurgency's ability to discredit the GRP; 2) promote the legitimacy of the government by improving their ability to rule effectively and assist them in demonstrating that ability to the people; 3) improve the GRP's ability to target the terrorist groups; and 4) improve the ability of the GRP to demonstrate control and provide a secure and prosperous environment for the population.³⁴⁰ This last objective was recognized as the root of the development of the terrorist and insurgent groups and would require the majority of the operation's resources.

This was the JSOTF-P mission statement for Sulu:

JSOTF-P, in coordination with the U.S. country team, builds capacity and strengthens the Republic of the Philippines security forces to defeat selected terrorist organizations in order to protect Philippine and American citizens and interests from terrorist attack while preserving Philippine sovereignty (Approved by COMSOCPAC on 23 Aug 05).³⁴¹

As the U.S. force made progress in overcoming suspicion and dispelling ASG propaganda, their presence would grow in number until, by October 2005, the task force included 6 ODAs (for mission purposes known as Liaison and Coordination Elements

³³⁸ Wilson interview.

³³⁹ Mossberg interview.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Maxwell, JSOTF-P Newcomer's Brief, 2007.

(LCEs), an SF company to advise and assist the TF Comet headquarters, a contingent of Navy SEALs, and Civil Affairs, engineers and medical personnel to facilitate the focus on CMO.

4. The Diamond Model in Sulu

The COIN model that was developed for Sulu expanded on the Basilan Model and included valuable lessons learned during the previous three years. The strategy included four lines of operation:³⁴²

- PSF Capacity Building: The JSOTF expanded assistance and advice to include not only the AFP, but also Philippine police and other security forces. The goal was to assist them in providing a secure environment for the Sulu residents.
- Targeted CMO: The JSOTF assisted the RP in conducting engineering, medical, dental, veterinarian projects as well as fund and facilitate major projects to improve local quality of life and demonstrate GRP concern for regional citizens.
- Intelligence Operations: Collected, fused, and disseminated timely and accurate intelligence to the right agencies.
- Information Operations (or influence ops): Emphasized the success of GRP efforts in the first 2 lines of operation to change perceptions about GRP legitimacy.

The desired end-state was that “the increased capacity of the PSF in combination with reduced local support to terrorists will deny the enemy sanctuary in Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago as well as the use of vital Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOCS).”³⁴³

In January 2005, an AFP offensive on Sulu, called Operation Shadow, targeted ASG positions on Sulu. It caused significant damage to local homes and infrastructure.³⁴⁴ The affected areas were known safe haven areas for the ASG. AFP and JSOTF planners,

³⁴² Maxwell, JSOTF-P Commander’s Brief, 2007.

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Hilt interview.

supported by the recommendations of President Arroyo, decided that those areas should be the first areas to receive CMO assistance and that AFP/U.S. influence would spread from there. These areas were the municipalities of Indanan, Talipao, and Patikul — also known as the “Tri-border” area.³⁴⁵ The plan was similar to the British “white area” strategy employed during the Malayan Emergency in which counterinsurgent operations were begun in areas with little insurgent activity and gradually expanded to insurgent strongholds.³⁴⁶ The U.S./AFP plan was different: operations began in areas most recently affected by perceived government heavy handedness and expanded to where they had isolated the ASG into small pockets where they could be efficiently removed by PSF forces.³⁴⁷ To the relief of both the AFP and JSOTF, the deployment of U.S. forces to Sulu was warmly received although there was deep suspicion among the locals as to the true goal of U.S. forces.³⁴⁸

The first SFODA (ODA 123) was deployed to Panamao in September 2005 and was followed in October by AOB 110. The latter collocated with TF Comet at Camp Bautista outside of Jolo. Panamao was chosen as the first site for a SFODA because of the support the Panamao people had shown for the GRP the previous January when they assisted the AFP in fighting the MNLF.³⁴⁹ The U.S./GRP hoped to strengthen ties with this municipality which was located adjacent to Patikul, the historic safe haven of Sulu insurgents.

The strategy also included a sophisticated information operations plan. SOCPAC Media and Open Source Team (MOST) began a detailed analysis of media coverage of Sulu and the effect of the U.S. presence.³⁵⁰ SOCPAC also contracted Brand Labs, a civilian market research company, to conduct ethnographic studies and target audience analysis to assist the CA planners in developing an effective IO strategy.³⁵¹ SOCPAC

³⁴⁵ Hilt interview.

³⁴⁶ R. W. Komer, *The Malayan Emergency in Retrospect: Organization of a Successful Counterinsurgency Effort*, Santa Monica: RAND, February 1972, 21.

³⁴⁷ Mossberg interview.

³⁴⁸ Hilt interview.

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

³⁵⁰ Martin interview.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

civil affairs planners also began working closely with the SOUTHCOM Civil Affairs (CA) Unit who would be actually implementing the strategy. The AFP SALAAM (Special Advocacy on Literacy/Livelihood and Advancement for Muslims) Teams³⁵² would play a key role in conducting CMO projects and implementing the information strategy.³⁵³ The JSOTF Military Information Support Team (MIST) was partnered with SALAAM teams at Camp Navarro and on Sulu to assist in developing information themes and products.³⁵⁴ The Information Operations strategy had three distinct phases or goals:

- Phase 1: Separate the population from the foreign terrorists.
- Phase 2: Separate the population from the indigenous terrorists.
- Phase 3: Separate the foreign terrorist from the indigenous terrorists.³⁵⁵

³⁵² SALAAM Teams are Philippine Civil Affairs teams, similar to the SOT teams employed by the AFP in communist areas, developed specifically for employment in Muslim areas. The teams are made up of all Muslim AFP members and often include former MNLF member who have been integrated into the AFP. This concept had been previously employed in communist held areas using previous communist insurgents and was adapted to fit the unique requirements in Mindanao.

³⁵³ Martin interview.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ Mossberg interview.

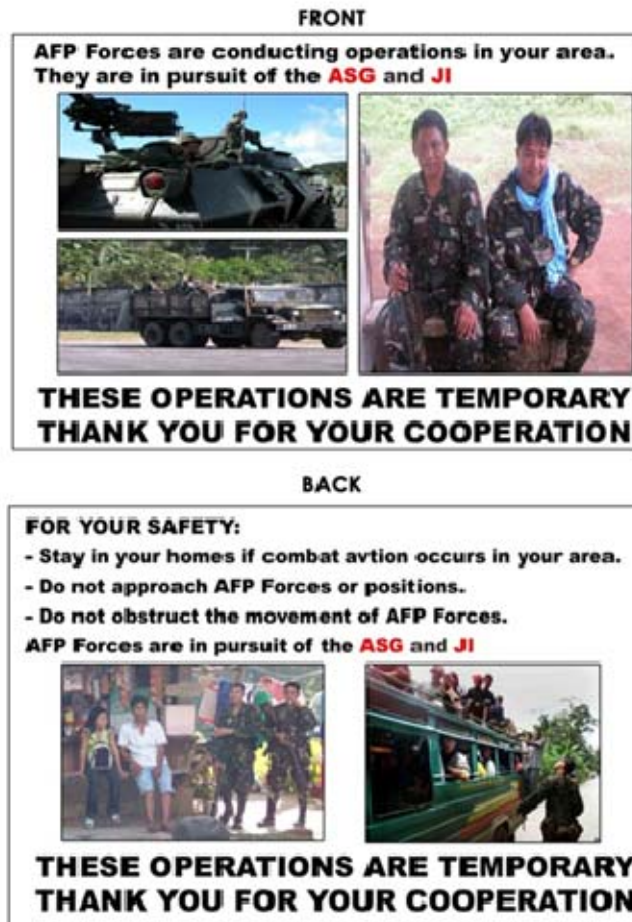


Figure 11. Example of Information Product developed by combined U.S. MIST and AFP CA team. Flyers that were distributed were written in the local dialect.³⁵⁶

SOCAP also expanded the Rewards program for information leading to the capture of designated personnel. While the U.S. Embassy continued to oversee the U.S. State Department Rewards for Justice Program (RFJ), PACOM implemented the recently authorized DoD Rewards Program. This authorized DoD personnel to reward money in return for information on High Value Individuals (HVIs).³⁵⁷ This program had been initiated by Secretary Rumsfeld and greatly streamlined the rewards process. Prior to this

³⁵⁶ MIST products provided by Major Stan Lane (pseudonym), a former team leader of the Civil Affairs detachment on Sulu during Operation Ultimatum.

³⁵⁷ Interview with LTC Jon Guarco, DoD Rewards Program Manager, PACOM J35 War on Terrorism Branch, by Major Hastings, 28 May 2008, PACOM HQs, Camp Smith, HI. Hereafter referred to as the Guarco interview.

program, there was only the RFJ Program which did not allow DoD personnel to dispense the money for information on HVIs.³⁵⁸ The RFJ Program was also slow in paying out with requests taking up to six months to process. Under the DoD Rewards Program, the JSOTF-P Commander was now authorized to award up to \$2500.³⁵⁹ Payouts of \$10,000 could be authorized by the PACOM J3 and rewards up to \$50,000 could be authorized by the PACOM commander.³⁶⁰

In developing the strategy, the AFP/U.S. planners also considered the possibility that the MNLF may support or join the ASG in fighting the AFP. The AFP set out to develop a plan to prevent the MNLF from supporting the ASG or interfering in AFP operations on Sulu.³⁶¹ The GRP was holding the MNLF founding leader, Nur Misuari, in prison in Santa Rosa, Laguna province. The GRP began discussions with him about planned AFP operations on Sulu. The AFP also dispatched Colonel Dolorfino, a Marine Officer, to begin discussions with MG Khaid O. Adjibun, Commander of MNLF forces, on the Western side of Sulu and other MNLF sub-commanders.³⁶² The GRP efforts were successful in convincing Misuari to honor the 1996 GRP/MNLF Peace Agreement. Misuari issued a written directive to the MNLF stating that the MNLF was to “maintain peace and security on the island of Sulu [for] the entire duration of Balikatan Humanitarian Program to be conducted on the island from February 6 to March 6, 2006.”³⁶³ With the MNLF support to the ASG severed — at least the open support —, the AFP was far more likely to be successful in tracking down the ASG/JI. As operations on Sulu progressed, a date for a large military offensive to capture or kill the ASG/JI was set for 1 August 2006.³⁶⁴ The operation, named Operation Ultimatum, presented another challenge for planners in not provoking an MNLF response. In another round of

³⁵⁸ Guarco interview.

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

³⁶¹ Dolorfino interview. Gen. Dolorfino was the lead GRP representative assigned to negotiate with the MNLF. As a native of Sulu, a Muslim and Marine Officer seemed the ideal choice to convince the MNLF that the GRP was interested in honoring the 1996 Peace Agreement.

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ Quote from the letter written by Masuari from prison to MNLF leaders on Sulu. The letter is included as Appendix A.

³⁶⁴ Esperon interview.

negotiations, Col. Dolorfino was able to convince Adjibun to agree to not interfere with AFP operations. In a series of letters, the MNLF agreed that during the AFP offensive to destroy the ASG, the MNLF would not intervene and would remain within an area known as Camp Marang. This camp was protected by a 4000 meter square AFP no-fire zone within which the MNLF and their families would remain.³⁶⁵ Two other MNLF groups also agreed to similar requests by the AFP and occupied no-fire areas within their municipalities.

In October 2005, Col James Linder took command of the JSOTF and “operationalized” the IA strategy on Sulu.³⁶⁶ With the date for Operation Ultimatum looming in the not too distant future, the new JSOTF Commander set priorities for the capacity-building efforts on Sulu. LCEs were to work with their AFP counterparts on improving their capacity to conduct small unit combat operations in the jungles of Sulu.³⁶⁷ With only 10 months until Operation Ultimatum would begin, the AFP and JSOTF had to work effectively to properly shape the environment for the offensive.

JSOTF forces began conducting CMO projects in Jolo City, Patikul, Maimbung, and Panamao. Similar to the strategy on Basilan, they began to expand their influence outward. Ten months later, there remained only small areas in Indanan and Patikul that the AFP/U.S. considered ASG safe havens (Figures 9 and 10).³⁶⁸

³⁶⁵ Personal experience by Major Hastings as a member of the JSOTF staff during the preparations for and execution of Operation Ultimatum.

³⁶⁶ Wilson interview.

³⁶⁷ Mossberg interview.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

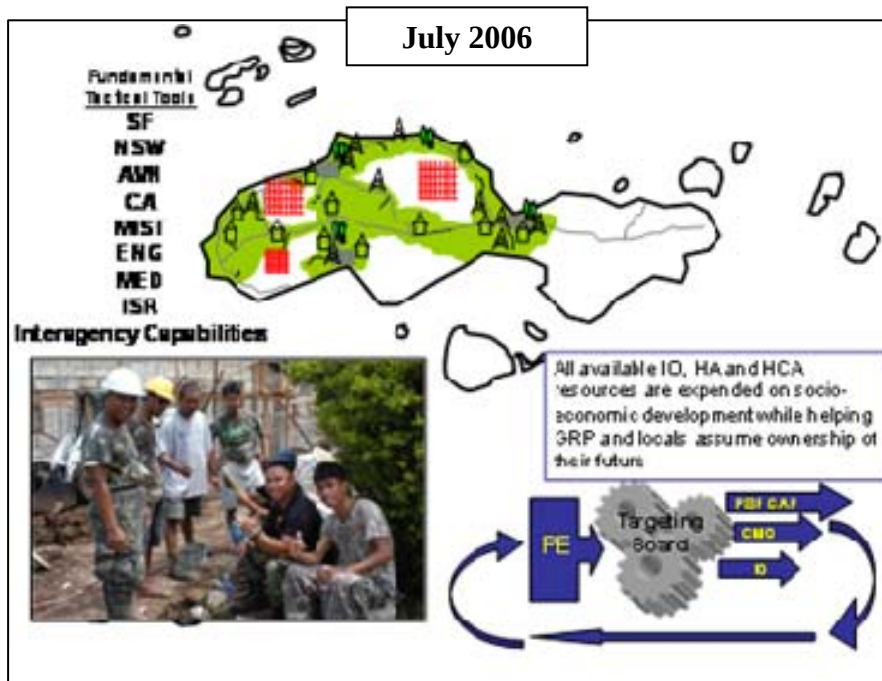
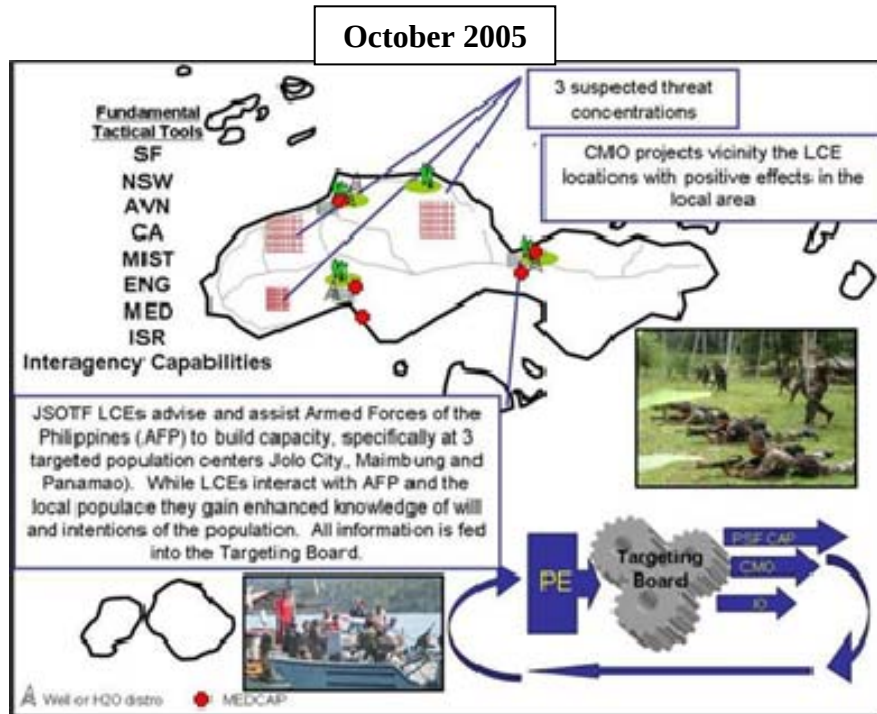


Figure 12. JSOTF diagrams of CMO influence leading up to OP Ultimatum.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁹ Diagrams derived from the 2006 JSOTF-P CDR's Newcomers Brief, August 2006.

As the AFP influence expanded, the ASG began conducting attacks on the Sulu population in an attempt to intimidate them into continued support of the group. This strategy was demonstrated by the ASG bombing of the Sulu Consumer's Cooperative Market in Jolo City in March 2006.³⁷⁰ This bombing and other retaliatory strikes directed against the population illustrated the growing frustration of the ASG over the successful AFP/U.S. operations and the widening fissure growing between the ASG and Sulu population.³⁷¹

5. Important Lessons from Sulu

As was the case on Basilan, the application of the Indirect Approach on Sulu had a profoundly positive effect on the perceived legitimacy of the GRP, security, and the socio-economic conditions on the island. Operation Ultimatum ended in April 2007, just 20 months after the first U.S. forces deployed to the island. The combined efforts of the AFP/JSOTF had transformed the island from a lawless and dangerous ASG safe haven to a relatively safe community where the local population welcomed the presence of the AFP and U.S. forces. The strategy had been successful in addressing the relative deprivation and won the support of the people.

a. Capacity Building

By the end of Operation Ultimatum in April 2007, the AFP units on Sulu were demonstrating a significant improvement in their capacity to provide security and conduct effective counterinsurgency operations against the ASG. When Operation Ultimatum is compared with Operation Shadow, an offensive operation conducted by the AFP in 2005, the significant improvement in capacity is dramatically illustrated.

Operation Shadow was an operation developed by the AFP to destroy ASG HVTs in the area of Mt. Tumatangis, a known safe haven area of the ASG. The operation was proposed and executed in late 2005 just after the arrival of U.S. forces on Sulu Island. With little time for U.S. Special Forces' detachments to conduct Subject

³⁷⁰ U.S. Embassy, "Country Reports on Terrorism, 2007," Manila, PI, 30 April 2007, <http://manila.usembassy.gov/wwwfps26.pdf>, accessed on 8 November 2008.

³⁷¹ Mossberg interview.

Matter Expert Exchanges (SMEEs),³⁷² the local AFP units deployed to seek-out and destroy the ASG HVTs. Due to restrictions on U.S. Forces, Special Forces' detachments were prevented from advising AFP units below battalion level during combat operations. The operation was also executed prior to conducting CMO or other measures to properly prepare the environment and population for AFP operations.³⁷³ The offensive involved artillery and aerial bombardment of areas on Sulu believed to be ASG safe havens and caused significant damage to property as well as the population's approval of the government.³⁷⁴ The AFP operation also experienced significant logistical challenges and after just 12 days, unable to resupply combat units, the AFP returned to their bases and ended the offensive.³⁷⁵

When the results from Operation Shadow are compared with Operation Ultimatum less than one year later and involving the same units, the contrast is dramatic. Ultimatum began on 01 August 2006 and involved nearly 9,000 AFP forces consisting of the AFP units stationed on Sulu and units from the JSOG and Philippine Navy. The plan included LRC and Marine forces conducting simultaneous nighttime amphibious landings at separate locations to strike ASG safe haven sites in Indanan while three battalions of the local AFP brigade struck three other suspected ASG camps. All five targets were to be struck simultaneously. Not only did the AFP achieve this, but they maintained an intensive pursuit operation against the ASG members who escaped the initial assaults for the next 20 months.³⁷⁶ With U.S. assistance, the AFP conducted extensive CMO operations to prepare the population for the AFP offensive by expanding the GRP influence on Sulu. This effectively isolated the ASG from the population's support.

³⁷² SMEE was a special term developed and approved by the U.S. and RP to describe the training that U.S. forces would provide to the AFP units. The term was necessary to soften the perception of U.S. involvement in RP domestic COIN operations and appease legislative opponents to the U.S. involvement. The term was created during negotiations and planning to conduct Balikatan 2002 and became part of subsequent document outlining U.S. involvement in the Southern Philippines.

³⁷³ Mossberg interview.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ Personal experience of Major Hastings as a member of the JSOTF staff during the preparations for and execution of Operation Ultimatum.

The effectiveness of the capacity-building efforts was described by Col David Maxwell in 2008 in his Commander's summary of the OEF-P operation:

The Philippines have had a number of successes over the last year with the decapitation of the ASG leadership and the dispersion of elements because of sustained combat operations. Over the 5 years that this mission has been in operation [describing the full OEF-P mission timeline] the capacity of the AFP has improved in numerous ways, not the least of which is the development of a basic NVG flying capability, joint sustainment operations, integrated air and maritime operations with land operations (two major amphibious landings were conducted at the start of Operation Ultimatum last summer and numerous company size amphibious infiltrations of Army and Marine forces have been conducted from Naval platforms). The ASG in the Sulu Archipelago has been unable to mass forces or conduct sustained bombing operations in the past year. Compare OP Shadow to Ultimatum.

The AFP, while conducting sustained combat operations since 01 AUG 06 in Sulu, has been able to simultaneously conduct integrated Civil Military Operations in order to gain access and influence over the population (and collect information), improve the local conditions and separate the population from the terrorists. The best example of this was this past April [2007] when the rogue commander Javier Malik attacked multiple AFP camps using indirect fires and direct assaults, the local civilian volunteer organizations (CVOs or militias) fought side by side with the government forces. This is the opposite of what occurred in 2005 when the local population supported rebel attacks. Following the unprovoked attacks, the AFP conducted disciplined operations to defeat Malik's forces and one month later the most successful local and provincial elections were held in Sulu. Another indicator of success includes the amount of information received from the local population on terrorist activities and the decapitation of the ASG leadership is a direct result of information from local civilians and informants in the terrorist organizations (with assistance from U.S. technical intelligence).³⁷⁷

Another factor contributing to the success of Operation Ultimatum was the employment of the Philippine Counter Terrorism units (LRCs) and the JSOG staff funded by SOCPAC (through Security Assistance funds) and trained by 1st SFG(A).³⁷⁸ The JSOG played a pivotal role in the success of operations on Sulu. Established in 1999, by

³⁷⁷ Col. D. Maxwell, "Commander's Summary of the Joint Special Operations Task Force Philippines (JSOTF-P)," Ft Bragg, NC, 23 February 2008.

³⁷⁸ Personal experience of Major Hastings as a member of the JSOTF staff during the preparations for and execution of Operation Ultimatum.

2006 JSOG had grown and jointly operated with other special units, such as Scout Ranger battalions, Special Forces battalions, and the Naval Special Operation Units (NAVSOU). The JSOG had not been widely employed on Basilan during Balikatan 2002, but by 2006 and Operation Ultimatum, the Group was prepared to assume the role of lead in the pursuit of ASG elements on Sulu. The JSOG staff was deployed to Sulu to directly support the efforts of the TF Comet commander and was used extensively to prosecute direct action/counter terror operations against HVT targets. The LRCs proved a very efficient CT force when combined with the Military Intelligence Group 9 (MIG-9), the intelligence company attached to WESTMINCOM and supported by U.S. technical intelligence.³⁷⁹

b. CMO and Improving GRP Legitimacy

As the security situation improved on Sulu, emphasis on CMO has increased.³⁸⁰ The wedge driven between the population and the insurgents was widened by providing the population with hope and the opportunity to improve their socio-economic conditions. The CMO and development brought to Sulu by the GRP caused the population and many of the insurgents to reevaluate their goals in life.³⁸¹ As the populace saw clinics and schools opening in their villages and their families benefiting from the new development, they saw an opportunity to improve their situation. Insurgency members also went through a similar reassessment deciding if they would join their families taking advantage of the new opportunities presented by the GRP or rejoin the insurgent movement in the jungle camps high in the hills. Many chose to rejoin their families.³⁸² Eventually, the villagers began turning in those insurgents that remained in the hills in the interest of preserving their new found prosperity. They were confident in the AFP's ability to protect them from insurgent reprisals.³⁸³

³⁷⁹ Personal experience of Major Hastings as a member of the JSOTF staff during the preparations for and execution of Operation Ultimatum.

³⁸⁰ Mossberg interview.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² Ibid.

³⁸³ Ibid..

The success of the CMO approach had not gone unnoticed by the MILF who had begun to conduct their own MEDCAPS and CMO projects in Central Mindanao. In April 2007, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) posted an article on the Central Committee website where they discussed the success of the AFP/U.S. Indirect Approach and called it “more lethal than brute force.”³⁸⁴ Khaled Musa, the deputy chairman of the MILF Committee on Information, made this statement when describing the AFP’s latest approach to the insurgency problem in Mindanao:

This approach had a chilling effect on Moros fighting the government who are less in ideological armor, saying, this was tested during the early years of the MNLF when practically everybody surrendered to the government, if the basis of counting is government statistics.” “It was mainly due to the policy of attraction pursued by the Americans that worked effectively against Moros who were up in arms.

In September 2007, the AFP established the AFP National Development Support Command (NDSC).³⁸⁵ This command was established to centralize government, non-government, and military efforts to conduct civil-military operations. The establishment of the NDSC institutionalized the valuable lessons learned during the Basilan, Bohol, and Sulu. The NDSC is a unified command and has become the Philippine government proponent for CMO, development, and disaster response.³⁸⁶ The NDSC also has operational control of all AFP engineer units as well as the authority to establish task forces to operate in support of regional unified commanders.³⁸⁷ This command will also coordinate the efforts of all Civil Affairs, SOT, and SALAAM teams in the specific region to maximize synchronization of effort.³⁸⁸ The NDSC mission “is to

³⁸⁴ MILF Central Committee website, “Civil-Military Operations more Lethal says MILF.” <http://www.luwaran.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=249>, accessed 15 July 2008.

³⁸⁵ Manuscript of the briefing by LTG Buenaflor establishing the NDSC. Delivered April 2007, on file in the NPS CORE Lab database.

³⁸⁶ Interview with LTG Buenaflor, 17 September 2008, Camp Aguinaldo, Manila, PI. By Majors Hastings and Mortela, hereafter referred to as the Buenaflor interview.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

undertake development projects in support of national development programs to establish a physically and psychologically secure environment conducive to socio-economic growth.”³⁸⁹

This new command was established to:

1. *Plan, direct, monitor, coordinate and implement development projects assigned by higher authorities.*
2. *Coordinate with other national government agencies, local government units, non-governmental organizations and other developmental organizations in the identification, planning, sourcing of requirements, monitoring, implementation and evaluation of development projects.*
3. *Undertake basic infrastructure works, livelihood activities, and other development projects together with government and non-government partners in conflict in underdeveloped and depressed areas.*
4. *Provide accurate information to the people in remote areas of the government’s national development and internal security programs.*
5. *Maintain close coordinative relationships with the geographical unified commands.*
6. *Assist government agencies and other AFP units performing lead roles in disaster response to include relief, rescue, and rehabilitation operations.*³⁹⁰

This new AFP command will go a long way towards achieving President Arroyo’s stated goal of resolving the Muslim and communist insurgencies by 2010.³⁹¹

To maintain the Philippine legal justification for the U.S./RP partnership and continue the COIN efforts in the Southern Philippines, the two countries entered into an additional agreement on 13 July 2006. It was called Kapit Bisig and was written as a clarifying document to the previously published agreements authorizing U.S. assistance in combating terror. Building on the provisions of the VFA, Security Engagement Board

³⁸⁹ Manuscript of LTG Buenaflor.

³⁹⁰ Briefing slides and manuscript of the comments by the first Commander of NDSC, LTG Buenaflor. The presentation outlines why the NDSC was created, its goals, how it will achieve those goals as well as how it is structured. The briefing is stored in the NPS CORE lab data base.

³⁹¹ Buenaflor interview.

(SEB), TOR, and the Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA), this document was developed to provide legal justification for U.S. assistance to the PSF.³⁹² The document re-stated the prohibition on permanent U.S. bases, prohibited U.S. service members from engaging in combat unless defending themselves, and reiterated that AFP commanders would take the lead in all combined activities.³⁹³ This document also outlined the specific support the U.S. would provide to the PSF. Aside from providing a framework for support to the AFP, this document provided the Arroyo administration and other GRP defenders of U.S. assistance the legal reference to Constitutional questions raised over the U.S. presence. Supported by the Philippine Constitution and previous agreements and treaties between the U.S. and the RP, Kapit Bisig has withstood multiple reviews and played a key role in continuing the U.S./RP partnership against terrorism.

c. Successful Negotiations with MNLF

The importance of the negotiation between the AFP and the MNLF cannot be understated. For the AFP/U.S. operation to be successful, it had to keep the MNLF out of the fighting. The negotiated agreements between the GRP and Misuari and those between BG Dolorfino and MNLF leader Adjibun, were pivotal to the successful prosecution of Operation Ultimatum. The GRP was able to convince the MNLF that continued support to the ASG would jeopardize the 1996 RP/MNLF Peace Treaty. To preserve the gains the MNLF had made in winning autonomy from the GRP, the MNLF publicly severed support to the ASG and condoned the ASG's destruction by AFP forces. Although there continued to be clear indications that the MNLF was secretly supporting the ASG on Sulu, the agreement prevented the MNLF from entering the fighting and openly supporting or harboring the ASG/JI.³⁹⁴

d. Effective Interagency Coordination and Cooperation

The continued involvement of the U.S. country team in the JSOTF operations on Sulu was essential to its success. The country team included U.S.AID who

³⁹² Abat interview.

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ WESMINCOM, "AAR of Operation Ultimatum," Headquarters Western Mindanao Command, Zamboanga, PI, 29 March 2007.

brought far more money to the effort than the JOSTF could. They were also in a better position to encourage NGO and foreign investment in the Island. The JSOTF/U.S. country team coordination and cooperation was excellent throughout the operations on Sulu. As Col. Maxwell points out in his Summary of JSOTF-P operations,

One of the most unique aspects of this mission is the synchronization of JSOTF operations with the U.S. Country Team. There is an extremely close working relationship with most elements of the country team and in particular U.S.AID. The Country Team conducts numerous activities that directly support operations in the Joint Operational Area in the Southern Philippines, to include the Rewards for Justice, U.S.AID sustainable development projects, 1206/1207 Funding, Intelligence support from the entire intelligence community as well as from LEGATT, Treasury, and other elements. The JSOTF maintains permanent liaison with the Country Team and the command group participates in weekly country team meetings and has a standing weekly brief to the Ambassador.

e. Information Operations

SOCAP and JSOTF planners developed a comprehensive IO strategy to support the deployment of AFP and U.S. forces to Sulu. This phased strategy had been effective in driving a wedge between the foreign fighters and the local population by publicizing the manipulative and self serving nature of the foreign fighters by highlighting the brutality they used on the populace. In the next phase, the information strategy was able to separate the population from the insurgents by advertising the improved socioeconomic conditions due to the improved security situation. It also discredited the ASG by highlighting their brutal attacks on the population. The JSOTF also developed excellent rapport with many RP journalists and gave them a direct line to the JSOTF Commander and his staff. By doing this, the JSOTF staff encouraged journalists to contact the JSOTF directly to get the Commander's explanation of developing situations. In this way, the AFP/JSOTF was able to get the correct story out quickly and effectively. The JSOTF developed iron clad credibility by providing quick responses to media inquiries and quantifiable proof to support the JSOTF position.³⁹⁵

³⁹⁵ Personal experience of Major Hastings as a member of the JSOTF staff, July 2006 - May 2007.

Media analysis conducted by the SOCPAC MOST team and Brand Labs demonstrates a significant trend in Philippine media coverage of the Sulu operation. In late 2005, when the U.S. first began deploying to Sulu, the media carried mostly negative stories about the U.S. involvement. By August 2006, less than one year later, the number of negative stories had dropped to a minority percentage.³⁹⁶ In April 2008, MOST reported media coverage of Balikatan 2008 consisted of 306 articles of which the majority (58 percent) were neutral and viewed as objective.³⁹⁷ Thirty percent were assessed as negative and 11 percent were positive. This was a significant improvement over the 2005 media coverage.

There were also indications that the Information strategy was reaching the ASG leaders and directly affecting their own information campaign. During Operation Ultimatum, a highly successful LRC raid on an ASG position had forced the group of bandits to flee without their rucksacks. Among the 14 rucksacks, the AFP found a new ASG pamphlet that directly addressed recent AFP/JSOTF information themes. The pamphlet bore the publishers mark of H.I. Media Bureau and had been prepared by Abu Hamid Al-Luzoni. Abu Hamid Al-Luzoni was otherwise known as Ahmed Santos, the leader of the Rajah Solaiman Islamic Movement (RSIM), a group known to have assisted the ASG in conducting the Superferry bombing in 2005.³⁹⁸ In the pamphlet, titled in English, “Frequently Asked Questions,” the ASG leadership defends their actions and provides a counter-argument to the themes distributed by the AFP/JSOTF. The ASG document asserts that their jihad was legitimate and they make a feeble attempt to support this assertion with quotes from the Koran.³⁹⁹ In a series of questions and answers, the ASG explained why it was necessary to kill fellow Muslims and civilians describing them as not being true Muslims because they work with the enemy (Shaytan forces) against the mujahadeen.⁴⁰⁰ They also explained their rape of women as their right and

³⁹⁶ Mossberg interview.

³⁹⁷ SOCPAC Media and Open Source Team, “*Report on Balikatan Media Analysis April 2008*.” SOCPAC, Camp Smith, HI, 7 April 2008.

³⁹⁸ Banlaoi interview.

³⁹⁹ The “Frequently Asked Questions” pamphlet was published for the ASG in an attempt to counter AFP/U.S. information operations themes. The pamphlet is included as Appendix D.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

choice under “Sabaya,” that was defined in the pamphlet as taking a woman as a concubine.⁴⁰¹ The pamphlet goes on to explain why Al Harakatul (the original name for the ASG) conducts kidnap for ransom, will not accept peace negotiations, and does not do drugs. The pamphlet provides a thoroughly unconvincing argument and an excellent example of a product intended to counter a successful information campaign.

f. DoD Rewards Program

The DoD Rewards Program proved quite beneficial to operations on Sulu. Initially reluctant to speak with the AFP/U.S. forces, as the operation on Sulu progressed, the population began to provide valuable information on the whereabouts of HVIs. Trust in the rewards program was initially established by the JSOTF by paying locals who returned lost UAVs. By mid 2006, barely 24 hours would pass from the time a UAV went missing before it would be reported as found by a local. Even Scan Eagle UAVs, lost at sea, would be found and returned to the JSOTF and the finders rewarded. Between 2003 and 2007, 60 payments were made through the PACOM DoD Rewards Program.⁴⁰² These payments included rewards for information that led to the successful operations to kill Abu Solaiman and “Black Killer” as well as the location of the body of slain ASG leader, Khadafy Janjalani.⁴⁰³ Out of the original 11 HVIs identified in 2002, only 1 has not been captured or killed (Insilon Hapilon).⁴⁰⁴

6. Challenges Amid the Success on Sulu

U.S./GRP forces still face some of the same challenges they faced at the end of Balikpapan 2002. The socio-economic situation on Sulu is still dire, but has improved for many.⁴⁰⁵ Continued improvements will require continued investment from both the U.S. and GRP. To ensure the continued investment in the operation, the long duration nature of this task must continue to be emphasized by the JSOTF and U.S. country team to

⁴⁰¹ The “Frequently Asked Questions” pamphlet was published for the ASG in an attempt to counter AFP/U.S. information operations themes. The pamphlet is included as Appendix D.

⁴⁰² Guarco interview.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid. The only remaining HVI from the original 2002 list is Insilon Hapilon of Basilan.

⁴⁰⁵ Philippine Human Development Report, 2005.

theater and national leaders. Without continued U.S. monetary and resource assistance, it would be very difficult for the GRP to continue the current scale of assistance to the region. The GRP must also continue to improve government infrastructure and governance on the island and throughout the region. Corruption continues to be a problem in the region.

As was the case with operations on Basilan, word of the success of Sulu operation has not reached much of the Philippine population outside of the region.⁴⁰⁶ Although it has improved greatly since 2005, there is still a significant amount of distrust and suspicion expressed by certain Philippine media outlets. The GRP/U.S. must improve their information operation strategy with disseminating the positive outcome of the operation and the satisfaction of local leaders. A GRP/U.S.-organized traveling seminar of Sulu and Basilan leaders may go a long way towards convincing other local leaders of the benefits of the IA in addressing the problem of insurgency and the value that U.S. assistance provided.

Restrictions on U.S. combat advisors continued to be a major challenge for U.S. forces in the Philippines. Although authorization to place SF advisors at the company level was granted, and approving authority placed with the SOCPAC Commander, U.S. advisors remained restricted to battalion headquarters level. This restriction was a result of the tenuous status of U.S. forces and the continued objections to the U.S. presence from opponents within the GRP. Although this restriction likely had a negative impact on the capacity of U.S. advisors to effectively assist AFP units in combat, it may also be at least partially responsible for preserving the JSOTF/AFP relationship. Had U.S. advisors been allowed to accompany company-sized AFP units into combat, they may have directly engaged in fighting. News of direct U.S. engagement would likely have drawn opposition and criticism from powerful lobbies within the GRP and not only threatened continued U.S. presence, but also the administration of President Arroyo, who had been a long time supporter of the U.S. assistance. Direct U.S. engagement in fighting would likely have had a negative effect on GRP legitimacy providing opponents the opportunity to portray the Arroyo administration as puppets of the United States. While restricting

⁴⁰⁶ Banlaoi interview.

U.S. advisors was a difficult choice and likely prolonged the operation, it was necessary to preserve the U.S. presence within the complex Philippine political environment.

E. CONCLUSION

In July 2007, 14 Marines were killed by the MILF on Basilan — 10 of them were beheaded.⁴⁰⁷ In a measured response that reflects a cultural shift away from heavy handed retaliation, President Arroyo declared that the AFP would redeploy to Basilan to “wage a humanitarian offensive on Basilan.” This approach reflected the confidence of the GRP and AFP in the IA and demonstrated their appreciation of its power. The subsequent “offensive” brought AFP and U.S. CMO efforts as well as an increased military presence to the island. Concerned with losing the initiative on Basilan, the renewed efforts bolstered the earlier success and once again brought stability to the island.

The GRP response to the Marine killings on Basilan and the establishment of the NDSC reflect a cultural shift in the way the GRP addresses its domestic conflicts. Once strictly a military matter involving ground offensives and aerial bombing, the GRP has now fully embraced the Indirect Approach and institutionalized the successful COIN strategies described in this chapter. Armed with this new strategy and organizational structure to address the root causes of insurgency, the GRP is well equipped to address the long-standing conflict in Mindanao.

⁴⁰⁷ Associated Press, “14 Philippines troops killed in clash with rebels.” MSNBC, 11 July 2007, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/19703829>, accessed 15 July 2007.

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IV. ENHANCING LEGITIMACY IN MINDANAO

While hunger rules, peace cannot prevail.

— Willy Brandt, former German Chancellor

This chapter examines the challenges faced by the Government of the Republic of the Philippines in bringing peace and security to Mindanao. It offers recommendations for the development of a strategy to achieve these goals. It will discuss the underlying issues in terms of threat groups, politics, socio-economic, and military implications to get a more comprehensive glimpse of what is known in the Philippines as the “Mindanao problem.”⁴⁰⁸ Although Mindanao is much larger than the provinces described in our case studies, many of the principles applied on the islands of Basilan, Bohol, and Sulu are appropriate for use within the complex environment of Mindanao. This thesis will relate Gurr’s concept of relative deprivation to the situation in Mindanao and, then, discuss how the McCormick Diamond Model, used as a framework, can be used to develop an appropriate COIN strategy. Using the lessons learned from Basilan, Bohol, and Sulu, this chapter will offer specific recommendations for GRP/U.S. operations in Mindanao and discuss the challenges they are likely to face.

A. MINDANAO BACKGROUND

While Mindanao boasts rich natural resources, its minority Muslim population continues to languish in poverty, underdevelopment, and struggle for self-determination.⁴⁰⁹ In Mindanao, rural communities remain far from the influence and infrastructure of the government and have become fertile grounds to cultivate the seeds of revolution. Mindanao is home to two of the world’s longest running insurgencies, the

⁴⁰⁸ Esperon Interview.

⁴⁰⁹ Rabasa, “*Undergoverned Territories*,” RAND, Santa Monica, 2007, 113.

class-based struggle of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and their military wing, the New People's Army (NPA) and the Muslim separatist movements represented by the MNLF and MILF.⁴¹⁰

For centuries, the Philippines has been plagued by opposition groups and insurgencies. The long history of foreign occupation, corruption, poverty, and armed conflict has led to the formation of many groups seeking either independence or control of the government. Specifically, in 1930, there emerged a group calling themselves the CPP who sought establishment of a Marxist – Leninist government.⁴¹¹ In 1968, the group was re-established and today represents the greatest threat to the present Philippine government. The goal of the CPP is to foment regime change through armed struggle and social revolution to install a Marxist – Leninist government in Manila. Their terrorist tactics have landed them on the U.S. State Department's list of terrorist organizations.⁴¹² Further, Mindanao is also home to other threat groups that include the kidnap-for-ransom Abu Sayyaf Group, other shadowy armed bands, and the various resource-based conflicts in many communities.⁴¹³

Despite the negative image that is portrayed about Mindanao as a result of its record of violence, the region plays a significant role in the Philippines' political, economic, social, and cultural affairs. To any observer, Mindanao holds a lot of promise. Its richness holds bright prospects in the future. Considered the poorest among the regions in the Philippines, Mindanao abounds with natural resources that other regions do not possess. That is why it is called the "land of contradictions."⁴¹⁴ So how can a place like Mindanao, with tremendous wealth potential, be so impoverished?

⁴¹⁰ Ressa, 9.

⁴¹¹ The Communist Party of the Philippines was established for the first time in Manila on 7 November 1930 by Crisanto Evangelista. By 1932, the CPP had been outlawed by the Philippine Supreme Court. Bureau, Party Information. *Communist Party of the Philippines*. June 11, 2008. <http://www.philippinerevolution.net/cpp/docs/hist/index.shtml>, accessed 13 June 2008.

⁴¹² U.S. State Department. "Foreign Terrorist Organizations." 11 October 2005. <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/fs/37191.htm>, accessed June 13, 2008.

⁴¹³ Julio Cesar L Benitez. Community practices of the culture of peace, Government of the Philippines-United Nations, Multi-Donor programme 3, Davao City, Philippines, 2004, 25.

⁴¹⁴ Mini-Marshall Plan for Mindanao: Will Foreign Aid Help End the Moro War? The Reality of Aid, October 2004, http://www.realityofaid.org/rchecknews.php?table=rc_oct04&id=3, accessed 7 August 2008.

As the second largest island in the Philippines with a land area of 10 million hectares, Mindanao constitutes a third of the country's total land area.⁴¹⁵ As of 2004, Mindanao had a population of about 21 million dwellers representing a fourth of the total Philippine population with 20 percent, approximately 4.3 million, being Muslim.⁴¹⁶ Mindanao is also home to the majority of Philippine indigenous peoples (IPs) with 17 IP group that comprise 5 percent of its population.⁴¹⁷



Figure 13. Map of Mindanao⁴¹⁸

In terms of economy, as the food basket of the country, Mindanao is a major contributor to the national income. Notably, Mindanao contributes around 19 percent of the country's total gross domestic product. Its agricultural sector serves as the major source of strength by contributing around 38 percent to the country's agricultural gross value added (GVA). This can be attributed to its rich fertile lands and the fact that it is located outside of the typhoon belt. Further, Mindanao produces around 60 percent of the country's total corn harvest; 56 percent of coconut production; 24 percent of rice production; more than 70 percent of the country's pineapple and banana harvests; and

⁴¹⁵ Ateneo Research Center, 2004.

⁴¹⁶ Max Gross, "A Muslim Archipelago: Islam and Politics in Southeast Asia." Center for Strategic Intelligence Research Report, Washington DC: National Defense Intelligence College, 2007, 172.

⁴¹⁷ Mindanao Peace and Development Imperatives: A Call to Action¹, Philippine Development Forum, March 26-27, 2008, [http://www.pdf.ph/downloads/MindaPDFfinal\(3-17-08\).pdf](http://www.pdf.ph/downloads/MindaPDFfinal(3-17-08).pdf), accessed 23 July 2008.

⁴¹⁸ MSN Encarta Encyclopedia, accessed 3 September 2008.

more than 40 percent of total fishery and aquaculture production.⁴¹⁹ Specifically, banana export amounts to over \$80 million; fresh pineapples at \$34 million; and exported tuna at \$23 million. In totality, Mindanao contributes over 40 percent of the Philippines' food requirements and more than 30% to the national food trade.⁴²⁰

More recently, interest has grown in the mining sector. This is the result of the discovery of large deposits of minerals and metals in various parts of Mindanao. The Philippines has an estimated \$1 trillion worth of untapped gold, copper, and nickel resources.⁴²¹ At present, Mindanao contributes 80 percent of the national total deposits of copper, nickel, and gold. Gold mined in Mindanao accounts for nearly half of the national gold reserves. Less than 2 percent, however, of about 9 million hectares of land, identified as having rich mineral deposits, have been explored and covered by mining permits. The Chamber of Mines of the Philippines said that by 2010 foreign investments in mining would rise steadily to \$1 billion per year.⁴²² Given this bright prospect, the potential for increased investments, due to the needs for minerals and metals in the international market, could fuel the long-delayed economic growth of the island.

In addition, Mindanao has the competitive edge in many aspects. The island economy, however, could contribute more to the national pie if concerted efforts are made to tap its vast economic potentials. The Growth with Equity in Mindanao (GEM), a development assistance program funded by the United States Agency for International Development (U.S.AID), claims that the island economy possesses competitive edges in terms of economic resources, location advantages, human resources, improved infrastructure, and natural resources. Over the years, development assistance and public investments in ports and road networks have significantly improved Mindanao's infrastructure stock. This has reduced the costs of doing business and improving

⁴¹⁹ Mindanao Peace and Development Imperatives, 2008.

⁴²⁰ Bob Martin, "What is Mindanao?" <http://www.mindanao.com/blog/?p=2165>, Accessed 4 August 2008

⁴²¹ Amy R. Remo, "CMP: Mining deals should be honored," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. 3 August 2008.

⁴²² Ibid.

competitiveness of Mindanao enterprises.⁴²³ The U.S. has been funneling much of its aid to the Philippines to the strife-torn areas of Mindanao. Starting in 2005, 60 percent of U.S. Development Assistance (DA) and Economic Support Funding (ESF) have gone to Mindanao, initially to build on the peace generated by the peace pact with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). Had a final peace accord been signed in Kuala Lumpur in August 2008, the U.S. was reportedly poised to extend the same level of assistance for the MILF.⁴²⁴

Some security analysts consider Mindanao's borders are porous — piracy, armed militias, terrorists, separatist groups, and unregulated movement of persons and goods. Southern Philippines, particularly the provinces of Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Lanao del Norte, North, South Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, and the waters adjacent to these areas meet our criteria for ungoverned territories. In addition, the maritime area between Mindanao and Sulawesi seems to be a key logistical corridor for the regional terrorist group Jemaah Islamiyah and other extremist groups.⁴²⁵ The southern Philippines currently constitute a main focus of U.S. concern regarding terrorism and trans-border militant threats. American diplomats darkly refer to the region as the 'new Afghanistan.' The U.S. attention, however, is concentrated on the island's western provinces, particularly the Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). Sulu, Basilan, and parts of Central Mindanao have been cradles of Islamic extremism in the country.⁴²⁶

Currently, Mindanao is the Philippines' vital link to the Brunei Darussalam-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East Asia Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA). The BIMP-EAGA initiative was launched by the four governments in 1994. The objective was to hasten, through regional cooperation, the development of the economy of Brunei and sub-

⁴²³ Dave L. Llorito, "Mindanao's cycle of unrest unbroken," *The Manila Times*, 28 August 2002, <http://www.manilatimes.net/others/special/2002/aug/28/20020828spe1.html>, Accessed 4 August 2008.

⁴²⁴ Rodney Jaleco, "Mindanao is focus of U.S. for Southeast Asia peace and stability," *ABS-CBN North America News Bureau*, 2 October 2008.

⁴²⁵ Angel Rabasa, *Case Study: Sulawesi-Mindanao Arc*, 111.

⁴²⁶ Jaleco, 2008.

regions of the three other countries.⁴²⁷ The economic potentials and the geopolitical importance of Mindanao cannot be discounted because it serves as a trade route linking Southeast Asia to Central Asia and the Middle East. There may be more resources that remain untapped. While northern and central regions of the Philippines have slowly reaped the benefits of a growing tourism industry, Mindanao is yet to resolve its peace and order problem. Investors, locals, and foreigners still worry about the security in Mindanao.

B. PERPETUAL CONFLICT IN MINDANAO

1. The Communist Threat

The communist insurgency remains a formidable threat in the Philippines. In fact, General Rodolfo Mendoza, former intelligence chief of the Philippine National Police (PNP), considers the Communist Party of the Philippines/New People's Army/National Democratic Front (CPP/NPA/NDF) as the most serious threat. This is because it affects a considerably large portion of the Philippine territory.⁴²⁸ Initially inspired by Marxist ideology, the communist insurgency has now adopted a Maoist orientation that aims to gain strength in the countryside as a springboard to takeover power in the urban areas as the centers of democracy. It is believed that the insurgency has thrived for 39 years. The same socio-economic problems that caused discontent then continue to pervade in the Philippines. This section explains the history of the Huk rebellion and communism in the Philippines and the factors, effects, and the counters employed by the Philippine state to defeat the insurgency.

a. History of Communism in the Philippines

The events which led to the insurgency can be traced to the activities of communist organizers in the Philippines during the 1920s and 1930s. The Communist movement began during this period as an urban political party inspired by the Comintern.

⁴²⁷ Asian Development Bank, BIMP-EAGA Database, 4 August 2008, <http://www.adb.org/BIMP/default.asp>, Accessed 25 September 2008.

⁴²⁸ General Rodolfo Mendoza, Interview by Majors Hastings and Mortela, Former Intelligence Chief, Philippine National Police, Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, Philippines, 17 September 2008.

At the end of WWII, once the Japanese Imperial Army had been defeated in the Philippines, the Communist fight for independence continued as the Huk rebellion.⁴²⁹ To generate support from the masses, the Huks exploited pre-war peasant unrest and the deteriorating traditional ties between the landlords and the tenants. The land issues worsened as the population growth resulted in diminishing arable lands — particularly in central Luzon.⁴³⁰

To defeat the Huks, the Philippine government employed a fight-and-develop strategy conceptualized by U.S. advisers and implemented by the charismatic Ramon Magsaysay. Magsaysay's campaign employed military operations and attraction programs which were simultaneously launched in enemy strongholds.⁴³¹ To gain popular support to his campaigns, Magsaysay dismissed incompetent and corrupt army officers, and made provisions to ensure honest elections. Resettlement areas for surrendered and captured Huks were later established under the Economic Development Corps (EDCOR) program. Habeas corpus was suspended to detain government officials suspected of corruption as well as suspected Communists and sympathizers. After his election to the Presidency in 1953, Magsaysay expanded the counterinsurgency program even further. In 1954, Huk leader Luis Taruc surrendered and the rebellion essentially came to an end.⁴³²

b. Emergence of a New Insurgency Movement

The present communist insurgency has its roots in the Huk rebellion. In 1969, remnants of the HMB and a breakaway faction of the Communist Party came together to form a new, national guerrilla organization, the New People's Army (NPA). By then, the agrarian conditions that had motivated the Huk Rebellion in the 1940s and 1950s had worsened throughout much of the nation. The emergence in the 1960s of mass

⁴²⁹ E. Landsdale, *In the Midst of Wars: An American's Mission to Southeast Asia* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 8.

⁴³⁰ Ricardo C. Morales, *Perpetual Wars: the Philippine Insurgencies* (Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, December 2003), 20.

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*

⁴³² Rodney S. Azama, "The Huks and the New People's Army: Comparing 2 Post-war Filipino Insurgencies," <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/1985/ARS.htm>, Accessed 16 August 2008.

organizations of students, trade unionists, slum dwellers, and multi-sectored political opposition groups in the capital and other urban areas provided new and powerful allies to the previously isolated peasants.⁴³³

In 1967, the communists split into a Marxist-Leninist PKP and a Maoist CPP. The CPP purports to represent the aspirations of those at the bottom of the social strata. Thus, they altered the Maoist doctrines to fit the Philippines. The split coincided with and was influenced by the Sino-Soviet split.⁴³⁴ Since 1971, the PKP openly aligned with Moscow while the CPP aligned with the Chinese. The CPP formed its military wing, the NPA, in 1968 with the stated goal of “fomenting regime change through social revolution and armed struggle in order to install a Marxist – Leninist government in Manila.”⁴³⁵ The actual goals of the Communist Party of the Philippines or ‘Urgent Tasks’ are:

- Carry Forward the Antifascist, Antifeudal, and Anti-imperialist Movement!
- Further Strengthen the Party and Rectify our Errors!
- Build the Revolutionary Mass Movement in the Countryside!
- Further Strengthen the People's Army and Carry forward the Revolutionary Armed Struggle!
- Build the Revolutionary Mass Movement in the Cities!
- Realize a Broad Antifascist, Antifeudal, and Anti-imperialist United Front!
- Relate the Philippine Revolution to the World Revolution!⁴³⁶

In 1989, the NPA gained international notoriety by killing the U.S. military adviser to the Philippines, Col. James Rowe.⁴³⁷ It supports itself with extortions

⁴³³ Michael Mc Clintock, “Instruments of Statecraft: U.S. Guerilla Warfare, Counterinsurgency, and Counterterrorism (1940-90),” <http://www.statecraft.org/chapter4.html>, Accessed 16 August 2008.

⁴³⁴ “Insurgency in the Philippines,” http://www.historyofwar.org/articles/wars_philippines.html, Accessed 10 August 2008

⁴³⁵ Bureau Party Information, *Communist Party of the Philippines*,. http://www.philippinerevolution.net/cgi-bin/cpp/pdocs.pl?id=out_e;page=01 , Accessed 25 July 2008.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

⁴³⁷ U.S. State Department, *Foreign Terrorist Organizations*, 11 October 2005, <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/fs/37191.htm> , Accessed 13 June 2008.

from logging and mining firms and plantations.⁴³⁸ The terrorist tactics of the CPP/NPA has landed them on the U.S. State Department's list of terrorist organizations.⁴³⁹

In terms of strategy, the CPP pursued a guerrilla war. Politically, they view the Philippines as a semi-colonial society being exploited by the U.S.⁴⁴⁰ Militarily, they believe in the Maoist principle of a protracted war. Notably, they claimed that the Huk rebellion failed because of its inability to spread beyond Luzon. They have recognized that the concept of having one liberated area from which their army could expand and seize the cities was impractical in the Philippines, so they based their strategy on the idea of a simultaneous insurrection in all the major islands.⁴⁴¹

c. *Factors that Fuel the Communist Movement*

The underlying causes of the Huk and the New People's Army insurgencies are similar. Both movements sought to overthrow the existing government to establish their own communist system. To accomplish this, the two groups exploited the following causes: the land tenancy system and a peasant desire for agrarian reform; unemployment and economic conditions, including an extremely inequitable income distribution; and a lack of government credibility due to corruption and military abuses.⁴⁴² In Mindanao, as in other provinces of the Philippines, the CPP was successful in emphasizing the disparity between the different classes of Filipino society. This fueled a sense of relative deprivation among the poor and down trodden.

d. *Effects of the Communist Insurgency*

The cycle of violence resulting from the insurgency does not augur well in a developing economy such as the Philippines. In various regions throughout the country, the NPA is responsible for sporadic violence, occasional clashes, and assassinations of elected officials, civil servants, and police figures. Peace talks with the CPP, the political

⁴³⁸ U.S. State Department, *Foreign Terrorist Organizations*, 11 October 2005.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ Bureau Party Information, *Communist Party of the Philippines*, http://www.philippinerevolution.net/cgi-bin/cpp/pdocs.pl?id=out_e;page=01, Accessed 25 July 2008.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴⁴² Azama, 2008.

wing of the NPA, formally resumed in mid-2001. Given the uncompromising stance of the CPP, they are not expected to yield any breakthroughs.⁴⁴³

In Mindanao, NPA violence has driven away both commercial investment and government development. For example, the Sagittarius Mines, Inc. (SMI) of the Philippines had prospected for both copper and gold in South Cotobato, Davao del Sur and Sultan Kudarat provinces. SMI had poured millions of dollars into the local communities providing much needed jobs, education, health care, and construction of community buildings to strengthen working relationships with the local governments and residents.⁴⁴⁴ The investment also succeeded in enticing tribal leaders to support the project. Their projects, however, were disrupted by a single NPA attack in January 1, 2008: the insurgents stole the firearms of the SMI security guards, abducted a militiaman, and torched company structures. They inflicted as much as 300,000 U.S. dollars in damages.⁴⁴⁵

The implications of such attacks include the jobs lost when investors leave. This means lost revenues also for the local government. The NPA also operates massive extortion activities to generate funds.⁴⁴⁶ The military estimates the NPA is collecting at least P30 million a month in revolutionary taxes in Mindanao, P20 million a month in Central Luzon, and about the same amount in Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, and Quezon provinces.⁴⁴⁷ The NPA continues to threaten businesses who do not pay revolutionary taxes.⁴⁴⁸ The threats are credible as exemplified by the attack of about 30 cellular phone tower sites — mostly owned by Globe — in 2005 after the company refused to pay revolutionary taxes.⁴⁴⁹ Without sufficient military and police security forces to protect these sites, many businesses are forced to pay this tax or leave the

⁴⁴³ “Foreign Labor Trends (Philippines),” *U.S. Department of Labor*, 2003, [http://www.stat-
usa.gov/miscfiles.nsf/85e140505600107b852566490063411d/ad54129db537d6b185256e1a0067b5f6/\\$FILE/philippines2003.pdf](http://www.stat-
usa.gov/miscfiles.nsf/85e140505600107b852566490063411d/ad54129db537d6b185256e1a0067b5f6/$FILE/philippines2003.pdf), Accessed 17 August 2008.

⁴⁴⁴ Brad Miller, “Locals Oppose Open Pit Mining For Copper, Gold,” *Inter Press Service News Agency*, <http://www.ipsnews.net/print.asp?idnews=41262>, Accessed 17 August 2008.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁶ “Troops ordered to foil NPA Taxmen,” *Manila Times*, 23 June 2006.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid..

affected areas. The CPP/NPA/NDF also works closely with organized criminal groups. According to Philippine military sources, the CCP/NPA runs large marijuana plantations and derives much of its revenue from marijuana trafficked to urban areas across the Philippines and abroad.⁴⁵⁰

e. Countermeasures and Effects

Efforts to neutralize the CPP/NPA by the last 3 administrations demonstrate inconsistent and changing policies. During the Ramos administration, the government sought comprehensive peace efforts after threats from the Left subsided after the 1986 People's Revolution that toppled President Marcos.⁴⁵¹ The result was the second series of GRP-NDF peace talks that produced the Hague Joint Declaration of September 1, 1992. This set the framework for negotiations in the absence of ceasefire.⁴⁵² As the NPA strength and activities declined in 1995, the Philippine government shifted its focus to external defense. The AFP terminated its focused and winning Lumbat Bitag campaigns against the communist insurgents.⁴⁵³ The consequence was disastrous as indicated by the resurgence of NPA activities in the late 1990s. The Estrada regime was marked by the suspension of peace talks several times due to issues and concerns raised by the communists regarding the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA). Subsequently, peace efforts were prosecuted at the local level.⁴⁵⁴

Currently, the Arroyo administration employs a holistic approach against the CPP/NPA/NDF. This strategy blends soft and hard approaches to address the political, economic, military and psycho-social components of insurgency.⁴⁵⁵ Except for the 2001 and 2004 talks brokered by Norway, there had been no substantial developments in the peace negotiations. Abinales believes that the CPP/NPA/NDF is only using the

⁴⁵⁰ "Troops ordered to foil NPA Taxmen," *Manila Times*, 23 June 2006.

⁴⁵¹ "Peace, Human Security and Human Development in the Philippines," *Philippine Human Development Report 2005*, 86.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁴ *Philippine Human Development Report 2005*, 87.

⁴⁵⁵ "Philippine defense secretary unveils strategy vs. insurgency," *Xinhua News Agency*, 17 January 2003.

talks for tactical purposes.⁴⁵⁶ The Philippine government, on the other hand, launched a campaign to reduce the communist insurgency to inconsequential level by 2010. This is a tall order and is militarist in approach.⁴⁵⁷ While there is a continuing downward trend in CPP/NPA/NDF influence and activities, war still rages on around the country that could add woes to an already impoverished countryside. While wars may not make people revolt, these might awaken consciousness that could facilitate recruitment into the insurgent movement.⁴⁵⁸

2. The Muslim Threat Groups

Another serious threat facing the Government of the Philippines (GRP) has been the growth of Muslim separatist groups in Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago. Two groups in particular, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), have offered a significant challenge to the GRP's control of the Southern provinces. Formed in the late 1960s and late 1980s, respectively, these groups continue the Muslim secessionist struggle that is more than 400 years old.⁴⁵⁹ Also inspired by the Muslim desire for self-determination, the most radical among the Muslim threat groups, the Abu Sayyaf, emerged out of a failed implementation of the GRP-MNLF peace negotiations and after being sidelined by Nur Misuari.⁴⁶⁰

a. Post World War II: The seeds of descent in the South

The rise of Muslim descent in Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago in the 1960s can be largely attributed to two main factors. The first was the GRP's policy of relocating Christians from the North to Mindanao.⁴⁶¹ This policy was the result of the

⁴⁵⁶ Patricio Abinales, *The Joys of Dislocation: Mindanao, Nation and Region* (Manila: ANVIL Publishing Company, 2008), 125.

⁴⁵⁷ "Arroyo tells military: Finish off insurgency, terror before 2010," *Sunstar*, 26 August 2007.

⁴⁵⁸ Abinales, 156.

⁴⁵⁹ Zachary Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia: the Crucible of Terror* (London: Rienner, 2003), 34.

⁴⁶⁰ Zachary Abuza, "Balik-Terrorism: The Return of the Abu Sayyaf," Strategic Studies Institute, September 2005, 3, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB625.pdf>, Accessed 9 August 2008.

⁴⁶¹ Cecille Aycocho, "Understanding the Mindanao Insurgency," *OG5 Digest* (October-December 2004 issue), 29.

peace agreement that ended the war with the Huks. Since the Huk rebellion was agrarian-based, President Magsaysay encouraged former Huk fighters to relocate in Mindanao by offering them large tracts of land for agricultural cultivation.⁴⁶² In line with the government's policy of attraction, the army-administered Economic Development Corps (EDCOR) established settlement projects primarily in Cotabato. Its first project, in 1951, was in the fertile Kapatagan Basin in neighboring Lanao Province.⁴⁶³ There were about 24 Christian settlers in the Kapatagan area in 1918.⁴⁶⁴ By 1941, their number had risen to 8,000 and by 1960 there were a total of 93,000 immigrants, many of whom had arrived under the EDCOR program.⁴⁶⁵ The migration was also expected to have the added benefit of 'diluting' the Muslim population.⁴⁶⁶ This policy quickly became the single most important issue among the Muslims of Mindanao.⁴⁶⁷

The second factor that changed the status quo in Mindanao was an initiative by the GRP to improve the socio-economic conditions in Mindanao by subsidizing the education of Muslim youths. Thousands of Muslims were granted government scholarships to study in Manila. Egypt and Libya also established scholarship programs and sponsored many other Muslims to study abroad. This exchange introduced a significant Egyptian and Libyan influence to Mindanao and led to the establishment of madrasas and mosques in Mindanao by Egyptian and Libyan-backed Muslim organizations.⁴⁶⁸ Students trained in these madrasas, as well as those schools in Manila and the Middle East, eventually returned to Mindanao and brought with them a sense of self determination and a desire to put an end to politics as usual in Mindanao.⁴⁶⁹ Some of these students, among them Hashim Salamat (who would later form the MILF), had been radicalized under the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and had

⁴⁶² Marites D. Vitug, "Power from the Forest," *Philippine Institute for Investigative Journalism*, 3.

⁴⁶³ Thomas M. Mc Kenna, *Muslim Rulers and Rebels: Everyday Politics and Armed Separatism in the Southern Philippines* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 115-116.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁶ "Interview on Hashim Salamat," <http://www.fas.org/irp/world/para/docs/ph2.htm>, Accessed 20 November 2008.

⁴⁶⁷ Abuza, *Balik Terrorism*, 37.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid., 97.

returned to Mindanao with an ideology that promoted force and violence in forwarding the Muslim cause.⁴⁷⁰ The teachings of Syed Qutb and Maududi contributed to his Islamic outlook and political beliefs. Upon his return to Mindanao, Salamat began the military training of the first batch of cadres (Batch 90) that would later become the military core group of the Moro National Liberation Front.⁴⁷¹

b. Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF)

In 1972, President Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law in Mindanao. Nur Misuari, an ethnic Tausug, assumed the leadership of the Muslim rebellion and organized the MNLF with the Bangsa Moro Army as its military arm.⁴⁷² After three years of heavy fighting, the GRP and MNLF enter into peace talks. ⁴⁷³ In 1988, a formal peace agreement, now known as the Jeddah Accord, was negotiated between the MNLF and President Aquino and signed into law in August 1989.⁴⁷⁴ In this agreement, the MNLF formally relinquished its goal of an established and independent Muslim Homeland in exchange for an agreement of autonomy.⁴⁷⁵ Initially, only 4 provinces voted to join the autonomous region, but by September 2001, Basilan and the Muslim city of Marawi had also joined the ARMM.⁴⁷⁶ The concessions made by Misuari during the peace negotiations had not been well received by everyone within the MNLF. Dissention over the questions of leadership, Islam, and ideology led Misuari to expel

⁴⁷⁰ Abuza, *Balik Terrorism*, 98.

⁴⁷¹ "Biodata of Sheik Hashim Salamat," <http://www.fas.org/irp/world/para/docs/ph2.htm>, Accessed 20 November 2008.

⁴⁷² General Fortunato Abat, Lecture to Philippine Army General Staff Corps (GSC) students, TRADOC, Philippine Army, Fort Bonifacio, Makati City, 03 September 1997.

⁴⁷³ From the website of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao. "On July 7, 1975, President Ferdinand E. Marcos signed Presidential Decree No. 742 and Letter Of Instruction 290 creating the Western and Central Mindanao regions and establishing the Office of the Regional Commissioner (ORC) in both regions. Hostilities, however, continued with armed confrontations between the MNLF and the military. The situation led the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) to intervene which led to the signing of the Tripoli Agreement between the Philippine Government and the MNLF in Tripoli, Libya on December 23, 1976. In compliance with the Tripoli Agreement, President Ferdinand E. Marcos signed Presidential Proclamation No. 1628 on 25 March 1977 forming an Autonomous Region in Southern Philippines." <http://www.armm.gov.ph/index.php?section=11> .

⁴⁷⁴ Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao website, <http://www.armm.gov.ph/index.php?section=11>, Accessed 15 April 2008.

⁴⁷⁵ Abuza, *Balik Terrorism*, 34-40.

⁴⁷⁶ ARMM website, 2008.

Salamat Hashim and his supporters known as the ‘Mujahideens.’ Hashim took his followers and left the MNLF to form the MILF in protest of the dictatorial style of Misuari and his corruption and favoritism towards ethnic Tausugs.⁴⁷⁷



Figure 14. Map of Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao⁴⁷⁸

In 1996, the government of President Fidel Ramos signed a peace agreement with the MNLF known as the Davao Consensus. The MNLF assumed the governance of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. This was composed of four Muslim-majority provinces—Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Maguindanao, and Lanao del Sur— and the city of Marawi. The signing of the GRP-MNLF Peace Agreement has opened avenues for peace building in many Mindanao communities. It was observed that at no time in the history of Mindanao was interest in peace building highest than after the breakthrough signing of the peace agreement. Peace movements emerged along with the sprouting of non-government organizations addressing peace concerns. This also led to the influx of external development assistance in Mindanao. This period may yet come to be described

⁴⁷⁷ Moshe Yegar, “Between Integration and Secession: The Muslim Communities in Southern Philippines, Southern Thailand, and Western Burma (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2002), 311.

⁴⁷⁸ From Briefing provided by Rommel Banlaoi, Manila, PI., 18 September 2008, interviewed by Major’s Hastings and Mortela.

as the time when social development investment in Mindanao was at its peak.⁴⁷⁹ Moreover, as a way to mitigate the effects of displacement or dislocation, the peace and development communities (PDCs) are either rebuilding their communities or providing settlement areas for Internally Displaced Persons (IDP). Community development activities are underway through projects and assistance from external development agencies. These agencies enhance the social cohesion of the people and raise their self-efficacy. These also enable the residents to come together and plan a common future through a participatory peace-based community development planning process facilitated by the Government of the Philippines-United Nations Mutual Development Program 3 (GOP-UN MDP3).⁴⁸⁰

There are indicators that the MNLF is weakened. Abinales assesses that they “are a spent force. Its leaders are not only aging but have degenerated into pathetic local officials fighting over patronage crumbs thrown to them by Manila.”⁴⁸¹ There are even deep schisms in their ranks. Banlaoi says that “we do not know now who among them compose the mainstream MNLF.”⁴⁸² Abinales adds that they are now part of the government.⁴⁸³ The failure of the MNLF stewardship of the ARMM to bring about any significant improvement in the lives of ordinary people in Muslim Mindanao is well known. According to World Bank figures, the poverty rate in the ARMM actually increased from 62.5 percent in 1997 to 73.9 percent in 2000 (compared to a national rate of 25.1 percent in 1997 and 27.5 percent in 2000).⁴⁸⁴ The incidence of poverty in the ARMM is more than double the national rate. In Sulu (Jolo) the poverty rate was an astonishing 92 percent in 2000.⁴⁸⁵ According to journalists Glenda Gloria and Maritess Vitug: on top of the state’s ambivalent strategy for peace, stories of corruption, fund reallocation, political maneuvering, clan and family feuds, and personal economic gain

⁴⁷⁹ Yegar, 26.

⁴⁸⁰ Abinales, 28.

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁴⁸² Banlaoi interview.

⁴⁸³ Abinales, 57.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

by MNLF leaders have marred the ARMM's reputation.⁴⁸⁶ The Moros complain that the weakness of the ARMM was built into its relationship with Manila. For instance, the ARMM is effectively prevented from collecting its own taxes, but even if it were able to collect taxes, the tax base in the ARMM is too small to allow the regional government to fund itself.

c. *Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)*

In 1977, Hashim Salamat, with a group of primarily Maguindanao-Iranun followers, established the MILF. Nur Misuari, who was Tausig-Samal, remained the leader of the government-recognized MNLF. A second, mostly Maranao faction, the MNLF-Reformist Group, similarly revolted against the leadership of Nur Misuari.⁴⁸⁷

The MILF started as a reformist organization willing to work with the republic's political framework. Its turn to radical Islamic politics came only very recently. It was brought about by the complete abdication of Nur Misuari of the revolutionary cause and the GRP's tolerance of the MILF's arms building program. It expanded during the administrations of Aquino and Ramos. The MILF was also bolstered by the return of veterans from the Afghan war that brought with them a Jihadi ideology, valuable fighting skills, and connections to the world wide affiliation of veterans of the afghan war.⁴⁸⁸

The MILF sought the overthrow of the GRP and the establishment of an Islamic state.⁴⁸⁹ The MILF quickly found support in Al Qaeda and forged an alliance with Osama bin Laden.⁴⁹⁰ Salamat's Islamic vision was strengthened as a result of his experiences in Pakistan between 1982 and 1987.⁴⁹¹ There he became involved with the Pakistani ISIs (Inter-Service Intelligence Directorate) that is a Saudi-funded effort to

⁴⁸⁶ Abinales, 57.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid., 28.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid., 50.

⁴⁸⁹ Abuza, 98.

⁴⁹⁰ Ressa (2003) points out that despite MILF claims that it has no links to Al Qaeda, there exists significant evidence to include the testimony of captured Al Qaeda and JI operatives that the MILF has very distinct connections to Al Qaeda.

⁴⁹¹ Abuza, 91.

recruit Muslims from around the world to assist the Afghan mujahidin in their struggle against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.⁴⁹² Administered in large part by Osama bin Laden, the program is said to have brought 35,000 potential fighters from different Muslim countries. The Philippine contribution of about 500 to 700 fighters was organized and coordinated by Hashim Salamat.⁴⁹³

In 1984, Salamat officially declared the establishment of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. The MILF demanded independence for Muslim populated regions and proclaimed that a Muslim state would be based on Koranic principles. After the ousting of President Marcos in February 1986, Corazon Aquino was installed as the successor. In March to September 1986, she immediately tasked the MILF to pursue peace talks with the Aquino government.⁴⁹⁴ In the 1990s, the MILF gained strength, increasing to 35,000-45,000 in seven provinces in Mindanao.⁴⁹⁵ In addition, the MILF had large base camps and functional governmental operations. Its operations included attacks on the AFP and planting bombs in Mindanao cities.⁴⁹⁶

In 1997, the GRP and the MILF issued a joint statement for peace. Hostilities broke out in Buldon, Maguindanao which resulted in heavy casualties and the displacement of civilians.⁴⁹⁷ An interim ceasefire monitoring committee was formed later, but the GRP launched its largest offensive in June that year.⁴⁹⁸ In 1999, both parties agreed to start formal peace talks. Due to the upsurge of MILF operations in 1998-99, the government was forced to launch a massive offensive in 2000 aimed at capturing all MILF established camps.⁴⁹⁹ In July 2000, government forces overran all MILF camps. In response, the MILF declared fighting a jihad in an attempt to motivate all Muslims in

⁴⁹² Abuza, 10.

⁴⁹³ Max L. Gross, *A Muslim Archipelago: Islam and Politics in Southeast Asia*, National Defense Intelligence College, March 2007, 196.

⁴⁹⁴ Altifahny Laguindab, Rey Trillana, Abdulrahman Ismael, and Samira Gutoc, "Highlights of Bangsamoro History," <http://bongmontesa.wordpress.com/2008/08/08/highlights-of-bangsamoro-history-one-perspective/>, Accessed 14 August 2008.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁶ Larry Niksch, "Abu Sayyaf: Target of Philippine-U.S. Anti-Terrorism Cooperation," *CRS Report for Congress*, January 24, 2007, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/terror/RL31265.pdf>, Accessed 14 August 2008.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid.

Mindanao to fight the AFP.⁵⁰⁰ On February 20, 2001, the newly elected president, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, declared a suspension of military operations (SOMO). After intense negotiations, the conflict de-escalated upon the signing of the Agreement on the General Framework of the Resumption of Peace Talks in March 24, 2001.⁵⁰¹

A ceasefire agreement with the MILF was reached in February 1997 and an agreement in principle to recognize the MILF camps in 1998.⁵⁰² Under President Joseph Estrada, however, clashes escalated in violation of the ceasefire and by 2000 the AFP and MILF were involved in full-scale war. This caused an estimated 400,000 Mindanao residents to be displaced.⁵⁰³ Peace talks were resumed after President Estrada was deposed in January 2001 through the efforts of the newly appointed President Gloria Arroyo. They continue to make progress.⁵⁰⁴

The MILF alleged to have been engaged in extorting money from legitimate businesses and kidnappings.⁵⁰⁵ Sources sympathetic to the organization, however, attribute these activities to so-called “lost commands” — rogue elements not under central leadership.⁵⁰⁶ The main sources of income for the MILF appear to be contributions by sympathizers and, according to Philippine authorities, the *zakat* (a charitable donation made by Muslims as a religious obligation) and funds diverted from nongovernmental organizations.⁵⁰⁷

Numerous indications of strong ties between the MILF and Al Qaeda had prompted the U.S. to view the MILF as a terrorist group, but President Arroyo was able to persuade the U.S. to leave the group off of the U.S. State Department’s list of named

⁵⁰⁰ Niksch, 2007.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid.

⁵⁰² Philippine Human Development Report 2005, http://hdr.undp.org/docs/reports/national/PHI_Philippines/Philippines_2005_en.pdf, Accessed 9 August 2008.

⁵⁰³ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁴ Angel Rabasa, et al., *Undergoverned Territories: Understanding and Reducing Terrorism Risks* (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2007), 113.

⁵⁰⁵ Angel Rabasa, *Case Study: The Sulawesi-Mindanao Arc*, 118, http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2007/RAND_MG561.pdf, Accessed 13 August 2008.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid.

terrorist organizations.⁵⁰⁸ President Arroyo sought this concession from the U.S. not to appease the MILF but to prevent an escalation of the volatile situation between the GRP and the MILF.⁵⁰⁹ The U.S. and GRP also provided official assurances to the MILF that neither U.S. nor GRP forces would target MILF members or enter MILF areas while pursuing the ASG and JI. These measures achieved the desired effect of allowing the deployment of U.S. and Philippine forces to destroy the ASG and JI while keeping the MILF out of the conflict.⁵¹⁰

The GRP's negotiations with the MILF had the effect of giving the Moro groups a degree of legitimacy as Goodwin suggests, "*the political "incorporation" of mobilized groups has typically served to de-radicalize them.*"⁵¹¹ There is a down side to this process: more hard-line and radical members are often not appeased by the process of negotiations and concessions and are dissatisfied with compromises.⁵¹² Often these sub-groups splinter from the parent organization to form new groups who continue the armed struggle.⁵¹³

As of the publication of this thesis, the MILF and GRP had not yet reached an agreement on peace. With the Philippine Supreme Court's dismissal of the Memorandum of Agreement on the Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) as unconstitutional, the MILF's goal of receiving Ancestral Domain rights to Mindanao is unachievable and both sides will have to return to the negotiating table. Since the deployment of the International Monitoring Team led by Malaysia, the level of violence has been dramatically reduced. Many believe that the MILF's inability to defeat the AFP or to gain official foreign support for its struggle for independence has forced the MILF to commit to the peace process.⁵¹⁴ As is the case with the GAM (Free Aceh Movement) in Aceh,

⁵⁰⁸ "Foreign Terrorist Organizations," U.S. State Department, 11 October 2005, <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/fs/37191.htm>, Accessed 13 June 2008.

⁵⁰⁹ Rabasa, 113.

⁵¹⁰ Abuza, 48.

⁵¹¹ Goodwin, 46.

⁵¹² Ibid.

⁵¹³ Ori Brafman and Rod A. Beckstrom, *The Starfish and the Spider: The Unstoppable Power of Leaderless Organization* (New York: Portfolio, 2006), 13.

⁵¹⁴ Banlaoi interview.

Indonesia, and the MNLF before it, the MILF sees the peace process as the best way of promoting its cause internationally and gaining access to foreign support and foreign monitoring of Philippine state activity in Mindanao.⁵¹⁵ GAM gave up its demand for immediate independence while the Indonesian government expanded its definition of regional autonomy.⁵¹⁶ Many are hoping that the same compromises might work in the Philippines.

The MOA-AD was intended to serve as a roadmap for a comprehensive peace treaty with the MILF.⁵¹⁷ The failure to sign the Memorandum of Agreement on August 4, 2008 resulted in renewed fighting in Southern Philippines. AFP operations continue against “renegade” MILF commanders – Ameril Umbra Kato, Abdullah Macapaar alias Bravo, and Aleem Sulaiman Pangalian – who were responsible for brutal attacks on villages in North Cotabato and Lanao del Norte after the announcement of the injunction placed on the MOA-AD.⁵¹⁸ By mid-October 2008 since the start of hostilities, about 390,000 have been displaced.⁵¹⁹

d. The Abu Sayyaf Group

The group’s stated goal is to promote an independent Islamic state in western Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago. The ASG, however, was noted to have used terror for financial profit. A commonly referred to point that indicates the ASG’s lack of a true political goal is the absence of a political program within the ASG.⁵²⁰ The group’s first large-scale action was a raid on the town of Ipil in Mindanao in April 1995. In April 2000, an ASG faction kidnapped 21 persons, including 10 Western tourists, from a resort in Malaysia. In May 2001, the ASG kidnapped 3 U.S. citizens and 17 Filipinos from a tourist resort in Palawan, Philippines. Several of the hostages, including U.S. citizen Guillermo Sobero, were murdered. A Philippine military hostage rescue operation in June

⁵¹⁵ Malcolm Cook and Kit Collier, *Mindanao: A Gamble Worth Taking* (Australia: Lowy Institute, 2006), 17.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid.

⁵¹⁷ Esperon interview.

⁵¹⁸ Ibid.

⁵¹⁹ “The Philippines: The Collapse of Peace in Mindanao,” *International Crisis Group*, 23 October 2008.

⁵²⁰ Abinales, 57.

2002 freed U.S. hostage Gracia Burnham, but her husband Martin Burnham and Filipina Deborah Yap were killed.⁵²¹ The U.S. and Philippine authorities also blame the ASG for exploding a bomb near a Philippine military base in Zamboanga in October 2002 that killed a U.S. serviceman. Then in February 2004, Khadaffy Janjalani's faction bombed Superferry 14 in Manila Bay, killing 132. In March 2004, Philippine authorities arrested an ASG cell whose bombing targets included the U.S. Embassy in Manila. The ASG also claimed responsibility for the 2005 Valentine's Day bombings in Manila, Davao City, and General Santos City, which killed 8 and injured more than 150.⁵²²

Largely prevented from conducting kidnap for ransom operations since 2005, it is not clear how the ASG continues to receive funding.⁵²³ According to Filipino and U.S. authorities, the group still receives some funding from Al-Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiya terror network.⁵²⁴ At present, the Abu Sayyaf is believed to be harboring 2 of Indonesia's most wanted terrorists, Jemaah Islamiya militants Dulmatin and Umar Patek in the Southern Philippines. Authorities in Jakarta have identified both men as having participated in the 2002 Bali resort bombings which killed 202 people, including 88 Australians.⁵²⁵ Due to continuous pressure by RP security forces, the ASG is believed to be disrupted and on the run.⁵²⁶ Abu Kahlid, an Abu Sayyaf militant, in a clandestine interview with Al-Jazeera television in Basilan, said his group has lost the capability to launch large-scale attacks.⁵²⁷

Much of the success against the Abu Sayyaf can be attributed to the U.S.-Philippine military cooperation, including USSF capacity-building, Civil-military

⁵²¹ R. Kaplan, *Imperial Grunts* (New York: Random House, 2005), 145.

⁵²² "Abu Sayyaf Group," *FAS Intelligence Resource Program*, <http://www.fas.org/irp/world/para/asg.htm>, Accessed 14 August 2008.

⁵²³ Ibid.

⁵²⁴ Ibid.

⁵²⁵ Ibid.

⁵²⁶ "After Action Report of Operation Ultimatum," AFP, Zamboanga, Philippines, 19 March 2007. On file in the NPS CORE Lab.

⁵²⁷ "Abu Sayyaf Loses Foreign Funding," *The Mindanao Examiner*, 18 September 2007, <http://zamboangajournal.blogspot.com/2007/09/abu-sayyaf-loses-foreign-funding.html>, Accessed 14 August 2008.

operations, and support and intelligence support.⁵²⁸ The Philippine military has been pursuing the terrorists as well as working with the U.S. Agency for International Development (U.S.AID) and the State Department to help promote GRP legitimacy and create conditions that sustain peace. The efforts include the building of health clinics, roads and bridges and providing educational opportunities for the Muslim communities mostly affected by the Abu Sayyaf operations.⁵²⁹

C. THE FACTORS THAT BREED RELATIVE DEPRIVATION IN MINDANAO

Is Mindanao the land of promise or the land of conflict? While Mindanao is considered the food basket of the Philippines, it has the highest incidence of hunger. Ironically, the island is also home to large agricultural enterprises with the highest productivity and profitability — even as it is home to a large portion of the country's most deprived citizens.⁵³⁰ The low Human Development Index (HDI), which collectively measures the standard of living, education, health, security, access, and opportunity in a community, scores Mindanao as having relative deprivation.⁵³¹

Gurr says that

the primary source of the human capacity for violence appears to be the frustration-aggression mechanism. Frustration does not necessarily lead to violence, and violence for some men is motivated by expectations of gain. The anger induced by frustration, however, is a motivating force that disposes men to aggression, irrespective of its instrumentalities. If frustrations are sufficiently prolonged or sharply felt, aggression is quite likely, if not certain, to occur...Men who are frustrated have an innate disposition to do violence to its source in proportion to the intensity of their frustrations..."⁵³² The conditions of deprivation in Mindanao reduces the government's legitimacy. This creates opportunities to change the system through violent means. HDN studies further indicate that measures

⁵²⁸ "U.S. Diplomat Praises 2-pronged Approach in War on Terror," 26 January 2007, <http://www.asianjournal.com/?c=186&a=17865>, Accessed 14 August 2008.

⁵²⁹ Ibid.

⁵³⁰ Jing A. Mable, "Taking the High Road: The Arroyo initiatives Eight Years After, *Free Press Philippines* (special feature), 26 July 2008, 20.

⁵³¹ Don Mustapha Arbison Loong, "The MOA is Not Dead," 1.

⁵³² Gurr, 36 -37.

of deprivation that include disparities in access to reliable water supply, electricity, and education, predict the occurrence of armed conflicts.⁵³³

Lessons from Basilan, Bohol, and Sulu indicate that a successful COIN strategy in Mindanao will hinge on the ability to promote GRP legitimacy among the population. In the Philippines, the rise of insurgent movements evolved during periods of diminishing state legitimacy. When governance is at its low as the state fails to resolve its issues of poverty, inequality, injustice, and to provide the essential needs such as water, roads, health services, and education, perceptions of relative deprivation creates conditions that fuel revolutionary consciousness. The communists, as well as the Muslim separatists, have feasted on these issues to foment dissent and division in the Philippine society, making it ripe for any revolution. In terms of recruitment, “those who feel that society as a whole has the least to offer them are the most likely to join.”⁵³⁴ Apart from relative deprivation, conditions of rising expectations also facilitate the development of revolutionary consciousness.⁵³⁵

Corruption, poor governance, and poverty feed the communist insurgency. Continuous violence pitting the military and the New People’s Army rages on in the poorly developed areas of eastern Mindanao. This frightens investors and often causes massive displacements in indigenous communities.⁵³⁶ In Muslim Mindanao particularly, it could be deduced that Muslim revolutionary consciousness arose out of the injustices against: (1) the Moro identity; (2) the Moro sovereignty; and (3) the Moro integral development. The injustices against the Moro identity were the centuries of effort to “*subjugate, assimilate and integrate the Bangsamoro* without regard to their historical and cultural make-up.”⁵³⁷ In all dimensions of human development — political, economic, educational, and cultural —, the Moro population continues to lag far behind

⁵³³ Gurr, ix.

⁵³⁴ Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 118.

⁵³⁵ Banlaoi interview.

⁵³⁶ Marilou Aguirre, “Communists Can Be Defeated if Arroyo Term is Extended, National Security Adviser Says,” *Davao Today*, 14 February 2008, <http://baluticious.blogspot.com/2008/02/communists-can-be-defeated-if-arroyo.html>, Accessed 10 July 2008.

⁵³⁷ Loong, 1.

its Christian Filipino counterparts.”⁵³⁸ Despite attempts to address the underlying issues, the Philippine state still falls short from achieving full legitimacy. In fact, relative deprivation and rising expectations pervade in the region and the issues that breed revolutionary consciousness are still present.

The current turmoil in Mindanao is symptomatic of the fundamental problem of a weak Filipino national identity arising from a weak Philippine state. Since most states are composed of several ethno-linguistic groups, the situation becomes polarized when a group dominates the rest. In the southern Philippines, the Muslims are now an anomaly in a country dominated by Catholics and heavily influenced by Spanish and American culture. Ever since the Spanish colonization of the Philippines in the mid-1500s, governments in Manila have aimed at both political domination and religious conversion in Mindanao.⁵³⁹ An integral part of this effort has been transmigration where Christians from other parts of the Philippines were encouraged to settle in the south. These programs altered the ethnic and religious balance in Mindanao – from an overall Muslim majority in Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago at the end of the 19th century to less than 17% of the population today – and precipitated bitter conflicts over land distribution and ownership.⁵⁴⁰ Moreover, Moros were unwilling to subscribe to Manila’s secular civil, political, judicial, and penal constitutional system. It is against this sociopolitical and economic background that the separatist Islamic insurgency in the southern Philippines has been fought since 1971.⁵⁴¹

The confluence of these factors became the solid basis for the struggle of the Muslims for self-determination.⁵⁴² Among others, the emerging grievance was born out of the perceived alienation of the Moros from the central government located in Manila. They were treated outside the Christian-dominated society. Their increased

⁵³⁸ Loong, 2.

⁵³⁹ Kareem M. Kamel, “Mindanao: The Hazy Shade of Peace in the Philippines,” *The Mindanao Examiner*, 21 August 2008.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid.

⁵⁴² “Mindanao Peace and Development Imperatives: A Call to Action,” *Philippine Development Forum*, March 26-27, 2008, [http://www.pdf.ph/downloads/MindaPDFfinal\(3-17-08\).pdf](http://www.pdf.ph/downloads/MindaPDFfinal(3-17-08).pdf), Accessed 4 August 2008.

impoverishment was a result of inadequate development assistance, strained relationship between Moro and Christian communities within Mindanao due to religious and cultural differences, and the persistent indifference among national government agencies on the plight of the Moros as different from the rest of Philippine society.⁵⁴³

Other literatures point to the fact that the Moro insurgency “is rooted in persistent material inequality, fueled by historical competition between ethnic and religious identities, sustained by diverse institutions embedded in Philippine society, and shaped by international forces. At various points in Philippine history, these factors have interacted with and reinforced one another.”⁵⁴⁴

1. Marginalization

The Mindanao problem is most commonly associated with land resettlement by Christian Filipinos in Mindanao. Although there had been small settlements of Christians on the island, historically they lived on lands claimed by the sultans and paid taxes to the latter. The political authority of the sultans and *datus*, however, was no longer recognized by the government created by U.S. administrators. Later on, the Americans introduced legal ownership to lands. Due to the absence of clear titles to most of these lands, this resulted in lands being turned over to Filipino administrators. Issues on land ownership became more complicated and critical during the Commonwealth period after 1935 when resettlement became part of an overall economic development plan for Mindanao. Efforts involved the confiscation of settled lands for purposes of economic development that virtually ignored the original Muslim inhabitants of the land.⁵⁴⁵ Among the policies that had effects later on were the legal reforms instituted under the American regime that discriminated against non-Christians. For example, new laws explicitly invalidated ancestral domain claims and set unequal limits on private land ownership for Christians and non-Christians.⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴³ Mindanao Peace and Development Imperatives, 2008..

⁵⁴⁴ “The Conflict in the Philippines,” *Catholic Peace-building Network*, <http://cpn.nd.edu/>, Accessed 3 August 2008.

⁵⁴⁵ Gross, 177-78.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

Moreover, the prejudicial land tenure reform begun under the Americans continued to appropriate lands for farming, plantations, and logging by settlers and large companies. This further marginalized the Muslims and IPs both economically and politically. Social tensions increased to the point that Christian, IP, and Muslim elites all began forming private armies.⁵⁴⁷ Even today, the contrast between a Christian and a Muslim community is prominent. Christian communities are well off while those of the Muslims are underdeveloped. Overall, the IPs and Moros in Mindanao are generally poorer, less secure in land tenure, less educated, less literate, and more infirm than their Christian peers.⁵⁴⁸ Analysts point out that ethnic and religious differences alone, however, do not lead to conflict. Most often, conflict results when the differences coincide with class and/or status inequalities. The existing ethno-religious hierarchy has its roots from the Spanish, American, and the independent Philippine government that relegated the IPs and the Muslims into minorities in the Philippine society. Even if they were integrated into the national life, the IPs and the Muslims remained at the bottom.

2. Migration

Records also show that the U.S. regime encouraged Christian Filipinos from the Northern Philippines to resettle in Mindanao. Specifically, during the American colonial period, the U.S. administrators promulgated several land laws that encouraged emigration to Mindanao. According to a study by Dr Samuel K. Tan of the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP-CIDS), these land laws deprived the Moros and the natives or lumads of the lands they regard as ancestral.⁵⁴⁹

Originally, the majority group in Mindanao, the Muslims became the minority within two generations. In the 1918 census, the Moros and lumad (the indigenous tribal people of Mindanao) still made up 78% of the Mindanao population while the Christians comprised the remaining 22%.⁵⁵⁰ The 1970 census, however, revealed a big reversal: the

⁵⁴⁷ Gross, 177-78.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁹ Jun Anave, "The Socio-political Dimension of the Mindanao Conflict," *Third World Network*, June 2000, <http://www.twinside.org.sg/title/2057.htm>, Accessed 14 August 2008.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid.

Christians outnumbered the natives 3 to 1.⁵⁵¹ In fact, Christian migrants in central Mindanao increased from .7 million in 1948 to 2.4 million in 1970.⁵⁵² As a consequence, the population in Mindanao was reduced to 17% Muslim and only 5% nationwide.⁵⁵³ The new settlers then acquired more lands, thus, steadily eroding the Muslims' ancestral domain. Since the government enforced the laws of land ownership, this was perceived by the Muslims as a Christian encroachment into their former territories.

3. Poverty

Poverty is a major contributor to the Muslim and communist grievances in Mindanao. Based on the 1997 Poverty Statistics from the National Statistical Coordination Board, Mindanao records the highest poverty incidence among the island groups with half of its population mired in poverty. Of the country's 27 million poor population, Mindanao accounts for 32% of the figure.⁵⁵⁴ Furthermore, the ARMM has the highest poverty incidence among the country's 15 regions with 62.5% of its population considered poor.⁵⁵⁵ It also has the lowest per capita gross regional domestic product in the country and the second lowest average annual family income.⁵⁵⁶

4. Tribal Tradition

Rido is also a source of violence that aggravates the Mindanao problem. Rido is a blood feud or a chain of killings provoked by an affront and disgrace to the honor of a family or its members.⁵⁵⁷ Weak law enforcement and a weak justice system manifest themselves in the privatization of justice. Clan and family feuds, for example, are so widespread in Marawi City, the center of the Maranaos, that according to a Manila-based Muslim activist from Marawi, many Maranaos have emigrated from Marawi to escape

⁵⁵¹ Anave, "The Socio-political Dimension of the Mindanao Conflict."

⁵⁵² Ibid.

⁵⁵³ Morales, 35.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁷ Durante et al., "Management of Clan Conflict and Rido Among the Tausug, Maguindanao, Maranao, Sama and Yakan Tribes," *Ateneo de Zamboanga University Research Center and Notre Dame University Research Center*, June 2005.

the ridos.⁵⁵⁸ According to a Social Weather Stations survey, 72 percent of ARMM respondents approved of personal retribution to avenge a family member in cases of murder, rape, or injury.⁵⁵⁹

5. Mindanao as the “Wild West of the Philippines”

Acop argues that “poor national governance is currently the biggest and most immediate threat to our national security. Poor governance includes all the failures of the national leaders to reduce the population growth rate fast enough, collect adequate taxes, enforce laws consistently and equitably in private and public life, join the export boom in the 70s and 80s and ride the tourism boom in the 90s, curb corruption, create enough jobs in the domestic economy, and end the long-running Maoist insurgency.”⁵⁶⁰ Since it is considered a poorly governed region, these governance problems manifest best in Muslim Mindanao. Banlaoi regards this area as the “Wild West of the Philippines.”⁵⁶¹

6. Political Power Rests on the Few, not the Population

Elitist politics has thrived in the Philippines for centuries. From the Spanish to the Americans, the easiest way to gain influence over the local population was to co-opt the Filipino landed elites. Apart from controlling the largest corporations, business ventures, and resources of the country, the elites have translated that economic power to political power. Thus, a cacique democracy pervades in the Filipino culture which hardly touched by globalization and international affairs.⁵⁶² It was above all the political innovations of the Americans that created a solid, visible ‘national oligarchy’ through the creation of a Congress-style bicameral legislature based, in the lower house at least, on single-district, winner-take-all elections. These mestizo *nouveaux riches* have an economic base in hacienda agriculture — not in the capital city. In Muslim communities, they have their own cacique democracy which is controlled by the few traditional datus or sultans.

⁵⁵⁸ Durante et al., “Management of Clan Conflict and Rido Among the Tausug, Maguindanao, Maranao, Sama and Yakan Tribes.”

⁵⁵⁹ Rabasa, Case Study, 138..

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁶¹ Rommel Banlaoi interview.

⁵⁶² Benedict Anderson, “Cacique Democracy in the Philippines: Origins and Dreams,” http://www.public-conversations.org.za/pdfs/anderson_12.pdf, Accessed 15 July 2008.

Rivalry among political clans, competition for lucrative public seats, a trigger-happy culture, and Muslim and communist insurgencies have made Philippine elections bloody affairs.⁵⁶³ As long as terrorism and fraud — or guns, goons, and gold — intrude on Philippine elections, democratization will be incomplete.⁵⁶⁴

7. Unpopular Leadership

While serious efforts are in place to build the government's legitimacy, the failure of the president to generate support hinders these modest efforts. A recent survey shows that Philippine President Arroyo's public support rating plunged to a record low, making her the country's most unpopular president since democracy was restored in 1986. The independent Social Weather Stations survey found that 22 percent of Filipinos were satisfied and 60 percent dissatisfied with Arroyo's performance.⁵⁶⁵ Her diminishing popularity could translate to diminishing trust and confidence of the whole structure of governance.

8. Uninformed Population

Compounding the problem is the seeming lack of information reaching the grassroots. In his paper entitled "Assessing the RP's National Security Strategies: The Alternate Views," Acop observes that "the country has a very large proportion of its population uninformed. Thus, this segment of the population is prone to manipulation and propaganda by just any sector of society."⁵⁶⁶ Banlaoi points out that the Philippine Information Agency (PIA) has not widened its audience.⁵⁶⁷ He says that the PIA should reach out to the civilians to spread the gospel, particularly the good stories of Bohol, Basilan, and Sulu. The government should ensure that the people are informed about

⁵⁶³ "Gunsmiths and Goons Get Set for Philippine Election," *Reuters*, 29 November 2006, <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/MAN289646.htm>, Accessed 22 August 2008.

⁵⁶⁴ John L. Linantud, "Whither Guns, Goons and Gold? The Decline of Factional Election Violence in the Philippines," *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 1998, <http://www.questia.com/googlescholar.qst?docid=5002303898>, Accessed 17 July 2008.

⁵⁶⁵ Teresa Cerojano, "Arroyo's Approval Rating in Philippines Hits Low," *Associated Press*, 21 July 2008.

⁵⁶⁶ Dencio S. Acop, *Assessing RP's National Security Strategies: The Alternate Views*, 2008.

⁵⁶⁷ Banlaoi interview.

what has been done, being done, and will be done. On resolving the problem in Mindanao, there are a lot of good stories to tell. For example, the story of Farma Abduhadi of Jolo tells the fascinating change of her perceptions about the military. Previously, she learned that the military is the monster that kills her neighbors. Later on, she appreciated what the monster had done which was to build roads and schools that, over the years, have been wanting in Sulu.⁵⁶⁸

9. Violent Culture Breeds Violence

Project Ploughshares reports that more than 80 percent of the 40 wars in 1999 occurred in countries at the bottom half of the UNDP Human Development Index (HDI) rankings.⁵⁶⁹ The effect of the loss of lives and destruction of economic-social infrastructure is so massive that a deeper understanding of the impact of conflict cannot be emphasized more.⁵⁷⁰ Another factor in the Mindanao problem is the Moro culture that considers a gun or other weapon as sacred.⁵⁷¹ There are too many guns in Mindanao with an estimated number of loose firearms at 100,000. Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi once said, “A man who holds a gun without ideology is a potential killer. Imagine a man or a group of people who own high-powered firearms with no means of livelihood. What sort of action would he or they take to feed their families? The culture of violence among the Moro people should also be addressed in order to solve the age-old Mindanao problem.”⁵⁷²

10. Inconsistent Policies

While the government policy is to deal with insurgency via an indirect holistic approach, there have been frequent deviations from the policy by resorting to the use of

⁵⁶⁸ Abduhadi, Farma, “AFP Has Made a Significant Impact on Sulu,” *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (photocopy of the article provided by Major General Dolorfino during the interview conducted by the authors on 19 September 2008 at Headquarters Philippine Marines, Fort Bonifacio, Makati City, Philippines).

⁵⁶⁹ Malapit, et al., “Does Violent Conflict Make Chronic Poverty More Likely? The Mindanao Experience,” 28 February 2003, <http://www.chronicpoverty.org/pdfs/malapit.pdf>, Accessed 21 September 2008.

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁷¹ Malapit, 2003.

⁵⁷² Ibid.

force. After the failed signing of the GRP-MILF Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain, the government pursued military actions in response to the MILF attacks of civilian villages in Lanao del Norte. It appears that the government lacks a comprehensive approach as shown by the changing positions of GRP after the failed MOA.⁵⁷³ This implies the lack of planning and definitive direction on the GRP strategy vis-à-vis the MILF.⁵⁷⁴ In the past, policies changed with new leaders: Ramos sought peace in the 1990s while Estrada pursued war in 2000 in Mindanao. Currently, the government policy is to dialogue with the communities affected by the conflict. In a sense, extreme changes in policy affect the implementation of peace and development initiatives in the region. This makes the people of Mindanao question the sincerity and sustainability of the efforts of the central government in addressing their concerns.⁵⁷⁵

11. Endless Displacement of Civilians

In 2007, the head of the Commission on Human Rights, De Lima, stated that, “An estimated two million Filipinos became internally displaced persons due to armed conflicts in Mindanao from 2000 to 2006. This number did not include those who were forced to abandon their homes because of natural calamities, national development projects, and other disputes.” De Lima said that in the Philippines, major displacements “are due to ideology-based conflict, political rivalry, clan wars, community violence and military campaign against terrorism.”⁵⁷⁶ Latest government figures show that nearly 400,000 people have been displaced by the ongoing fighting in Central Mindanao that began after MILF renegade commanders went on a rampage in protest of the non-signing of the MOA-AD in August of 2008.⁵⁷⁷

⁵⁷³ Carolyn Arguilas, Interview by Major Mortela, She noted the changing positions of the GRP regarding the failed signing of MOA-AD between the GRP and the MILF Davao City, Philippines, 22 September 2008.

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁶ Nikko Dizon, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 17 October 2008.

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid.

D. LESSONS FROM BASILAN, BOHOL AND SULU

Because the government resolved the root causes of grievances being exploited by insurgents, the Huk insurgency died a natural death. With the successive Philippine administrations, however, the insurgency rose up from its tomb because the roots of the problem intensified once again.⁵⁷⁸ Will the Bohol, Basilan, and Sulu models work when used as a strategy in the whole of Mindanao? Did these models address relative deprivation and revolutionary consciousness? How does an indirect strategy anchored on the Diamond Model play in Mindanao?

As has been proven effective in Bohol, Basilan, and Sulu, any future strategy should be people-centered and anchored on an indirect approach demonstrated by McCormick's Diamond Model. Brigadier General Richard L. Clutterbuck in the book "Long, Long War: Counterinsurgency in Malaya and Vietnam" says, "the first reaction to guerilla warfare must be to protect and control the population." If the target is the population and not the enemy, then a sensitive government must be able to bring to the fore the active participation and support of civilian communities. Community-based programs that integrate the minds of the stakeholders could definitely bring legitimacy in any state.⁵⁷⁹ The value of legitimacy is even expressed in the principles of the Philippine National Unification Commission (NUC) that says:

A national *peace* program should present a peace vision and process that is community-based, reflecting the sentiments, values and principles important to Filipinos. Thus, it shall not be defined by the government alone, nor by the contending armed groups only, but by all Filipinos as one community.⁵⁸⁰

Applying the principles of the Diamond Model, the strategy should begin along leg 1 and leg 2 of the model to address the underlying causes of the populations support for the insurgencies. The strategy should reflect a culture of peace (COP) framework or roadmap for the future, crafted with the involvement of stakeholders. COP is defined as

⁵⁷⁸ Leonardo I. Peña, Finding the Missing Link to a Successful Philippine Counterinsurgency Strategy (Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, June 2007), 56.

⁵⁷⁹ Julio Cesar L. Benitez, "Community Practices of the Culture of Peace," *Government of the Philippines-United Nations, Multi-Donor Programme 3*, Davao City, Philippines, 2004.

⁵⁸⁰ "Guiding Principles," *National Unification Commission* (1986-92).

“a shared way of living that promotes peace.”⁵⁸¹ It includes key processes, such as peace building, healing and reconciliation, sustainable development, good governance, and empowerment.⁵⁸² The components include policy advocacy that builds consensus, community participation, and media mobilization. Community participation in the promotion of COP should be undertaken through use of community radio, integration of peace education into community-based literacy and continuing education programs, training of women as peace advocates, forums for organized religious leaders, and special education for law enforcement agents, such as the military and police.⁵⁸³ This will help to promote the legitimacy of the plan and contribute to its durability. This strategy should be comprehensive in addressing issues beyond COIN and include a review and possible revision of GRP policies governing Mindanao. While the heart of this indirect strategy is a non-kinetic solution, this does not preclude the government from employing its coercive instruments to prosecute the violators of peace.

Generally, the operational environment provides the basis for any given strategy. Any environment is unique in terms of the dynamics of politics, information, economy, and security as they interplay with the culture and identity of the nation. The perception of legitimacy may also differ among people of different races and regions. The manner by which people recognize as well as resolve their problems, changes relative to context or environment. As such, while the models in the Philippines had a profound effect in addressing the threats, there is no guarantee that these will work in other areas. Given this, Basilan, Bohol, and Sulu cannot be “perfect templates” to any insurgency in the world. Any strategy to be adopted in any country shall be justified by the context or operational environment. There is no one-size-fits-all model for COIN. Successful models, however, provide important lessons that could enhance the prosecution of any COIN strategy. In the final analysis, the models may provide ideas that work in Mindanao, but the government must be careful to analyze the differences in context that may require some innovations or changes in strategy. In the case of the Bohol insurgency,

⁵⁸¹ Benitez, 2004.

⁵⁸² Ibid.

⁵⁸³ Ibid., 2.

success could be largely attributed to the unity of Boholanos.⁵⁸⁴ The case of Mindanao is very different. Even among tribes, there are serious schisms that could hamper unity and harmony. These issues have not been resolved. Among the Muslim threat groups, there are also serious differences in ideology. Despite efforts to project a unified Bangsamoro front, the Muslim separatist movement is very much splintered.⁵⁸⁵ Of late, resources are starting to come into Mindanao, but the filtering of benefits of reforms, development, and poverty alleviation programs will take time.

On the other hand, the Sulu and Basilan Models worked in as far as addressing the problems on a shorter term. The building of infrastructures, provision of basic services, such as water supply, health and education, and attempts to address poverty are just the necessary components of a longer-term commitment to address the roots. As long as poverty, unemployment, injustice, and marginalization remain, the seeds that breed discontent could still sprout and provide the rationale to challenge the Philippine state's legitimacy. In Basilan and Jolo, cases of kidnapping have occurred recently. This indicates that the underlying problems have not been totally uprooted. Arguilas says that "the Philippine government should not focus on COIN." The problems that create a perception of relative deprivation and that give rise to revolutionary consciousness are not always COIN-related. Any strategy should be comprehensive. COIN will just be a part of it.⁵⁸⁶ Similar to Bohol, the overall template revolved on the fight against poverty and, thus, insurgency-related solutions are tied to it.

E. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BUILDING GRP LEGITIMACY IN MINDANAO

To address the conflict in Mindanao, the GRP must reduce the conditions that create relative deprivation and revolutionary consciousness by building the legitimacy of the Philippine state. It also much improve the socio-economic conditions.

⁵⁸⁴ Aumentado, 2007.

⁵⁸⁵ Abinales, 59.

⁵⁸⁶ Arguilas interview.

1. Ensure Good Governance from the National to the Local Level

Aware of the operational system of a highly politicized and unstable organization in the Philippines, there is a need to recognize the importance of instituting good governance and shared responsibilities. This would entail improving the efficiency of the state bureaucracy. This would be, anchored on the premise of providing transparency, accountability, consistency, people participation and partnership with LGUs, private sector, and civil society.⁵⁸⁷ Governance could also be improved through partnership building. This will consist of the empowerment of the local leaders and their constituents, the development and organization of a core of local organizers and development facilitators, and the openness of the local government units and line agency functionaries to participatory and innovative approaches to peace building and development.⁵⁸⁸ In this case, these approaches will not only ensure empowerment, but also ownership of the programs. For example, in the development of Peace and Development Communities (PDC) in Mindanao, it is important that for any development endeavor to be relevant to the beneficiaries, it is imperative that the people are involved even in the earliest stages. In fact, the development plan should come from them.⁵⁸⁹ To ensure a people-centered approach even on governance, a bottom-up strategy should employ the active involvement of the barangay. This governance framework has legal basis in Republic Act 7160 (The Local Government Code of 1991) which underlines that:

... the barangay serves as the primary planning and implementing unit of government policies, plans, programs, projects and activities, and a forum where collective views of the people in the community may be expressed, crystallized and considered and where disputes may be amicably settled.⁵⁹⁰

⁵⁸⁷ Rita T. Dela Cruz, "Panganiban is Back at DA's Helm," Vol. 6 No. 7, 1-31 July 2005, http://www.bar.gov.ph/barchronicle/2005/jul05_1-31_panganibanis.asp, Accessed 25 October 2008.

⁵⁸⁸ Eric S. Libre, "Improved Governance Through Partnership Building," *The GOP-UN MDP3 Experience*, 2004, Davao City, Philippines, 29.

⁵⁸⁹ Benitez, 40.

⁵⁹⁰ Ilagan et al, 9.

2. Institute Long-term Political Reforms

Political change is equally essential to the successful resolution of an insurgency with that of socio-economic development.⁵⁹¹ In essence, the evolution of the armed conflict on the communist front will depend much on the evolution of Philippine democracy itself. Political conditions have to change, but there is a difference between political change for counterinsurgency and political change to address the people's need.⁵⁹² Election reforms that would allow a complete expression of people's choices would improve legitimacy and, subsequently, revolutionary consciousness arising out of frustrations on the political process. Moreover, more Muslim leaders in the national government and other policy-making bodies would mean more agenda on Mindanao, put the region in the national discourse, and avoid the unilateral decisions of Imperial Manila.

3. Work with Both Civil Society and Elites

Outside Congress, a vibrant civil society has emerged over the last 2 decades, providing non-governmental organizations and their leaders with a powerful political voice.⁵⁹³ In southern Philippines, Kusog Mindanao is a civil society organization committed to the promotion of peace and development of Mindanawons. It provides a mechanism for consensus building through major organizations, such as the Mindanao Business Council, Bishops-Ulama Conference, Mindanao Media Association, Mindanao Cooperatives, and the Confederation of Mindanao Governors, City Mayors, and Municipal Mayors.⁵⁹⁴ In addition, the middle class in the Philippines has grown in size and has become a countervailing force to the traditional elites.⁵⁹⁵ Apart from the effects of a growing middle class, the government should also encourage more political participation and openness. For example, it could work with the traditional elites to allow the revolutionaries to reach out to their communities by opening their electoral

⁵⁹¹ Philippine Human Development Report 2005, 83.

⁵⁹² Ibid., 90.

⁵⁹³ Elisa Pereira Reis, and Mick Moore, *Elite Perceptions of Poverty and Inequality* (London: Zed Books, 2005), 62.

⁵⁹⁴ Rey Teves, Interview by Major Mortela, Executive Director, Technical Assistance Center for the Development of Rural and Urban Poor, Davao City, Philippines, 22 September 2008.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid.

bailiwicks.⁵⁹⁶ This will help temper differences and prevent political repression that has led to revolutionary consciousness in the past.

4. Pursue Economic Reforms to Ensure an Enhanced Quality of Life

There is a time-tested rule that for societies to achieve true freedom and stability, economic development must precede political development.⁵⁹⁷ If the latter outruns economic and administrative efficiencies, then democratic systems are bound to flounder.⁵⁹⁸ Dr Jose Rizal, the Philippines' national hero, once acknowledged that "no people can have liberties without first having material prosperity."⁵⁹⁹ This shows that without freedom from want, all other freedoms would be meaningless. As such, the critical task is for the government to focus on raising the quality of life of its people.

5. Address Poverty

The current anti-poverty policy orientation recognizes that areas having high measures of violent conflict and ensuing devastation should be prioritized with a corresponding amount of dedicated resources for basic services. The pouring in of resources to fill basic needs may, thus, address deprivation in the conflict-stricken areas and, likewise, address the causal link from poverty to conflict.⁶⁰⁰ It can, therefore, be argued that spending on poverty alleviation is an efficient approach in addressing conflict since it supposedly addresses the primary driver of conflict. Further, current poverty alleviation efforts, at best, make up for immediate deprivation effects of violent conflict.⁶⁰¹ This poverty alleviation strategy, typical of an indirect approach to insurgency, manifested its efficacy in reducing the conditions that create revolutionary consciousness and, in turn, reducing conflict and violence in Bohol. Under the Philippine experience, the following seven basic imperatives to combat poverty in developing nations should be pursued vigorously: sound macroeconomic policies; strong partnership

⁵⁹⁶ Abinales, 44.

⁵⁹⁷ David C. Martinez, *A Country of Our Own: Partitioning the Philippines* (Los Angeles: Bisaya Books, 2004), 239-240.

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid..

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁰ Malapit, et al., 2003.

⁶⁰¹ Ibid.

between national government and local government units; equitable asset distribution; infrastructure development; rural and agricultural development; ensure food security, economic competitiveness, regional growth and national self-reliance; good governance and accurately controlled public investments; and political stability.⁶⁰² One modest program that the government should actively support and encourage is microfinance. The Philippines' microfinance development program has made extensive progress in the provision of microfinance services for the poor. This is led by institutions such as the Philippine Central Bank and the People's Credit and Finance Corporation.⁶⁰³

6. War on Ideas and Emotions

Is it just a war on ideas? Gail Ilagan says that it could be "war on emotions." In fact, each side appeals to the emotions of the people. So the realm of insurgency and counterinsurgency is not all about perceptions. We should not try to appeal to what people think, but to what they feel. If legitimacy is to be developed, these 2 concepts should go together. Insurgencies develop in a way because some people think and feel that a state is illegitimate.⁶⁰⁴ Communication is important in cementing communal peace and is receptive to the use of available technology. For example, the operation of the radio can bring to more far-flung communities the good news of a more developmentally-oriented LGU bureaucracy, the monitoring of the peace and order situation, and the information on communal activities that would be opportunities to strengthen the social cohesion.⁶⁰⁵

7. More Carrots than Sticks

While a two-pronged approach involving soft and hard approaches is necessary, it is important that the Philippine government focuses on peace building. This means going

⁶⁰² "Panganiban Left for Bangkok to Address UNESCAP Poverty Reduction Conference, 11 December 2007, http://www.napc.gov.ph/PRESS%20RELEASES/news_details_2007-1211.htm, Accessed 12 November 2008.

⁶⁰³ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁴ Gail Ilagan, Interview by Major Mortela, She teaches at the Psychology Department of Ateneo de Davao University, and is a correspondent of Mindanews, Davao City, Philippines, 22 September 2008.

⁶⁰⁵ Gail Tan-Ilagan, Charina Sanz-Zarate and Claire A. Dy. "Mainstreaming Political Participation in Marginal Communities, *Government of the Philippines-United Nations, Multi-Donor Programme 3*, Davao City, Philippines, 2004, 36.

back to the negotiation table to talk peace and extending an iron fist to hard-core criminals and terrorists.⁶⁰⁶ The Philippines could learn from the experience of communist insurgents in other countries who have come to peace agreements with their respective governments. For instance, in Nepal, the Communists have been included in their government. In China, the Communists are the ones running their government. The path to peace is a better alternative as violence against violence is not the solution.⁶⁰⁷ Thus, it would be better if the government would continue with the peace talks since talking builds trust and allows both sides to collectively seek solutions that will end a conflict — whether with the MILF or the CPP/NPA/NDF. It is important to couple the efforts to talk peace with well-meaning or well-intentioned programs that address needs down to the grassroots level. In Bohol alone, poverty reduction programs have decreased rebel-sightings and insurgent activities, promoted resettlement, and increased the number of rebel returnees alongside a significant decrease in the incidence of poverty. Peace can not be attained by the usual government solution of aggressive militarization.

8. Manage Conflict that Hinders the Delivery of Basic Services

The sporadic outbreaks of armed violence sabotage efforts at cohesion as community life becomes subject to abrupt interruptions. LGU resources that could have been better harnessed for the delivery of basic services are instead diverted for relief and rehabilitation. Any volatile situation poses a threat to the delivery of services as agencies veer away from areas of conflict.⁶⁰⁸ Nobody wants to see the development of Mindanao put at risk because of the renewed conflict. Even if the targeting scheme of the anti-poverty program is efficient, conflict may block the delivery of basic services. In this scenario, poverty alleviation objectives are not met. This is not due to short-term unresponsiveness of target areas that, in turn, would imply a rethinking of anti-poverty measures. Rather, objectives are not attained due to the inability of anti-poverty efforts to

⁶⁰⁶ Rey Anthony Chui, Philippine Information Agency (PIA) Release, 18 August 2007, <http://pia.gov.ph/?m=12&sec=reader&rp=1&fi=p070818.htm&no=8&date>, Accessed 15 October 2008. Chui, 2007.

⁶⁰⁷ Jorge Cabalit, “Can Military Solution Solve the Insurgency Problem?,” *The Bohol Chronicle*, 25 June 2006, Volume 52, # 12, <http://www.boholchronicle.com/jun06/25/viewpoints.htm>, Accessed 10 August 2008.

⁶⁰⁸ Ilagan, Zarate and Dy, 2004, 8.

reach the target populations. Monitoring schemes must be clear on this distinction. With regard to implementation, the administration should look into the convergence of poverty alleviation policies and peace-building efforts — at least in the case of Mindanao.⁶⁰⁹ There is also a need to manage Rido. Clan feuds are common in many parts of the southern Philippines. Weapons are plentiful in Muslim provinces and several armed groups have a presence there despite earlier initiatives to ban illegal firearms.⁶¹⁰ Research funded by the U.S.-based Asia Foundation found that the number of violent conflicts between clans or families has risen in recent years in 11 southern provinces. This has disrupted peace talks with Muslim rebels in the area and displaced large numbers of villagers and crippling communities.⁶¹¹

9. Relief and Rehabilitation of War-torn Areas

Displaced communities are a responsibility of the state. The cycle of conflict in Mindanao has created a sort of a diaspora for the evacuees “denied of their rights to make choices and decisions for themselves and their community due to violence, deprivation and coercion.”⁶¹² The government should take care of these evacuees and help them return to their communities and build normal lives. This would entail “designing and reconstructing of community resources and facilities like schools, houses, places of worship, traditional communal and multi-purpose halls, health centers, the continuation of planting cycles and abundance of harvest, purchase of farm tools, holding of elections, observance of rituals... and the functioning of everyday life.”⁶¹³ The rebuilding of physical component of their lives should go with rebuilding their mental capacities that also have been devastated while constantly fleeing their homes torn during wars.

⁶⁰⁹ Malapit, Clemente, and Yunzal, 2003.

⁶¹⁰ “2 Killed, 9 Wounded in Clan War in Mindanao,” *Philippine Star*, 31 October 2008, <http://www.philstar.com/index.php?Local%20News&p=54&type=2&sec=2&aid=2008103111illagers and crippling communities>, Accessed 19 October 2008.

⁶¹¹ Ibid.

⁶¹² Jose Jowel Canuday, “Celebrating the Power of the Displaced,” *Tambara*, Ateneo de Davao University Journal, Volume 22, December 2005, 60.

⁶¹³ Ibid., 63.

10. Establish Guidepost of Performance

Like schedules, there should be guideposts that clearly manifest the intentions of the state and the will of the people. It steers the state toward the right direction and provides guidance along the way. It allows the state to make occasional stops to evaluate for only in doing so can there be a reality check. In any event that there are deviations from the original goal, the best pulse is always the perception of the people. Since it builds consensus that would later on translate to improved legitimacy for the state, a comprehensive consultation is a safe formula.

F. SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONDUCTING COIN IN MINDANAO.

The immediate threat to peace in Mindanao is represented by the multiple insurgent, terror, and criminal groups operating there. To be successful, the GRP must deal with the insurgent groups and the underlying causes that support them simultaneously. As they did in Basilan, Bohol, and Sulu, the AFP must develop a strategy that uses the right mix of COIN (the indirect approach) and CT (the direct approach). This mix of direct and indirect strategies is not intuitive, but requires comprehensive assessments of the operational environment. As demonstrated in our 3 case studies, sometimes the quickest way to defeat an insurgency is through the indirect approach. The lessons learned from Basilan, Bohol, and Sulu have allowed the AFP to “operationalize” the development of an effective COIN strategy.

In the following recommendations we will apply the lessons learned from these three previous COIN strategies and apply them to the conflict in Mindanao.

1. The Overarching COIN Strategy

The underlying cause of support for both the communist and Muslim insurgencies in Mindanao are similar to those found on Basilan, Bohol, and Sulu. Preliminary indications are demonstrating that a similar strategy can be effective in Mindanao. The situation in Mindanao, however, is made far more complicated by the GRP’s desire to maintain the peace treaty with the MILF. Although there is not currently a treaty with the CPP, the GRP also wants to avoid provoking a conflict with the NPA by attempting to

establish its security apparatus too quickly. Any COIN strategy implemented in Mindanao will consist of short, medium, and long-term goals. Begun in 2003, the AFP, assisted by the U.S., has conducted dozens of CMO projects in Mindanao to promote GRP legitimacy and begin to address the socio-economic deprivation. Funded largely by the U.S. State Department's U.S.AID, millions of dollars have been spent on improving access and availability to basic resources, such as clean drinking water, shelter, education, and medical care.⁶¹⁴ This strategy has had quantifiable effects on the support the MILF and ASG are receiving from the population in Mindanao.⁶¹⁵ The AFP's recent establishment of the NDSC provides an excellent example of the GRP's understanding of the strategy-legitimacy nexus and their confidence in the effectiveness of the indirect approach. The AFP's heavy use of the IA strategy and careful application of the CT capability clearly demonstrates the GRP's ability to manage the appropriate balance within Borer's "Strategic-legitimacy Nexus."⁶¹⁶

The progress demonstrated by the GRP in addressing the conflict in the Southern Philippines is also illustrative of SOCPAC's mid-term goal of leveraging and expanding the HN COIN and CT capacity throughout the region. This encompasses the Southern Philippines, Indonesia, and Eastern Malaysia.⁶¹⁷

Capitalizing on the success of the indirect approach, the AFP must maintain pressure on the insurgent groups through the improvement of security and influence of the PSF. As was the case on Basilan and Sulu, the main effort should remain CMO or indirect-focused on the population and promoting the principles of good governance. The supporting effort or direct approach will focus along leg 3 of the Diamond Model. It will strike the insurgency as it becomes visible due to the success of the indirect approach conducted along legs 1 and 2 of the model.

⁶¹⁴ "Promoting Peace and Prosperity in Mindanao," *U.S.AID-Philippines*, http://philippines.usaid.gov/documents/about/aid_minda_ovw.pdf, Accessed 12 November 2008.

⁶¹⁵ The MILF admitted on its Central Committee website that the U.S./RP CMO strategy was, in their word, "more lethal than brute force." According to Col Maxwell and information compiled by the JSOTF-P, the MILF also began conducting their own CMO projects and MEDCAPs in response to CMO project conducted by the U.S./AFP in communities known to support the MILF.

⁶¹⁶ Douglas A. Borer, *The Strategy-Legitimacy Nexus: Why America Wins or Loses at Irregular War*. Unpublished book manuscript under contract for Stanford University Press. Forthcoming, 2010.

⁶¹⁷ Ibid.

A COIN strategy can be developed along the four lines of operation used in the Sulu strategy:

a. *Capacity Building and Intelligence Fusion*

As General Fridovich points out, “the near term focus of SOCPAC is the nexus of insurgency and terrorist actions in the Republic of the Philippines.”⁶¹⁸ Improving the capacity of AFP units throughout Mindanao will be a long-term and challenging endeavor, but the efforts have had a very beneficial effect on the AFP and their success against threat groups in the Sulu Archipelago and Mindanao.⁶¹⁹ U.S. assistance in terms of resources and personnel is limited. The size of Mindanao and large number of PSF units make it unfeasible for the U.S. to conduct capacity-building in all needed areas. The division of Mindanao into 2 separate commands, WESTMINCOM and EASTMINCOM, has created challenges for the AFP. Drawn along AFP unit AORs, the line delineating WESTMINCOM from EASTMINCOM bisects one the most lawless areas in Mindanao, and Lanao. As with other border areas, lawless elements are able to use this area to more easily avoid capture or pursuit by PSF forces. Any type of coordination that PSF units must do to cross the AOR border will potentially slow them down. This would allow the lawless elements to escape.

The division of Mindanao also creates a challenge for the JSOTF, requiring it to liaison with and coordinate assistance through both commands separately. This presents logistical and resource challenges for the Zamboanga-based JSOTF. The widespread presence of the CPP in EASTMINCOM also complicates U.S. involvement in EASTMINCOM. GRP sensitivity to the tenuous relationship with the CPP has, thus far, kept U.S. involvement in the EASTMINCOM AOR to a minimum. The limited resources of the JSOTF have also limited it from expanding considerable assistance and advice to Philippine police and other security forces.

The limitations of the JSOTF could be addressed by establishing a cadre training program where PSF members are trained to conduct capacity-building training

⁶¹⁸ D. Fridovich, “Statement of SOCPAC Commander before the Senate Armed Services Committee on Terrorism and Unconventional Threats and Capabilities,” 28 February 2007, 8.

⁶¹⁹ WESTMINCOM AAR of Operation Ultimatum, Zamboanga City, PI, 29 March 2007.

for other PSF personnel and units. The JSOTF could also establish a COIN cadre training program for AFP Special Forces units and, thus, assist them in becoming advisors to other AFP units.

The JSOG have demonstrated tremendous capacity during Operations in both Sulu and on Mindanao. It should serve as the lead element in the CT campaign against the ASG/JI and other threat groups. As they did during Operation Ultimatum on Sulu, the JSOG staff should deploy to Mindanao and work directly with the TF commander in conducting raids against threat groups identified through intelligence. Working jointly with the Military Intelligence Groups (MIG) of the AFP, the LRC, NAVSOU, and other JSOG units have proven highly effective in finding and fixing terrorist suspects. If the MIG is able to plug into the local PNP intelligence network, it should prove all the more valuable.

The RP/U.S. should also expand the capacity-building efforts to the PNP and other local security officials. As Kelev Sepp points out, “Intelligence operations that help detect terrorist insurgents for arrest and prosecution are the single most important practice to protecting a population from threats to its security.”⁶²⁰ Local police are the best positioned and effective force to provide accurate intelligence on the populace. This is because of their membership within the local community and their long-term presence in that environment. AFP and paramilitary units should work closely with the PNP and other constabulary forces to maximize the use of this valuable source of information.

The RP/U.S. also faces a difficult challenge in continuing U.S. assistance and advising in Mindanao. As mentioned earlier, the GRP negotiations with the MILF have created a tenuous situation in Mindanao that is exacerbated by the presence of U.S. advisors.⁶²¹ Mindanao stationed AFP forces benefit significantly from USSF capacity-building efforts, but their presence on Mindanao continues to be the topic of heated debate among opponents within the Philippine government, media, and population.⁶²² We conducted numerous interviews with AFP and GRP officials for this paper and

⁶²⁰ K. Sepp, “Best Practices in Counterinsurgency,” *Military Review*, May-June 2005, 9.

⁶²¹ Banlaoi, Mendoza, Dolorfino, Adan and Esperon interviews.

⁶²² Ibid.

discussed at length the U.S. role in the GRP's fight against threat groups in the Southern Philippines. These interviews included, Rommel Banlaoi, director of the Philippine Institute for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, General (ret) Rodolfo Mendoza, former commander of the PNP, Undersecretary Adan of the VFA Commission, and Secretary Hermogenes Esperon, the Presidential Peace Advisor and architect of the MOA-AD and recently retired commander of the AFP from 2006 to 2008. Each of these men expressed the value of U.S. assistance in defeating the ASG and other threat groups in the Southern Philippines, but also spoke of the difficult political situation that continues to generate challenges for the Arroyo administration. While they praised the U.S. efforts in capacity-building, CMO, logistical support, intelligence sharing, and medical treatment to wounded AFP members, they each expressed concern over the continued scrutiny that U.S. presence was drawing from political opponents within the local and national government and Philippine media. Undersecretary Adan, of the Visiting Forces Agreement Commission, explained that he and his staff are regularly required to answer congressional inquiries into the U.S. involvement in the conflict. He also explained that to date, each of these inquiries or challenges to U.S. involvement had been defeated due to the legal framework established with the Kapit Bisig Agreement and other supporting documents.

Although the U.S./RP partnership has been legally justified and supported through documents such as the Mutual Defense Treaty and Kapit Bisig, legal challenges continue to hound the Arroyo administration.⁶²³ All of the GRP officials interviewed thought that the U.S. assistance should continue, and that a premature withdrawal of U.S. forces could erase gains made on Basilan, Sulu and Mindanao but they also agreed that the number of U.S. personnel and their visibility within the conflict area should be decreased.⁶²⁴ Rommel Banlaoi explained that the sectors of the Philippine media continue to portray the U.S. as participating in "direct combat operations."⁶²⁵ While the allegations are typically easily countered, repeated negative stories like this support insurgent propaganda. The already suspicious population often accepts these stories as

⁶²³ Adan interview.

⁶²⁴ Banlaoi, Esperon, Adan, Mendoza, interviews.

⁶²⁵ Banlaoi interview.

fact. A larger or more visible U.S. presence in Mindanao would likely increase the negative perception and have a derogatory impact on the legitimacy of the GRP.⁶²⁶ Secretary Esperon suggested that the overall presence of U.S. forces could be reduced while increasing U.S. efforts in U.S. Special Forces capacity-building and increased assistance in intelligence collection and fusion, logistics and CMO support. Secretary Esperon also said that while the successful end of Operation Ultimatum meant that U.S. troop numbers could be reduced, he also warned that if US forces departed Sulu prematurely there would be a loss in progress. Secretary Esperon explained that a complete withdrawal of US forces from Basilan after Balikatan 02 led to a resurgence in ASG influence on the island. To prevent this from happening on Sulu, he suggested that U.S. Special Forces continue to conduct capacity building with PSF force and encouraged an increase in other organizations oriented to CMO, such as U.S.AID. He also expressed a desire to see an increase in U.S. assistance in securing the porous borders of the Southern Philippines to stem the flow of terrorist and their equipment.⁶²⁷ Secretary Esperon specifically said that U.S. technical intelligence collection capabilities and UAVs would greatly assist the AFP in this endeavor.⁶²⁸

b. Targeted CMO

The wedge driven between the population and the insurgents on Sulu was widened by providing the population with hope and the opportunity to improve their socio-economic conditions. The CMO and development brought to Sulu by the GRP caused the population and many of the insurgents to reevaluate their goals in life.⁶²⁹ As the populace saw clinics and schools opening in their villages and their families benefiting from the new development, they saw an opportunity to improve their situation. Insurgency members also went through a similar reassessment deciding if they would join their families taking advantage of the new opportunities presented by the GRP or rejoin the insurgent movement in the jungle camps high in the hills. Many chose to rejoin

⁶²⁶ Banlaoi interview.

⁶²⁷ Esperon interview.

⁶²⁸ Ibid.

⁶²⁹ Ibid.

their families.⁶³⁰ Eventually, the villagers began turning in those insurgents that remained in the hills in the interest of preserving their new found prosperity and confidence in the AFP's ability to protect them from insurgent reprisals.⁶³¹ The success of the CMO approach had not gone unnoticed by the MILF who had begun to conduct their own MEDCAPS and CMO projects in Central Mindanao.

Funding for CMO in Mindanao must increase to expand the influence of the GRP into areas considered to be insurgent safe havens. According to Rommel Banlaoi, Chairman and Executive Director of the Philippine Institute for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, 80% of foreign aid given to the Philippines since 2001 has been spent in Mindanao, yet it still includes the poorest provinces in the country.⁶³² No amount of spending will solve all of the problems of Mindanao but a significant investment must be made by the GRP if they hope to begin to correct the issues of poverty and lack of infrastructure in Mindanao. Coupled with policy changes and improvements in good governance, the GRP can make real progress towards curing the causes of relative deprivation.

Recognizing their failure to properly support CMO activities during Operation Ultimatum,⁶³³ the AFP has formed the NDSC to oversee all AFP and GRP development efforts.⁶³⁴ This new AFP command will greatly improve the effectiveness of AFP CMO efforts in Mindanao and give agencies, such as U.S.AID and other non-governmental agencies, a single point of contact to coordinate efforts. The NDSC and the coordination cell that it will establish at both EASTMIMCOM and WESTMINCOM will also provide a conduit for the JSOTF-P to coordinate assistance and implement CMO projects.

⁶³⁰ Esperon interview.

⁶³¹ Ibid.

⁶³² Ibid.

⁶³³ WESMINCOM AAR of Operation Ultimatum, 29 March 2007.

⁶³⁴ Buenaflor interview. LTG Buenaflor is the first commander of the newly established National Development Support Command. The command is responsible for the coordination of all AFP, national, and NGO efforts in conducting CMO and development in the Philippines. They currently command all AFP engineering units and will soon assume command of all Civil Affairs unit to include SOT and SALAAM teams.

c. Information Operations

The goal of the IO campaign is to emphasize the success of GRP efforts in the first 2 lines of operation to change perceptions about GRP legitimacy. The IO campaign on Sulu was highly successful in both driving a wedge between the population and the insurgents as well as causing fissures within the ASG.⁶³⁵ Decentralized organizations such as the ASG tend to be deeply suspicious of members and concerned over the loyalties of members and possible exposure to government security forces.⁶³⁶ The AFP/U.S. information operations on Sulu have been very effective in capitalizing on this vulnerability.⁶³⁷ This same approach is appropriate for use in Mindanao and could be used to erode public support for insurgents and create dissention and distrust between the foreign members of groups, such as the JI and their Filipino counterparts.

The Philippine government should also increase public awareness through an information program at the local level that explains in quantifiable terms the evils of terrorism. It should also explain the public's vulnerability as potential targets of terrorists if they do not support GRP efforts to defeat the threat groups. Within the AFP, there should be increased communications training for military public affairs officials by drawing on private-sector expertise, noting that public affairs jobs in the military have not been "career enhancing." Similar to the U.S., the Philippines should create 24-hour media operations centers and "multifaceted media campaigns" using the Internet, blogs, and satellite television that "will result in much less reliance on the traditional print press."⁶³⁸ The general intention of IO should be to achieve a fast, limited, and decisive operation while maintaining the support of the international community. It should also obtain the support of the local population and its leaders.⁶³⁹ The government must be able to win the "war on perceptions." For example, it can demonize the enemy by launching a

⁶³⁵ Martin interview.

⁶³⁶ Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 89.

⁶³⁷ Martin interview.

⁶³⁸ Ann Scott Tyson, "Rumsfeld Urges Using Media to Fight Terror," *Washington Post*, 18 February 2006.

⁶³⁹ Raimundo Rodriguez Roca, "Information Operations During Counterinsurgency Operations: Essential Option For a Limited Response, U.S. Army General Staff College, 14 February 2008.

propaganda campaign focused on the purgings committed by the insurgents (particularly the CPP/NPA/NDF), their atrocities and human rights violations, their use of children as combatants, and their use of syndicated crimes to further their terrorist financing.⁶⁴⁰

d. SOT/ SALAAM at the Heart of COIN

The implementation of the Special Operations Team (SOT) concept has immensely reduced the influence and control of the communists in the countryside.⁶⁴¹ In Muslim communities, the SALAAM units of the AFP, which are composed of Muslim soldiers, are effectively reaching out to address grass root needs. They are informing the populace about the modest programs of the government and dialoguing to identify not only the problems, but the aspirations of the Muslims. This concept which is non-kinetic in nature has proven to be more palatable to the populace. This brings the government closer and provides opportunities to regain trust and legitimacy in deprived communities. Similar to the experience in Bohol, the AFP should innovate further to best address the requirements of any operational environment, such as the ability of the enemy to institute counters to SOT tactics, techniques, and procedures. Part of the innovation is to work with people's organizations in targeted areas to ensure ownership and empowerment of the populace. The Special Operations team approach of the military in its counter-insurgency campaign in Bohol was prosecuted in tandem with the civilian community organizers that were deployed in conflict areas to organize residents into cooperatives.⁶⁴² Together with the soldiers, they immersed in the communities to facilitate the needs of the barangay folks in their livelihood projects, supported the information campaigns and medical, surgical, and dental civic action programs of the SOT operators. This way, trust and confidence was easily established among the people.

e. Upgrade the Readiness of the AFP through Defense Reforms

A formidable and dependable force is essential in the prosecution of a COIN strategy in Mindanao. Reforms should be instituted based on the Joint Defense

⁶⁴⁰ General Hermogenes Esperon, "Heeding the Call to Urgency," 2006, 67.

⁶⁴¹ "Overall Analysis and Assessment on the Implementation of SOT Concept," Special Report, AFP Special Operations Team Center, Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, Philippines, 5 September 2006, 3.

⁶⁴² Aumentado, 2007.

Assessment jointly done by the AFP and the U.S. For example, the weaknesses in AFP capabilities in the areas of manpower, intelligence, doctrine, organization, and logistics should be addressed to enhance capabilities to perform COIN missions.⁶⁴³ The U.S. can provide support in terms of training and advising AFP troops involved in COIN. The overall U.S. support in capacity-building should include ensuring that counterterrorism be fully integrated into basic doctrine, training, and equipment of Philippine forces. This will enable the forces to sustain their operations and to decisively defeat the insurgents and terrorists.⁶⁴⁴ Since one of the keys in the success of AFP operations in Sulu was the employment of special operators, such as JSOG, Scout Rangers, and Special Forces that persistently penetrated terrorist sanctuaries, the U.S. could further assist in upgrading the capabilities of these units through continued organization, training, and equipping to make them more mission-ready to combat terrorism.

f. Soldiers for Peace and Development

While soldiers go to war to attain peace, they are only trained to fight wars. Little emphasis is placed on peace building. Given this, peace advocacy in the military should develop awareness and understanding that soldiers not only fight wars, but also fight for peace. Since the AFP has been given a greater role in development initiatives, such as helping communities build schools, water supply, health centers, and roads, educating the soldiers on this radical shift from their traditional role could make them more competent and effective in their given missions. As active participants in non-kinetic operations, the soldiers can ensure that there are no human rights violations. In addition, they can also assuage perceptions about the military being occupiers and create an image as a partner for peace and development. The National Development Support Command (NDSC) of the military has been envisioned to perform this mandate.⁶⁴⁵

⁶⁴³ Joint Defense Assessment (Sourced from the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, J3, Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, Philippines).

⁶⁴⁴ "Defense Planning Guidance 2006-2011," *Department of National Defense*, 5.

⁶⁴⁵ Lieutenant General Jaime Buenaflor, Interview by Majors Hastings and Mortela, Commander, National Development Support Command, AFP, Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, Philippines, 17 September 2008.

g. Legal Offensives to Pin Down Terrorists

The way forward to restore peace is to replace the use of military force with a legal offensive strategy. Law experts opine that by treating ‘terrorists’ as ‘criminals’ in courts can help sustain the war against terrorism. This would be without undermining national constitutional rights, civil liberties, international treaties, and conventions and human rights.⁶⁴⁶ Given this, the Philippine government should provide the mechanism to prosecute violations committed by terrorists with the ultimate objective of putting more terrorists in jail. At present, the communists, for example, have a number of shields that protect them from incarceration particularly when the Anti-subversion Law was repealed in 1992 through Republic Act 7636. This made the CPP/NPA/NPA a legal group.⁶⁴⁷ General Mendoza adds that the presence of party list representatives in Congress further extended a shield and immunity of the communists from any legal prosecution.⁶⁴⁸ Legal offensive should be done in concert with the police and the justice department.

h. Address Terrorist Financing

Finance is the lifeblood of terrorist operations. It is an integral element of the overall activity cycle of any terrorist organization. As such, it is imperative that financial investigations must be embedded in all counter-terrorism efforts. The financial sector has all the knowledge and information that could lead to useful pieces of intelligence. The regulatory and law enforcement agencies should have the capability to provide the policy and tools necessary to build that intelligence.⁶⁴⁹ General Mendoza says the Philippine government should establish a mechanism that allows and facilitates

⁶⁴⁶ Rizwan Ghani, “Gonzales Resignation and War Against Terrorism,” *American Chronicle*, 28 August 2007, <http://www.americanchronicle.com/articles/36268>, Accessed 27 November 2008.

⁶⁴⁷ Chriatian V. Esguerra and Gil Cabacungan, “Anti-subversion Law’s Revival Slammed,” *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 15 December 2007, http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/inquirerheadlines/nation/view/20071215-106986/Anti-Subversion_Laws_revival_slammed, Accessed 27 November 2008.

⁶⁴⁸ Mendoza interview.

⁶⁴⁹ Arabinda Acharya and Gunawan Husin, “Integration of Financial Investigation Into Counter-terrorism Strategy, 17 August 2006, <http://www.c-cft.org/publication/pdf/IDSS0842006.pdf>, Accessed 05 July 2008.

investigation of terrorists. This would be similar to the capability of the FBI.⁶⁵⁰ Financial investigation is like a river: it leads upstream to donors and downstream to operational cells. The government can look at the sources of terrorist funds. Part of the effort is a robust attempt to curtail the terrorist-crime group nexus. Foreign direct support should also be prevented. Once the terrorist funds are dried up, their capability to launch attacks or violence in the future would be greatly reduced. The Philippines should fully implement the criminalization of terrorist financing. They should implement without delay measures to freeze funds or other assets of terrorists, of others who finance terrorism, and of terrorist organizations in accordance with the United Nations resolutions relating to the prevention and suppression of the financing of terrorist acts.⁶⁵¹

i. Utilize Reservists as Force Multipliers

Since reservists are organized in all districts, provinces, and cities in Mindanao, they can provide valuable manpower and resources if integrated into all sectors of the society. In fact, they can play a significant role as part of the integrated territorial defense system. For example, as members of the community, the reservists can provide the necessary intelligence in their respective areas because they are embedded in the populace, such as the police forces. In addition, tapping the potential of reservists can stimulate the participation of the private sector to bring in more investments in deprived areas — medicines for civic action programs and job opportunities in support of Philippine peace and development initiatives. This concept would bring more ownership to the strategy that would allow the people to be directly involved in securing and bringing peace to their communities.

j. Interagency Collaboration at All Levels

The success of AFP operations in Bohol as well as the strategy in Basilan and Sulu can also be attributed to the high degree of interagency coordination at all levels. Planners as well as implementers ensured that all programs and activities were

⁶⁵⁰ Acharya and Husin, “Integration of Financial Investigation Into Counter-terrorism Strategy.”

⁶⁵¹ “9 Special Recommendations on Terrorist Financing,” *Financial Action Task Force*, http://www.fatf-gafi.org/document/9/0,3343,en_32250379_32236920_34032073_1_1_1_1,00.html, Accessed 27 November 2008.

jointly planned and integrated from the strategic to the tactical levels. Fighting insurgencies demands a holistic approach involving the political, economic, informational and military instruments of the state; as such, there is a need to continue organizing in a manner which promotes interagency cooperation. In fact, the entire plan for an integrated strategy cannot be done without an effective interagency collaboration. Key to this collaboration is the use of liaisons from different organizations embedded at the right locations in key agencies.⁶⁵² When working with other states, planning that integrates the military and country-team staff members produces optimal results. Because of the protracted nature of COIN operations, military and country-team staff must maintain close relationships and conduct interagency coordination on a regular basis. In the Philippines, OEF-P planners coordinate closely with the country team to facilitate interagency planning and synchronization.⁶⁵³

G. CONCLUSION

Focused on the strategic-legitimacy nexus described by Borer, AFP, and SOCPAC, planners continue to develop highly effective indirect approach strategies that promote good governance. They also improve the underlying socio-economic conditions that feed the multiple insurgencies in the Southern Philippines. Due to the immense size and scope of the problem, progress in relieving relative deprivation in Mindanao is likely to be slow. Significant progress, however, is possible as demonstrated by the COIN operations on Basilan, Bohol, and Sulu. The GRP has already demonstrated its commitment to achieving peace and security in Mindanao through its continued commitment to peace negotiations and efforts to improve governance, security, and socio-economic conditions. The development of a long-term IA strategy supported by the establishment of the NDSC further illustrates the GRP's belief in the policy of attraction as opposed to force.

The case studies described in this thesis present compelling evidence that the McCormick Diamond Counterinsurgency Model and its Indirect Approach strategy have

⁶⁵² Michelle M. Clays, "The interagency process and America's second front in the global war on terrorism," Air Command and Staff College, Air University, April 2003, 38.

⁶⁵³ Wilson, 2006.

been highly effective in improving the security situation in the Southern Philippines. Coupled with other measures to improve governance and include opposition groups in the Philippine political process, the indirect approach is changing the culture of violence in Mindanao. The successful peace negotiations with the MNLF, continued involvement of the MILF in Peace negotiations, and involvement of the CPP in the political process demonstrate the mutual desire of these groups to resolve the conflict in a peaceful manner. The success of the indirect approach strategy has had the effect of compelling these groups to pursue a peaceful resolution to the conflict by diminishing their influence, mobility, and popular support. By offering economic opportunity, hope, and security, the GRP has given the people of Mindanao a viable alternative to supporting the insurgents.

With the significant emphasis on peaceful resolution demonstrated by the Arroyo administration and the assistance of the U.S. in continuing to improve legitimacy and security in the region, there is cause for hope that Mindanao will experience a new awakening — not one of revolutionary consciousness, but one of economic and social prosperity.

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APPENDIX A. NUR MASUARI LETTER TO THE MNLF⁶⁵⁴

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Directive To:

- (1) SSRC Chairman, Uthuk Khalid Ajison
- (2) Ustadz Kaderi Malik
- (3) BAT Chief of Staff, Radji Sulhamerie
Masuari
- (4) Ustadz Bachir Jailani, BAT
Deputy Chief of Staff
- (5) Cmdr. Abduljabar Jialil Marra,
Vice Chief of Staff, BAT
- (6) Alimujahid Biao, Deputy Chief
of Staff for the Bangsamoro
Islands
- (7) SSRC State Congress Chairman,
Cmdr. Barak Kanyu
- (8) All other Political, Religious &
Military Leaders of MNLF
and Bangsamoro

In my capacity as Founding Leader
and Central Committee Chairman of the
 Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF),
I hereby issue this directive to all
MNLF leaders mentioned above to
maintain peace and security in the
Island of Jolo in the entire Jurisdiction
of Bangsamoro Humanitarian Program
to be conducted in the said Bangsamoro

⁶⁵⁴ Document provided during interview with Major Stan Lane (pseudonym), team leader of CMOC during preparations for Operation Ultimatum, 2006.NPS, 20 July 2008, Interviewed by Majors Hastings and Mortela. Hereafter referred to as the Lane interview. Document on file at the NPS, Defense Analysis Department, CORE Lab database.

island from February 6 to March 6, 2006.

For your information, the Bah'katon, will be non-military in character, as it will focus mainly/solely on the conduct of Medical and Engineering Civic actions for the benefit of our People.

Accordingly, all MNF forces should be advised to stay put in their camps to avoid untoward incident.

For strict and immediate Compliance.

Wa Billahi Taufiq w'Alhi Razaq
Wassalamu Salaamu W'Alaihimus Salam
W/Burak etuk!

Copy furnishes:

Hon. Speaker Jose
de Venecia;

Hon. Exec-Sec. Eduardo
Ermita;

Hon. Sec. Ausilio Cruz;

Hon. DOT Sec. Raul
Gonzalez;

Chief of Staff General
Gonzalo Sings;

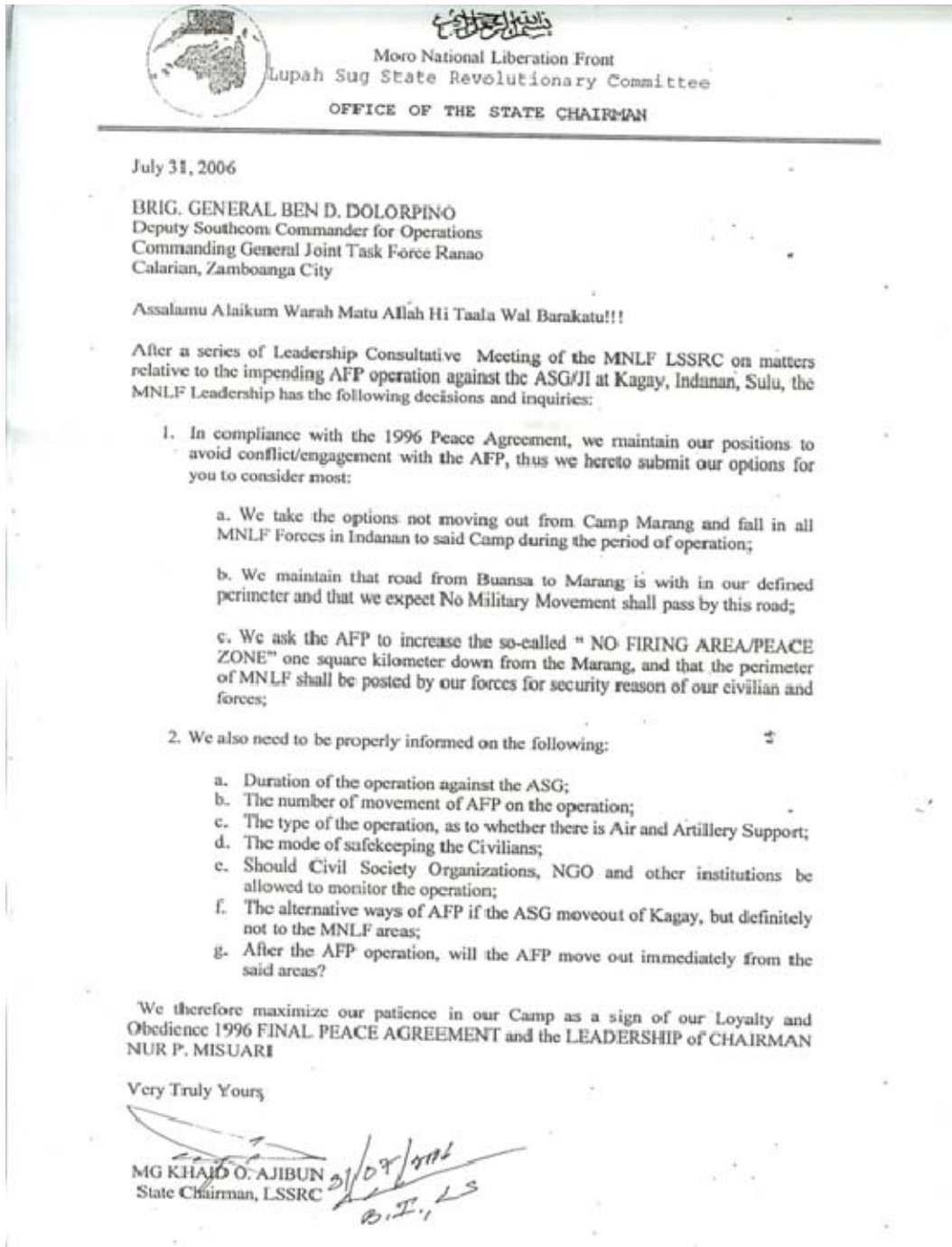
NSC Secretary Norberto
Gonzalez;

Nur Misuari
Chairman,
MNF

Fort St. Domingo
PWP-SAF Detachment
Compo, Sta.

Rosa, Legaspi
Wednesday, 18th January,
2006

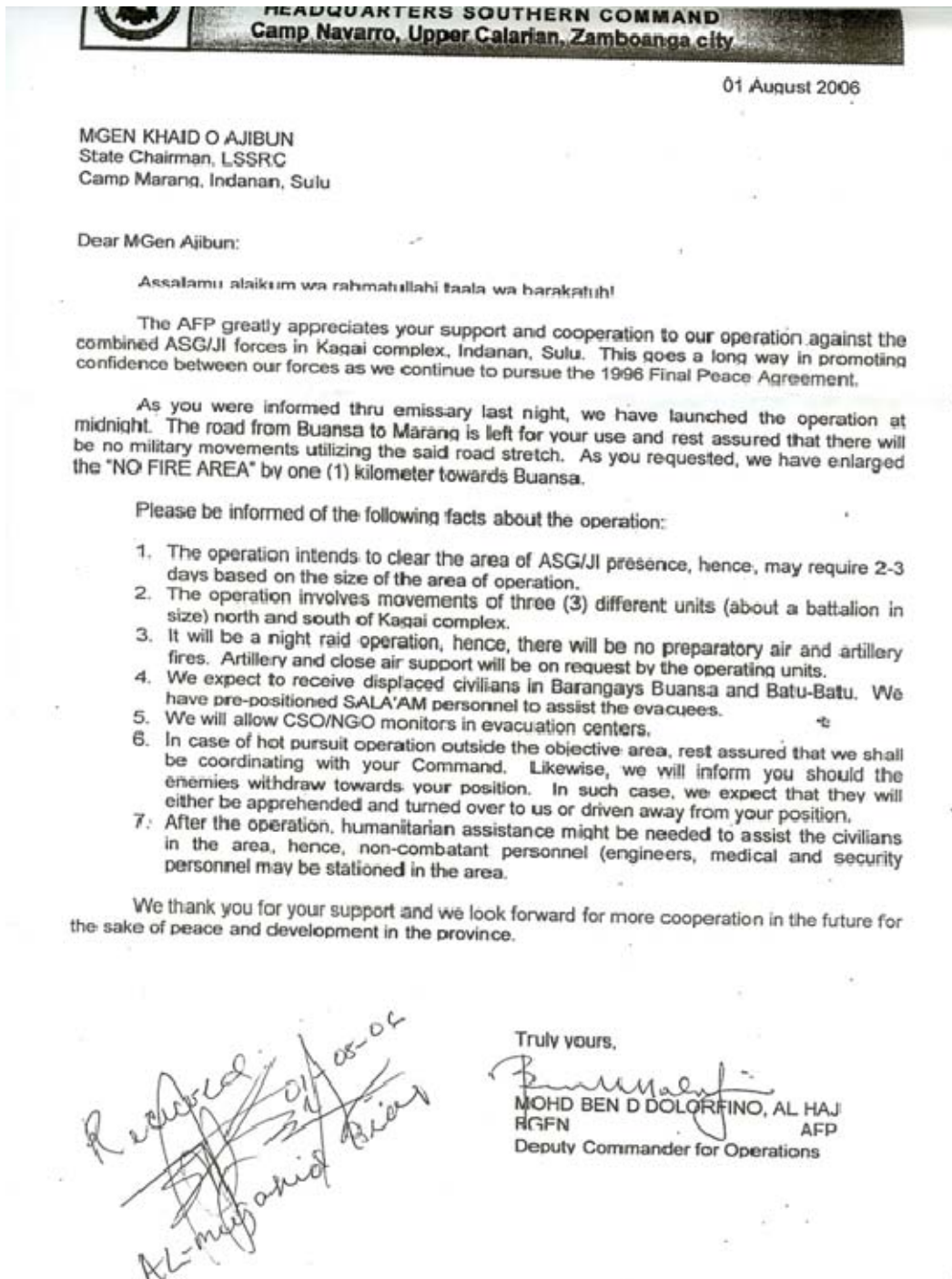
APPENDIX B. KHAID ADJIBUN LETTER TO BG DOLORFINO⁶⁵⁵



⁶⁵⁵ Document provided during Lane interview. Document on file at the NPS, Defense Analysis Department, CORE Lab database.

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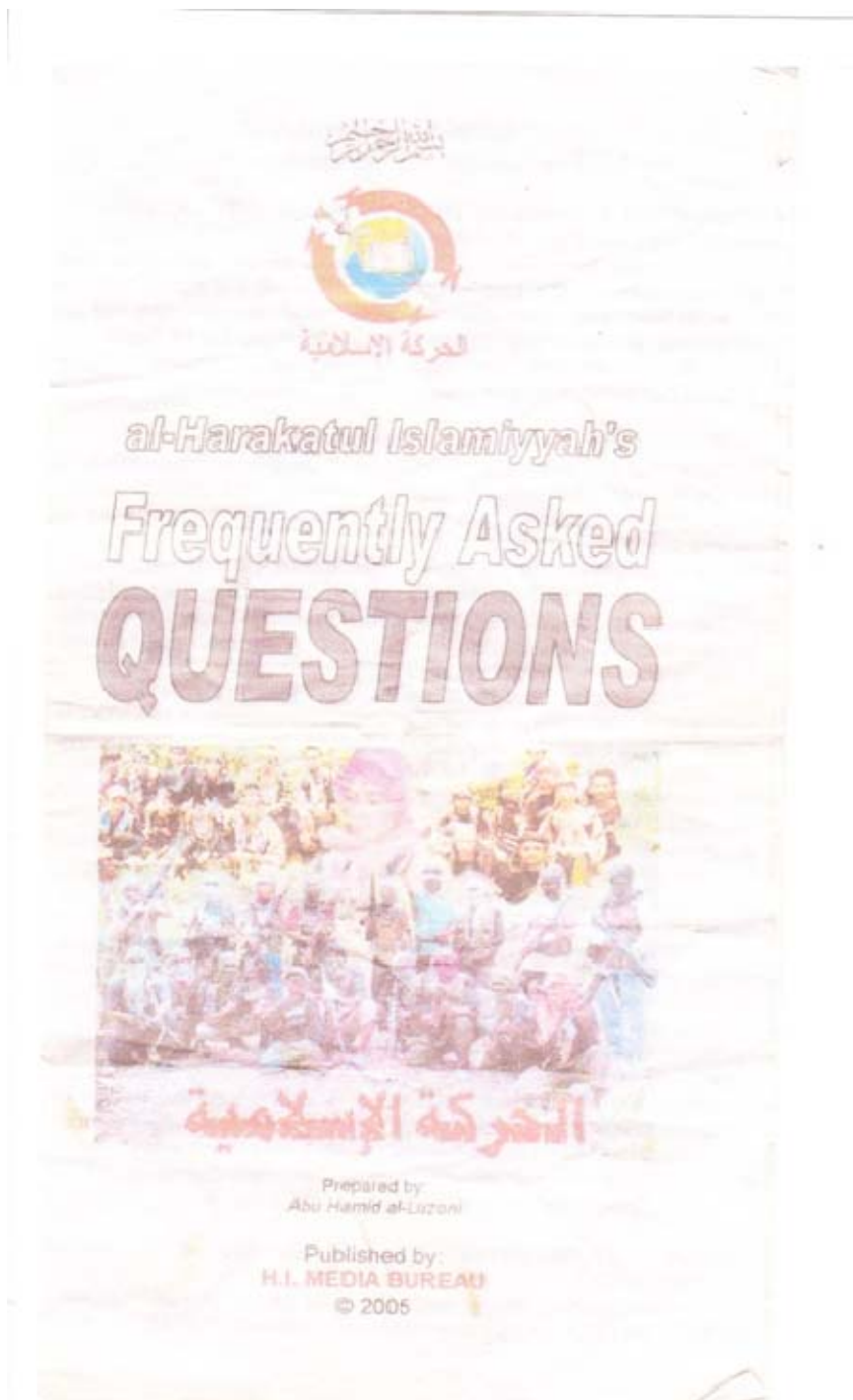
APPENDIX C. BG DOLORFINO LETTER TO KHAID ADJIBUN⁶⁵⁶



⁶⁵⁶ Document provided during Lane interview. Document on file at the NPS, Defense Analysis Department, CORE Lab database.

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APPENDIX D. ASG PROPAGANDA PAMPHLET⁶⁵⁷



⁶⁵⁷ Document provided during Lane interview. Document on file at the NPS, Defense Analysis Department, CORE Lab database.

Al-Harakatul Islamiyyah Frequently Asked Questions

HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT YOUR JIHAD IS LEGITIMATE IN THE LIGHT OF ISLAM?

A. The legitimacy of our Jihad is purely based on the teachings of the Noble Qur'an and in the Sunnah of the Last Messenger Muhammad (saw) - from the Aqeedah of al-Walaa'u-wal-Baraa' to the Aqeedah of Jihad Fi Sabilillah that was practiced by the Last Prophet Muhammad (saw) and his noble companions.

As our Dhalil (Bases) - Allah (swt) said:

"And fight in the Way of Allah (swt) and know that Allah is All-Hearer, All-Knower". Surah al-Baqarah 244

"Fight those who (1) believe not in Allah (swt), (2) nor in the Last Day, (3) nor forbid that which has been forbidden by Allah (swt) and His Messenger (saw), (4) and those who acknowledge not the religion of truth (ie. Islam) among the people of Scriptures (Jews and Christians), until they pay the Jizyah with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued." Surah Al-Tawbah 29

"And fight them until there is no more FITNAH (Kufr and Shirk - ie. worshipping others besides Allah) and the DEEN (worship, way of life) will all be for Allah Alone [in the whole of the world]..." Surah An-Anfal 39

"Then fight in the Cause of Allah (swt), you are not tasked (held responsible) except for yourself, and in the believers (to fight along with you), it may be that Allah (swt) will restrain the evil might of the disbelievers. And Allah (swt) is Stronger in might and Stronger in punishing" Surah An-Nisaa' 84

"Fight against them so that Allah (swt) will punish them by your hands and disgrace them and give you victory over them and heal the breasts of believing people" Surah al-Tawbah 14

"March forth, whether you are light (being healthy, young and wealthy) or heavy (being ill, old and poor), and strive hard with your wealth and your lives in the Cause of Allah (swt). This is better for you, if you but know." Surah al-Tawbah 41

... and many other verses from the Noble Qur'an and from the ahadith of the Last Messenger Muhammad (saw).

WHY al-HARAKATUL ISLAMIYYAH KILLS FELLOW MUSLIMS?

A. We don't kill MUSLIMS, rather we kill people who claimed themselves to be Muslims. They are called MURTAD, FASIQ,

DHALIM & MUNAFIQ. These kinds of people - we see them praying five times a day and performing all Islamic rites, but are working with the enemies and Shaytan Forces against Muslims, especially the fighting Mujahideen. They sell the lives of our Muslim brothers in exchange for a miserable price. Moreover, they submit themselves to the Shaytan Government which is not Allah's government. Allah (swt) said in His Noble Book:

"And whosoever does not judge by what Allah (swt) has revealed, such are the Kafirun... such are the Dhalimun... such are the Fasiqun..." Surah al-Maidah 44, 45, 47

"Fight those who (1) believe not in Allah (swt), (2) nor in the Last Day, (3) nor forbid that which has been forbidden by Allah (swt) and His Messenger (saw)..." Surah al-Tawbah 29

It clearly states: to fight those who forbid not that which has been forbidden by Allah (swt) and His Messenger (saw) - IT IS FORBIDDEN BY ALLAH (SWT) - THAT BELIEVERS SHOULD MAKE HIS ENEMY AS THEIR AWLIYAA' (friend, supporter, adviser, helper) AND MUCH MORE IN SUBMITTING TO THEIR MAN-MADE LAWS. These verses tell us who are the enemies of Islam, and enough for us the Words of Allah (swt) as bases for all our actions...

WHY THE al-HARAKATUL ISLAMIYYAH KILLS NOT ONLY MILITARY MEN BUT CIVILIANS AS WELL?

A. Our enemies are not only the military or government forces. We are in combat to all the enemies of ALLAH (swt) which He (swt) clearly stated in His Noble Qur'an:

Allah (swt) said in His Noble Qur'an:

"Fight those who (1) believe not in Allah (swt), (2) nor in the Last Day, (3) nor forbid that which has been forbidden by Allah (swt) and His Messenger (saw), (4) and those who acknowledge not the religion of truth (ie. Islam) among the people of Scriptures (Jews and Christians), until they pay the Jizyah with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued." Surah Al-Tawbah 29

"When the Sacred Months have passed, then kill the MUSHRIKUN wherever you find them, and capture them and besiege them, and prepare for each and every ambush. But if they repent and offer prayers perfectly and give zakat, then leave their way free. Verily, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." Surah al-Tawbah 5

These are verses from the Noble Qur'an that we use as bases for our actions. The militaries, and the civilians that support them, are one and the same. Their aim to dispute Muslims, by whatever means, suffice our action to be at war with them too.

"Except those of the Mushrikun with whom you have a treaty, and who have not subsequently failed you in aught, nor have supported anyone against you. So fulfill their treaty to them to the end of their term. Surely Allah loves Al-Muttaqun". Surah at-Tawbah 4

This verse supports the credibility in making agreements with the Kuffar but, as much, is embodied by certain conditions to be met. But since at present JIHAD is declared Fardu 'ayn, thus we strongly decline to any kind of treaty.

WHY al-HARAKATUL ISLAMIYYAH PRACTICES KIDNAPPING FOR RANSOM?

A. First, we would like to make it clear that our reasons for kidnapping operations are not to gain money for personal interests. Let it be known to everyone that we are on war against the forces of Shaytan in the Philippines, its allies and supporters. And whatever we gain (ie, ghanaim) from this war is to be used for our future operations, in buying more war materials and of course, in maintaining our fighters' supplies and other necessities.

"And make ready against them all you can of POWER, including steeds of WAR (tanks, planes, missiles, artillery) to TERRORIZE the enemy of ALLAH and your enemy, and others besides whom, you may not know but whom ALLAH does know. And whatever you shall spend Fi Sabilillah shall be repaid unto you, and you shall not be treated unjustly". Surah al-Anfal 60

Second, as followers of Prophet Muhammad (saw), we based our actions on the Noble Qur'an and in his (saw) Sunnah.

Allah (swt) said:

"So, when you meet (in fight - Jihad Fi Sabilillah) those who disbelieve, smite (their) necks till when you have killed and wounded many of them, then bind a bond firmly (on them, ie, take them as captives). Thereafter (is the time) either for generosity (ie, free them without ransom) or RANSOM (according to what benefits Islam), until war lays down its burden..." Surah Muhammad 4

Those whom we kidnapped are clear supporters of our ENEMY (they sympathized and support the PHILIPPINE KUFFAR GOVERNMENT by paying their taxes, etc.)

And as they say: their GOVERNMENT is of the PEOPLE, by the PEOPLE, and for the PEOPLE. Therefore, their people as a whole is the GOVERNMENT. So, we can kidnap anybody from among them.

WHY THE al-HARAKATUL ISLAMIYYAH RAPES THEIR (WOMEN) HOSTAGES?

A. Again, we would like to stress that we are on war against the disbelievers as what Allah (swt) commanded us believers in

Surah At-Tawbah 29. The word RAPE is used only to demoralize our Mujahideen - so that Muslims will not support our Jihad against the Kuffar. And if we capture any women from them, it depends on us - either we free them with or without ransom or make them as Sabiya (plural Sabaya (i.e. concubine)). As basis, Allah (swt) said:

"And if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly with the orphan girls then marry (other) women of your choice, two or three, or four; but if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one or that your right hand possess. That is nearer to prevent you from doing injustice". Surah An-Nisaa' 3

"Also (forbidden are) women already married, except those whom your right hand possesses. Thus has Allah ordained for you..." Surah An-Nisaa' 24

Abu Saïd Al-Khudri (ra) reported:

"We went out with Allah's Messenger (saw) on the expedition to the Banu al-Mustaliq and took captive some excellent Arab women. We were suffering from the absence of our wives (but at the same time) we refrain from copulation with our female captives lest should we lose the right of asking RANSOM for them (in case they bear children for us). So we decided to have sexual intercourse with them but with observing 'Azl (withdrawing the male sexual organ before emission of semen to avoid conception). But we said: we are doing an act whereas Allah's Messenger is amongst us; why not ask him? So, we ask Allah's Messenger (saw), and he said: 'It does not matter whether you perform 'Azl or not, for every soul that is to be born up to the Day of Resurrection will be born'." [al-Bukhari/ al-Muslim]

WHY THE al-HARAKATUL ISLAMIYYAH WON'T ACCEPT ANY PEACE NEGOTIATION?

A. There are some differences among Islamic Scholars about this issue. Some scholars say that it is acceptable, like the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah, and some decline to any peace agreements. There are also some who say that if the Muslims are really weak, then peace negotiations with Kuffar is valid providing that it will be an advantage to Muslim Ummah.

But this kind of negotiation has its **CONDITIONS** that should not be included in the Treaty, as follows:

1. That no part of any Muslim land can be taken, even a span of a hand, by the Kuffar. (Nihayatul Muhtaj Vol. 8 Page 58)
2. That no symbols, signs or practices of disbelief [KUFUR - i.e. churches, sending of missionaries, propagation of any religion, ETC.] must be included.
3. If there are conditions that will result to unimplementation of the Laws of Allah (swt) or

violation of any Islamic Law and likewise, if as a result, Muslims are in an inferior position, then the Treaty is VOID. (based on a hadith from the Book 'Iis as-Sunnah, Vol. 12 Page 8)

4. If JIHAD is Fardu Ayn - there should not be any kind of Peace Treaty. Like for instance, Kuffar enters the Muslim territories, then JIHAD is Fardu Ayn. (Fathul Ali Vol. 1, Page 982)

(FROM THE BOOK 'AD-DHIFA' ANI ARADHIL MUSLIMIN ('Defence of Muslim Lands') BY SHAHID DR. ABUULLAH AZZAM)

ACCORDING TO THE NEWS, al-HARAKATUL ISLAMIYYAH IS A BUNCH OF DRUG ADDICTS, IS THIS TRUE?

A. It is absolutely not true! This is an accusation only to demoralize the credibility of our Mujahideen. Islam does not allow this kind of practice. As a matter of fact, it's Haram for us to take anything that intoxicates our mind and body. Allah (swt) says in His Noble Qur'an:

"O you who believe! Intoxicants (all kinds of alcoholic drinks) and gambling and Al-Ansab (animals that are sacrificed (slaughtered) on altars and for the idols) and Azlam (arrows for seeking luck or decision) are abominations of Shaytan's handiwork. So avoid (strictly all) that (abominations) in order that you may be successful." Al-Baqarah 90

"And we say: wAllahu A'lam (Allah Knows Best)..."

Other Dhalil about JIHAD from the Noble Qur'an:

Surah al-Baqarah 2:190, 2:249 | Surah al-Imran 3:140 | Surah an-Nisaa' 4:74, 4:76, 4:84, 4:104 | Surah al-Anfal 8:15, 8:39, 8:45, 8:60, 8:67, 8:74 | Surah at-Tawbah 5: 14, 20, 29, 36-39, 41, 73, 111, 123 | Surah al-Haji 22:39-40 | Surah Muhammad 47:4-6 | Surah as-Saff 61:4, 61:10-13

"READ al-QUR'AN & BE GUIDED"

JOIN JIHAD FI SABILILLAH & RAISE THE KALIMAH
"LA ILAHA ILLA ALLAH, MUHAMMAD RASULULLAH"

BRING BACK ISLAM IN OUR HOMELAND
FIGHT THE FORCES OF TAGHUT

Please do your part, Share this leaflet to other Muslims...

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4. ASD/SOLIC
Washington D.C.
5. CDR Thomas C. Sass
MG “Wild Bill” Donovan SOF Chair
US Navy War College
Newport, Rhode Island
6. COL David Maxwell
G3, USASOC
Ft Bragg, North Carolina
7. SOCOM J-7
Special Operations Command
Tampa, Florida
8. HQ USSOCOM Library
Special Operations Command
Tampa, Florida
9. SOCPAC Historian
Camp Smith, Hawaii
10. SOCPAC Republic of the Philippines Desk Officer
Camp Smith, Hawaii
11. SOCPAC SOJ5
Camp Smith, Hawaii
12. SOCPAC SOJ35
Camp Smith, Hawaii

13. SOCPAC SOJ352
Camp Smith, Hawaii
14. JUSMAG – Philippines Deputy
Manila, Philippines
15. JSOTF-P Chief of Staff
Zamboanga, Philippines
16. JSOTF-P FUOPS
Zamboanga, Philippines
17. JSOTF-P J3
Zamboanga, Philippines
18. 2-1SFG(A) S3 SGM
Cotabato, Philippines
19. 3-1 SFG(A) XO
Ft Lewis, Washington
20. Chief of Staff
Armed Forces of the Philippines
Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, Philippines
21. Office of the President
National Defense College of the Philippines
Camp Aguinaldo, Philippines
22. Commanding General
Special Operations Command, Philippine Army
Fort Ramon Magsaysay, Palayan City, Philippines
23. Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, J3
General Headquarters, Armed Forces of the Philippines
Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, Philippines
24. Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Education and Training, J8
General headquarters, Armed Forces of the Philippines
Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, Philippines
25. Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations, G3
Headquarters, Philippine Army
Fort Andres Bonifacio, Makati City, Philippines

26. Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Education and Training, G8
Headquarters, Philippine Army
Fort Andres Bonifacio, Makati City, Philippines