

**Foreign Internal Defense: An Indirect Approach to  
Counter-Insurgency/Counter Terrorism,  
Lessons from Operation Enduring Freedom-  
Philippines for dealing with Non-Existential Threats to  
the United States**

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The purpose of this paper is to look at Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines (OEF-P) and determine select lessons that may be useful in the future operating environment when the United States' friends, partners, and allies are faced with threats from lawlessness, subversion, insurgency, and terrorism. It will examine how the OEF-P mission initially evolved; focusing on assessment and campaign plan development and approval and then look at selected vignettes to illustrate lessons that may have some application for other U.S. operations in the future around the world. The paper will argue that small footprint, indirect operations (to include indirect support to counterinsurgency and counterterrorism), working through and with government and/or local and indigenous security forces and agencies while giving primacy to the sovereignty of the host nation government, may provide a useful construct for some situations in the future operating environment.<sup>1</sup>

As the U.S. looks ahead beyond the Afghan and Iraq experiences with counterinsurgency, counterterrorism and irregular warfare, the question that must be considered is how the U.S. can and should deal with non-existential threats to the U.S. The United States military will continue to have as its primary mission to deter war and if deterrence fails to fight and win the nation's wars. The military, however, must be prepared for the full range of threats to the U.S. as well as to conduct other missions that the civilian political leadership deems in the U.S. national interests. Some of these interests may include the requirement to help another military or security force to conduct counterinsurgency without US forces executing operations in lieu of that military force. If such a mission is deemed an appropriate one for the U.S. military then OEF-P may provide some useful examples for assessing, planning and preparing for such a mission as well as understanding and determining the relationship between U.S. and host nation forces and other participants whether, military, other government agency (U.S. and host nation), non-governmental agency, commercial business, and the civilian population as well as the enemy. This paper is not an all inclusive look at OEF-P but looks at the key events and activities that may be useful for future planners and strategists as they look at how to advise and assist friends, partners, and allies against threats that may or may not be existential to them, but are certainly non-existential to the U.S.

The first and most important lesson from OEF-P is that Foreign Internal Defense (FID) is not a tactical operation or mission. It is by definition one part of a possible "way" of an overall strategy to support US strategic objectives or ends. The personnel and organizations, or the "means" that have been conducting this mission, predominantly Special Operations Forces, have kept this strategic outlook in mind from the very beginning. Most importantly they recognized that success does not rest on military operations alone but also requires interagency and civilian participation as well. The operations of OEF-P are best illustrated by the definition of FID:

Foreign Internal Defense (FID) is participation by civilian and military agencies of a government or in any of the action programs taken by another government or other designated organization, to free and protect is society from subversion, lawlessness,

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is based on the author's personal experiences in the Philippines over the period of 2000-2007 including command of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Special Forces Group on Basilan during the initial execution of OEF-P and later as commander of the Joint Special Operations Task Force Philippines. This paper provides highlights of key events and a synthesis of key missions, concepts, and issues to illustrate potentially applicable lessons and is not meant to be an exact chronological history of OEF-P.

insurgency, terrorism, and other threats to their security. The focus of US FID efforts is to support the host nation's (HN's) internal defense and development (IDAD), which can be described as the full range of measures taken by a nation to promote its growth and protect itself from the security threats described above.<sup>2</sup>

FID may be a strategic option for policy makers to consider when the U.S. is faced with non-existential threats but deems it in the U.S. interest to commit U.S. government resources, both military and civilian to come to the aid of a friend, partner or ally who may be faced with an existential threat. The remainder of this paper will examine some of the key points of the OEF-P mission for consideration as lessons or guides for the execution of FID in other situations when the U.S. decides that a commitment of the military instrument of power, along with diplomatic, information, and economic instruments, is necessary. Furthermore, the paper will show that there is utility in certain situations, particularly involving national sovereignty sensitivities, when the U.S. military should not be the main effort nor command operations on the ground--operations better left to a host nation lead.

## **BACKGROUND**

This paper cannot go into depth about the threat in the Philippines. An adequate description would require more than the length of this paper. However, a short summary is necessary to provide some context.

In 2000, the Republic of the Philippines faced multiple insurgencies and terrorist threats and organizations. Although there was a peace agreement reached in 1996 with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) that established the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) refused the agreement and continued its insurgency.

Homegrown terrorist organizations such as the Abu Sayyef Group (ASG), the Rajah Solaiman Movement (RSM) and the Pentagon Gang, although espousing ideological and religious rhetoric, are better described as thugs and kidnap for ransom gangs. The most significant foreign terrorist organization remains Jemmah Isalmiyah (JI) and has been associated with both the MILF and RSM. Of significance is that the ASG and the JI have historical ties to Al Qaeda, and in the case of JI, recent ties as evidenced by its member Umar Patek meeting with Al Qaeda senior leaders before he was arrested in Pakistan in March 2011.

Finally there is the Communist Party of the Philippines and the New People's Army that has conducted a decades long insurgency and seeks to overthrow the Republic of the Philippines. Of all the threats, the CCP/NPA is the existential threat to the Philippines.

Furthermore, there are complex civil and political disputes throughout the Philippines and in particular in conflict areas in Mindanao. These range from clan versus clan feuds -- in local terminology "ridos" -- to violence against candidates and supporters during election periods to outright criminal activity. The population is diverse from a predominately Roman

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<sup>2</sup> Department of Defense, Joint Publication 3-22, Foreign Internal Defense (US Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 12 July 2010), p, ix.

Catholic majority to a significant Muslim minority in the South, with strong tribal loyalties and numerous languages and dialects. Land disputes reaching back generations, competition among the so-called “haves” and “have-nots,” disillusionment with the ruling oligarchy, and the inability of the national government to bring good governance and economic development to all areas of the remote southern islands, all create the conditions for insurgency and terrorism.

The combination of Moro and Communist insurgencies, terrorist groups and civil strife and criminal activity make for a very complex security situation for the Republic of the Philippines, its government agencies, and security forces. But the presence of the Moro and Communist insurgencies also complicated the planning for U.S. forces. First, because of the government negotiations with the MILF, and U.S. diplomatic support for those negotiations, it was imperative that the U.S. military refrain from being involved in operations with the AFP that could be perceived as targeting the MILF. This was difficult to do because of the already described family and tribal relationships. While a clear order of battle and the ability to identify the participants on all sides in all organizations because of tribal affiliations and family ties was possible there were many situations where some members of a family or tribe belonged to the MILF or MNLF and others belonged to the ASG.

Furthermore, because of the way that the Global War on Terrorism campaign unfolded, the targeted terrorist organizations either belonged to or had had some connection to Al Qaeda (AQ). The ASG and the JI had demonstrated connections to AQ. The CPP/NPA do not have such ties. Therefore U.S. forces were restricted from providing any support to HN forces conducting counter-insurgency operations against their existential threat. This was especially frustrating because not only does U.S. Special Forces have a history with the NPA (they assassinated Special Forces Colonel Nick Rowe in 1989) and believe that it would be good to assist the AFP in defeating that insurgency because of that history, it also provides a point of friction in the relationship between the U.S. and Philippine forces. It can be difficult when a HN commander requests intelligence support for NPA targets, but because of the U.S. imposed restrictions such support could not be provided. Fortunately the long-established relationship from attendance at schools<sup>3</sup> to numerous combined training events worked to overcome that friction. But the most negative aspect of not assisting the AFP against the NPA was the assessment that if the CPP/NPA is first successful at destabilizing the government and later overthrowing it, the U.S. will not only lose its longest standing treaty ally, it is likely that conditions will deteriorate to such a level as to make the Southern Philippines even a more attractive safe haven for terrorists groups. Taking a narrow focus against AQ restricted the strategy and operations of U.S. forces to support achievement of national objectives. Fortunately the AFP has continued to defend its country with some success and suppress the insurgency. Yet it persists and remains a danger to the Philippine people and government. In the end the Philippines is helping the U.S. against its high priority targets (AQ related terrorist organizations) but the U.S. is not helping the Philippines against its existential threat.

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<sup>3</sup> As an example in 1985 the author attended the Infantry Officers' Advanced Course at Fort Benning with then-CPT Alexander Yano. In 2001, then-COL Yano was commander of Task Force Zamboanga and when the author arrived with the TCAV he was on the tarmac to meet the team. When the author commanded JSOTF-P then-GEN Yano was first the Chief of Staff of the Army and later Commander of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. This personal relationship was instrumental in overcoming friction on many occasions.

## **PHILIPPINES-UNITED STATES “SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP”**

The U.S. has a “special relationship” with the Philippines that influences how U.S. and Philippine security forces work together. First, the Philippines was the only U.S. colony. Second, the U.S. previously fought and assisted in two previous insurgencies with General Pershing leading the counterinsurgency against the Moros following the Spanish-American War to Edward Lansdale advising and assisting Ramon Magsaysay during the Huk Rebellion following World War II after the Philippines gained independence. Third, the U.S. and Philippine regular and irregular forces fought a bloody struggle against the Japanese occupation in World War II until liberation in 1944-45. Fourth, the Philippines is the U.S.’ longest standing treaty ally. Fifth, there is long standing security cooperation from security assistance (SA) to foreign military sales (FMS) and international military education and training (IMET) to major annual combined exercises (such as Balikatan) and this cooperation has continued through numerous Philippine governments including in politically turbulent times. Lastly, the U.S. maintained two major bases on Philippine territory throughout the Cold War only leaving after the failure to negotiate a reasonable compensation agreement, internal political opposition, and the eruption of the Mount Pinatubo volcanic. Because of these six major historical events and ties, the “special relationship” has important influence on diplomatic and security affairs and manifests itself in many ways, and especially in terms of strong personal and “people-to-people” relationships. On the other hand, there is political opposition to the U.S. as a former colonial ruler and in particular antagonism to the perception that the U.S. seeks to re-establish permanent military bases, as well as a sense that the Philippines should receive preferential support in terms of security assistance.

The combination of the complex threats to the Philippines and this special relationship with the U.S. serve to provide unique challenges to both Philippine and U.S. military forces working together to combat terrorism and insurgency. It also provides a caution to those who might think that the operations the U.S. has conducted through and with Philippine security forces provides a template or a model for conducting operations in other parts of the world. It should be kept in mind that each situation has its own unique set of conditions and the search for a “one size fits all” model is likely to be counter-productive. However, there may very well be useful tactics, techniques, and procedures as well as operational concepts and strategic considerations that may provide a starting point for planning similar missions around the world.

## **PRE-SEPTEMBER 2001 ENGAGEMENT**

Prior to 9-11 due to the multiple insurgencies and the presence of the groups mentioned above, the Philippines experienced not only direct combat operations but also terrorist incidents throughout the country. Most were relatively unknown outside of the Philippines or the region or beyond U.S. Pacific Command, but by 2000 some were making the news. These included, but were not limited to, the kidnapping of foreign tourists from Sipadan Island in Malaysia in April 2000, the alleged kidnapping of American Jeffrey Schilling in 2000-2001, and the Dos Palmas kidnapping in May 2001 (with U.S. Citizens Martin and Gracie Burnham and Guillermo Sobero).

The 2000 incidents, along with other events, influenced U.S. government officials, led by Ambassador Michael Sheehan to advocate for the development of a Philippine military national counterterrorist capability. In September of 2000 a U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) planning team led by Admiral Blair with members of the Special Operations Command Pacific, (SOCPAC), the Joint US Military Assistance Group Philippines (JUSMAG-Phil), and the 1<sup>st</sup> Special Forces Group met with Philippine military and government officials in Manila to begin planning for an extensive mobile training team (MTT) mission under Title 22 Security Assistance authorities to organize, train, and equip this new force for the Armed Forces of the Philippines that would be called the Light Reaction Company (LRC).

Mission execution for this effort fell to the 1<sup>st</sup> Special Forces Group. Special Forces planners, based on extensive long term relationships with the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), particularly with Philippine Special Forces and Scout Rangers, developed the detailed equipment requirements and a 6 month training program of instruction to provide a comprehensive counterterrorism capability for rural and urban situations. Training included urban and rural tactical training, assault of multiple structures, communications, intelligence, and medical training and sniper operations. This MTT was executed from January through July 2001 at Fort Magsaysay on the northern island of Luzon. As previously mentioned, on May 27, 2001 the Dos Palmas kidnapping occurred on Palawan island by members of the ASG who brought the hostages to Basilan Island at the southern tip of Mindanao. The Philippine military wanted to cease the LRC MTT and deploy the force to Basilan to support ongoing military operations to recover the hostages. However, after much discussion, the AFP decided to allow the training to be completed. Graduation was held on 6 July 2001 and the LRC deployed to Basilan on 8 July.

Based on assessments by the Special Forces Soldiers conducting the training, it was recommended that advisors accompany the LRC when they deployed to Basilan. However, this was not approved. One of the major deficiencies identified was the lack of a command and control mechanism to ensure proper integration of the LRC with the regional command in Mindanao. This resulted in one of the endemic problems for all Special Operations Forces and that is to be incorrectly employed. U.S. Special Forces, as part of SOCPAC's Pacific Situational Assessment Team (PSAT) at the embassy in Manila, kept in close contact with the leadership of the LRC on Basilan and confirmed the assessments of the trainers. Throughout the summer of 2001 SOCPAC and PACOM monitored the situation and decided that a follow-up assessment on Basilan was necessary. The commander of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Special Forces was tasked to meet with the LRC leadership in Mindanao on 11 September but due to the attacks in New York and Washington, this was postponed for 3 days. At a meeting in Zamboanga, Mindanao on 14 September the LRC XO laid out the challenges of operations on Basilan and how the LRC was being employed and requested advisors.

Of note, while the above description revolves around a single mobile training team mission, U.S. Special Operations Forces built the foundation for U.S. operations in the Philippines on the basis of continuous engagement with their Philippine military counterparts over many years. The routine conduct of Joint/Combined Exercises and Training (JCET) established many personal and professional relationships as well as provided the opportunity to U.S. SOF to maintain situational awareness and understanding. Furthermore the routine

deployment of U.S. SOF, and especially U.S. Special Forces, to remote areas with little to no enabler support, ensured that when OEF-P was executed the tactical SOF elements were well prepared. In reality, OEF-P was just an expansion of what U.S. SOF had been routinely doing not only in the Philippines but also throughout Asia. Just as U.S. Special Forces from the 5<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group were well prepared to execute the unique Unconventional Warfare mission in Afghanistan, the members of the 1<sup>st</sup> Special Forces Group were equally well prepared for the Foreign Internal Defense mission in the Philippines and throughout Asia.

With 9-11 and the beginning of the Global War on Terrorism, SOCPAC and PACOM determined that support should be provided to the Philippines in light of the fact that the ASG was holding American citizens hostage and it was linked to Al Qaeda. SOCPAC turned to the commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Special Forces Group, then-COL David P. Fridovich (later Lieutenant General, retired) to lead an assessment team and develop a campaign plan to support the Philippine government against its terrorist threats.

### **9-11 – INITIAL ASSESSMENT, PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL**

In October 2001, then-COL Fridovich deployed the Terrorism Coordination Assessment Visit (TCAV) that included operations, plans and intelligence officers and one Special Forces ODA and a JUSMAG representative to conduct a top to bottom, strategic to tactical level assessment of the security challenges concerning the terrorist threats in the Southern Philippines.

The TCAV coordinated with the U.S. Embassy and were given unprecedented access to the Armed Forces of the Philippines, reviewing strategic documents and holding meetings with senior officials to hear their views on the terrorist problem. The team traveled next to the Western Mindanao Command, which was in effect the combatant or regional command headquarters again meeting with the commander and staff, receiving their input and assessments and reviewing strategic documents and operational plans. Finally, the team flew to the island of Basilan meeting with the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division Command and staff and its forward command and control headquarters, Joint Task Force Comet.

The result of this assessment was to identify areas in which U.S. forces could provide advice and assistance to the AFP. These areas were mutually identified and agreed upon by U.S. and Filipino officers. Based on this assessment, then-COL Fridovich delivered a campaign plan brief to the Commander, U.S. PACOM, Admiral Blair, who approved it and sent it to Washington.

Simultaneously, other components of PACOM were drafting plans, one being a very aggressive offensive plan to land forces on Basilan to clear the island of terrorist groups and rescue the U.S. hostages. ADM Blair asked the special operations planners the feasibility of this as well as the potential timeline for results. A U.S. led offensive operation would have to have approval of the Philippine government and there were serious domestic political issues for the government. Furthermore, while a short-term result achieving some level of success might be achievable, it would likely have long-term negative effects for the Philippine government and thus on the alliance. The special operations planners

recommend a more deliberate approach working through and with the AFP to help build their military capacity to defeat the insurgents and terrorists while ensuring respect for Philippine sovereignty recognizing the residual effects of U.S. colonization and the domestic political situation. When asked how long this approach might take, the response was that the situation could be improved over the next ten years with sustained commitment.

In November 2001, President Bush met with Philippine President Arroyo and pledged support to her fight against terrorism and insurgency. This turned out to be very significant because as the PACOM plan moved through the approval process in the Pentagon, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld was opposed to it. Ultimately the decision for execution went to the White House and in the end President Bush overruled Secretary Rumsfeld saying that he had promised support to President Arroyo and he would keep his promise.<sup>4</sup> This assessment, planning and approval process took place from October 2001 to January 2002. Although it appeared to be a lengthy process there were some significant benefits to this. First the plan was built on a very thorough assessment of the situation and this assessment would continue and be updated throughout execution of the mission. Second, the initial forces for execution were able to deploy to Okinawa to the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, First Special Forces headquarters and begin preparation. These included CONUS-based Special Forces, Naval Special Warfare, Air Force Special Operations personnel, Civil Affairs, and Psychological Operations (now Military Information Support Operations) forces. Planners from E Company, 160<sup>th</sup> Special Operation Aviation Regiment based in Taegu, Republic of Korea were also able to deploy and conduct mission planning.

The result of the assessment and the plan development can be summed up in a few simple concepts. First, the AFP and the Philippine government could benefit from the advice and assistance of U.S. military and other U.S. government agencies to overcome mutually observed shortcomings. Second, U.S. forces had to work through and with AFP forces with the AFP always in the lead with no unilateral or direct U.S. combat operations. Third, the U.S. forces had to ensure respect for the sovereignty of the Philippines and have a thorough understanding of the political environment and the sensitivities therein and conduct operations in ways that took those sensitivities into account. Fourth, the U.S. effort had to be joint and interagency and capable of being sustained for a long duration (years), and this in turn required continuous assessment.

## **CONTEXT – HISTORICAL AND DOCTRINAL**

In addition to World War II and the liberation of the Philippines from the Japanese occupation, the U.S. has conducted, supported, or participated in what might be termed three irregular conflicts in the Philippines.

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<sup>4</sup> The late General Wayne A. Downing who was serving as the counterterrorism advisor to the National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice and was present in the oval office when the decision was made relayed this account to the author in June 2006 at a conference at the Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point.



Following the Spanish-American War and the ceding of Philippines territory to the United States, some of the Philippine people wanted but were denied their independence. This led to a long and bloody insurgency that has been studied in great depth and remains part of any study of insurgency and counterinsurgency. This conflict can be characterized as a U.S. occupation force quelling an internal rebellion in which some elements of the population tried to rid the Philippines of an occupying force. GEN Pershing and others such as GEN Leonard Wood led U.S. forces in extensive combat and counterinsurgency operations while developing techniques that would lead to effective suppression of the rebellion.

Following World War II and Philippine Independence a communist insurgency erupted, which became known as the Huk Rebellion. Unlike the conflict at the turn of the century, this was focused against the sovereign government and not an occupying power. Also unlike the previous insurgency, the U.S. did not commit forces to suppress the rebellion and only offered minor military equipment support and advice and assistance through the military assistance group at the U.S. Embassy. Edward Lansdale was the key U.S. advisor in support of then Defense Minister and later President Ramon Magsaysay. The Huk Rebellion was effectively suppressed after a number of years and is a good example of an extremely small footprint commitment by the U.S. to assist an ally. One of the reasons for a successful outcome, in addition to being willing to make the necessary political and land reforms, was the fact that the Philippine government and its security forces were in the lead throughout and the U.S. remained in relatively low visibility support.

Although the U.S. did not participate directly in supporting Philippine efforts against the Moro insurgency in the 1990's following the peace agreement between the Philippine Government and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), the U.S. Government, led by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), supported efforts to disarm rebel forces and reintegrate them into society with extensive local development, job training, and education programs. This is an excellent example of the critical contribution that USAID can make in conflict areas. Its work in Mindanao continues today.

The third and final irregular conflict is the focus of this paper. What will be shown in the remainder of this paper is that OEF-P really splits the difference between Pershing and Lansdale from one of U.S. occupation and the dominant role of the U.S. military to the very low visibility advisory commitment and no presence of U.S. combat forces or significant support forces beyond the military assistance group at the US Embassy. In OEF-P U.S. forces are in a supporting role with a presence greater than Lansdale and but on a much smaller scale than Pershing. Arguably, JSOTF-P was the right sized force for the right mission based on a thorough assessment of the political and security conditions. While it can never be touted as a template, the key lesson remains that a thorough assessment that leads to situational understanding so that the right ways and means can be brought to bear to achieve the desired ends is the way to plan and conduct such operations.

In addition to historical context it is necessary to put OEF-P in a doctrinal context. As stated, the overall mission was one of Foreign Internal Defense. However, there is a spectrum within this mission that is termed Indirect, Direct, and Combat FID. Indirect FID can best be described as peacetime security assistance and can encompass a range of activities from foreign military sales (FMS) to international military education and training (IMET) to providing military equipment and training to host nation security forces. In the

context of the situation in the Philippines, the MTT for the LRC previously described, was a security assistance mission under the security assistance authority of Title 22 and falls in the category of indirect FID which focuses relatively narrowly on building the capacity and capability of HN forces. Other examples of Indirect FID might be the Saudi Army National Guard advisory mission or routine operations and maintenance training that accompany the sale or grant of military equipment to a HN.

Combat FID is illustrated by operations conducted in Iraq and Afghanistan in which military forces are advising and assisting HN forces through the full spectrum of operations up to and including combat employment. In a combat FID role U.S. forces can and often do accompany HN forces on operations. Furthermore, U.S. combat support or enabling capabilities may assist in operations as well. Two of the best examples of Combat FID operations are the organizing, training, advising, and assisting the Afghan Commando Force and the Iraqi National Counter-Terrorism Task Force. U.S. SOF, along with enablers, support combat operations led by Afghan and Iraqi forces.

Just as OEF-P historically split the difference between Pershing and Lansdale, it also doctrinally splits the difference between Indirect and Combat FID by conducting Direct FID. In this role U.S. military forces operate within a combat zone and can advise and assist HN forces short of participating directly in combat operations but may integrate U.S. enabling support ranging from logistics and intelligence to airlift and fires. Both Direct and Combat FID are conducted under Title 10 authorities. However, there sometimes is confusion from an authorities stand point that must be addressed on a case-by-case basis when training and equipping (Title 22) is part of the advise and assist mission set. Other examples of Direct FID would be Plan Colombia, Operation Enduring Freedom - Caribbean and Central America (OEF-CCA), Operation Enduring Freedom - Trans Sahel (OEF-TS); Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa (JTF-HOA), and Georgia Train and Equip.

Direct FID was the appropriate mission for the U.S. military in the Philippines because the political sensitivities within the Philippines demanded that U.S. forces not be engaged in direct combat operations. While enemy forces have engaged U.S. forces and a number of casualties have resulted, U.S. forces have never conducted deliberate direct combat operations either unilaterally or with Philippine forces. An example of the sensitivity of the presence of U.S. forces in the conflict areas on Mindanao occurred in naming the first deployment of U.S. forces to Basilan in 2002. During operational planning discussions between SOCPAC and the AFP it was decided to call the first deployment "Balikatan" (in Tagalog meaning "shoulder to shoulder") in order to alleviate the concerns of the population. Balikatan is an annual combined exercise normally conducted on the island of Luzon that includes training in combat operations as well as various training scenarios to improve interoperability between the AFP and the U.S. military and these include disaster relief, humanitarian assistance, and civil-military operations. At the beginning of Balikatan the commander of SOCPAC, then Brig Gen Donald Wurster (later Lt Gen) stated that U.S. forces were on Basilan to assist the AFP to defend Filipinos from terrorists and to assist the government of the Philippines with local development projects. One of the most important results of this first deployment was described by then-COL Fridovich is that the U.S. forces kept their promise. They did not engage in deliberate direct combat operations, they improved AFP forces, and they supported the AFP in conducting civic action and humanitarian assistance for the local population. Although there was and continues to be

vocal political opposition in the Philippines among some segments of the population, the establishment of trust between U.S. forces and the people continues to serve the mission well.

With the understanding that OEF-P is a Direct FID mission that is a much reduced combat mission than was conducted by Pershing but a much more comprehensive advisory mission than Lansdale, including the provision of enabling capabilities, the details of the structure and methods of the operation can be examined.

## **JSOTF-P MISSION**

Although the mission statement for the Joint Special Operations Task Force- Philippines has evolved and will continue to evolve as the mission is continually assessed, one mission statement stands out for discussion.

JSOTF-P, ***in coordination with the US Country Team***, builds capacity and strengthens the Republic of the Philippines security forces to defeat selected terrorist organizations in order to protect RP and US citizens and interest from terrorist attack ***while preserving RP sovereignty***.<sup>5</sup>

This mission statement is unique for two reasons and because of those reasons should be considered as an example for other missions. This was the military mission statement for the main U.S. military operation in the Philippines. It focuses the effort on assisting the Philippine security forces so that they can defeat the terrorist organizations with the purpose of protecting Philippine and U.S. citizens and interests. It emphasizes that the U.S. is in a supporting role. But what is unique about this mission statement is that it emphasizes two key elements about the FID mission. First is the interagency aspect, which is represented by coordination with the U.S. Country Team. The second is the clearly stated imperative of preserving Philippine Sovereignty.

JSOTF-P built on the relationships established over the years between SOCPAC and the U.S. Country Team. Over the years whenever there were security issues in the Philippine SOCPAC would deploy liaison elements (PSAT) to augment embassy military support. The presence of U.S. Special Operations personnel at country team meetings was not unusual. When the JSOTF was established the Ambassador and the Country Team welcomed the permanent JSOTF liaison elements that were an essential element for coordinating and approving myriad actions. These ranged from exchanging information on the situation in Mindanao, to approving psychological operations products that supported the State Department's Rewards for Justice program to coordinating development activities with USAID and media events with the Public Diplomacy officer. Although there was a permanent liaison presence from the JSOTF in the embassy to ensure transparency and synchronization, the JSOTF Commander, Commander Sergeant Major, Intelligence and Operations officers would fly to Manila to meet with the intelligence working group and attend both the Country Team and the political-military meeting. The commander and the Ambassador also met weekly to exchange information, provide the opportunity for the

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<sup>5</sup> Credit for this mission statement belongs to then-LTC Bill Medina who was a planner in the SOCPAC J5 in 2006 and later Chief of Staff, JSOTF-P, 2007.

Ambassador to provide guidance and to synchronize activities with Philippine government and military officers as well as media engagement. This close liaison and coordination was critical to ensure that all representatives of the U.S. government were speaking with one voice when dealing with counterparts and the press.

The issue of sovereignty was of special significance in the Philippines because of the special relationship between the two countries. However, respect for sovereignty must be a consideration in all operations by U.S. military forces operating through and with friends, partners, and allies to achieve mutual objectives. Because of the colonial history, U.S. bases on Philippine soil, and political opponents, it was paramount that criticism of the Philippine government and military be deflected or at least not be a result of U.S. actions. Every member of the JSOTF had to be fully aware that every action they took could be under intense scrutiny. In fact many mistakes were made as military personnel tried to balance security and protection of the force with protection of the mission. However, in these cases coordinated efforts among the Philippine military and government, the U.S. Country Team, and the JSOTF were usually effective in diffusing the situation. Most importantly the foundation of trust built on the first Balikatan and successive commanders ensuring that the JSOTF remained true to the established principle of trust was critical in being able to diffuse tense situations. Lastly, the concept of respect for sovereignty was a key component in the operationalization of the lines of effort.

## **THEORETICAL CONSTRUCT**

To prepare members of the JSOTF, particular those not trained in Special Operations, for operations in the Philippines it was necessary to provide a theoretical foundation so that all members could understand the mission and intent, the operational design of the campaign, and how their actions fit into the plan. The following is an overview of the instruction that all arriving members of the JSOTF received on FID and counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations in the Philippines. Note also that this was based on years of Special Forces training and education and was developed long before FM 3-24 was published.

First, there are three major elements in the equation. There are the insurgent/terrorist groups that usually have some form of underground, auxiliary, and tactical force. Second, is the population which some term as the “battlefield of human terrain.” The third is the counter-insurgent/counter-terrorist force, which consists of the existing government security forces and ***external support to the government***. All U.S. forces understood that they were the external support and that from a military operations perspective the Philippine security forces were the main effort. This was a particularly important point to emphasize with forces that had served in Iraq and Afghanistan and subsequently deployed to the Philippines.

The key to understanding insurgency is that it is usually a political or economic problem first and foremost which has implications for the military. While destruction of key insurgent targets is necessary for success in most cases, an insurgency will be defeated if the underlying political and socio-economic causes are addressed by the HN government. Unfortunately, this translates to a long duration and complex operation that rests on the principles of presence, patience, and persistence. Security forces and HN government agencies must be present and engaged. The complex time-consuming nature requires

patience, patience on the part of the security forces and the government leadership as well the leadership of the external support. Finally, the HN and its support must be persistent. It must be understood that there is no template or checklist and that mistakes will be made but the HN must persist in both defeating insurgent and terrorist organizations and solving the underlying political and socio-economic causes of the insurgency.

It was necessary to define the types of insurgencies that the Philippine government was faced with and continues to face today.

One type is an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict. This type described the CPP and NPA.

Another type is a protracted political military struggle designed to weaken government control and legitimacy while increasing insurgent control and legitimacy. This type describes the actions of the MILF, the ASG, the RSM and the JI.

A third type is an armed expression of internal and organic political disaffiliation (regardless of external support). It may be offensive (as in revolutionary war) or defensive (e.g., separatist or autonomous movements). This type also describes in part the actions of the MILF, RSM, and JI.

All these descriptions are derived from historical counterinsurgency doctrine and were published prior to 9-11 in FM 31-20, *Special Forces Operations*, in April 1990. Rather than FM 3-24, this manual provided the doctrinal basis for operations in OEF-P.

In addition it was important to understand the range of engagement for externally supporting forces in this type of operation. First and foremost the threat must be engaged by the HN forces in the appropriate manner, capturing or killing the right insurgents is paramount. Security forces must consider and understand the complexity of culture, ethnicity, tribal, political, family, and religious factors when planning and conducting all operations. In addition, the correct level of engagement must be determined for the externally supporting forces. The sovereign nation is really in control of how that force can be employed in either direct action or indirect action. In the Philippines U.S. forces could not act unilaterally or directly and therefore had to work through and with HN forces in every respect.

Finally, when all counterinsurgency doctrine is synthesized and brought to its fundamental roots there are four basic key tasks that contribute to success. These are:

- Denial of insurgent/terrorist sanctuary
- Denial of insurgent/terrorist mobility
- Denial of insurgent/terrorist access to resources
- Separation of the population from insurgent/terrorist organizations

These four tasks are very simple and easy to remember. However, to paraphrase Clausewitz, in war (or COIN and CT) everything is simple but even the simplest thing is hard. The hard work of COIN and CT was explained in the Operational Design of the campaign.

## OPERATIONAL DESIGN

There were two centers of gravity identified that had to be addressed. First was the population. This was the counter-insurgency center of gravity. The terrorist networks were the second. The end-state to be achieved was that sanctuary, mobility and resources were denied to the insurgents/terrorists; the existence of a capable HN COIN/CT force and the population supporting government efforts. This end-state has not yet been fully achieved and remains a work in progress, again illustrating the need for presence, patience and persistence.

The campaign plan that was developed called for four lines of effort:

1. Capacity Building
2. Targeted Civil-Military Operations (CMO)
3. Information Collection and Sharing
4. Influence Operations.

The foundation of the Capacity Building line of effort was the traditional advise and assist mission conducted by Special Operations Forces, predominantly Special Forces advising Philippine Army and Marine Regular and Special Operations Forces. At various times elements of the Marine Special Operations Command (MARSOC) deployed and advised various Philippine Marine units. Naval Special Warfare SEALs and Combatant Crewmen (with organic MK V and Rigid-Inflatable Boats) advised Philippine Navy surface warfare and Naval Special Warfare units conducting maritime intercept operations. Air Force Special Operations advisors as well as pilots from regular Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps flying units provided advice and assistance to Philippine Air Force operations to include night vision goggle operations, resupply, MEDEVAC, and close air support.

Numerous operations conducted by the AFP were supported with U.S. advisors from the Liberty Operations on Basilan that eliminated the ASG sanctuary and drove the organization of the island in 2002 to Operation Ultimatum on Jolo island in 2006-2007 which resulted in a significant reduction in the ASG ability to operate, the killing of multiple key ASG leaders and provided a secure environment for local elections in 2007 which included a peaceful transfer of power among rival governors. In addition to major operations, the capacity and capability of Philippine combat forces was significantly enhanced at the tactical level and included improved joint integration particularly in fire support from both air delivered and indirect fire mortar and artillery systems. Operation Ultimatum, which arguably was the most complex operation conducted by the AFP, included a major deception operation by Army forces and a night amphibious landing with Philippine Marine and Army and Navy Special Operations forces which significantly disrupted both ASG and JI operations leading to the death of ASG leader Khadafy Janjalani as well as capture of the JI bomb making factories of Dulmatin and Patek.

The second line of effort was Targeted CMO. The use of the word targeting is problematic for some but its use had two meanings. First, the idea was to assist the Philippine government and its security forces with development projects that would help to address the

socio-economic conditions that caused the population to support the insurgents and terrorists. In this sense the conditions were targeted. The CMO effort evolved over time and involved very close coordination among Philippine and U.S. Civil Affairs, USAID, the Philippine Mindanao Economic Development Corporation as well as Philippine and U.S. non-governmental organizations. CMO projects ranged from the traditional medical civic action programs to the construction of schools, the digging of wells, repairing roads, and even improving a city's water treatment plant and airport. Small-scale projects in remote areas were conducted by the Philippine and U.S. militaries to maintain contact with the local population. A second form of targeting was part of this line of effort. CMO projects were also focused on ASG influenced areas where Philippine security forces did not normally operate. The security forces were able to "target" these areas by first conducting an assessment of the needs of the population, working with the local leaders to determine feasible projects, and then conducting development activities. This had the value of building trust among the people for AFP forces and providing AFP military and intelligence access to an ASG influenced area.

CMO projects were based on conducting thorough assessments. When the first SF Teams deployed to Basilan they used a 67-question questionnaire to survey the conditions in the local village. This questionnaire had been developed for use in Haiti during Uphold Democracy by the-LTC Fridovich. SF teams used this questionnaire to collect data that was transmitted to the Army Special Operations Task Force (ARSOTF) HQ for analysis and prioritization of resources. The initial data collected formed a baseline from which changes to conditions could be measured over time as subsequent assessments were conducted. This process was the result of fundamental Special Forces operations: prior to deployment teams conducted a detailed area study to understand the operational area and develop plans and once deployed they conduct area assessments to gather information to further their situational understanding and adjust their plans.

One major CMO project stands out for examination. One of the major shortfalls on Basilan Island identified during the initial assessment in October of 2001 was the poor road infrastructure which limited the ability of farmers to get crops to market as well as for security forces to rapidly move to different parts of the island. During initial planning it was determined that if 84 kilometers of road could be repaired it would improve the tactical mobility of security forces and enhance the economic livelihood of the people. Because of sufficient humanitarian funding had not yet been authorized it was decided to use Philippine Army Engineers with heavy augmentation by U.S. Navy SEABEES and U.S. Marine Engineers using Title 10 funding with the justification being that the improved road was necessary for force protection. The SEABEES and Marine Engineers landed on Basilan Island and provided the heavy equipment and resources that the Philippine Army Engineers lacked and helped to build an 84-kilometer hard packed "assault road." Although not paved it was extremely hard packed and significantly improved ground mobility and completed the circumferential road around the island. The original intent had been to construct this "assault road" which would serve as the foundation for a later government paving operation. Unfortunately that operation has taken longer to be resourced. However, this was another example of the U.S. military keeping its word as it was announced that as part of the original Balikatan exercise it promised to improve the circumferential road and it did.

There is an interesting side note regarding the SEABEES. They were extremely well received by the citizens of Basilan and the SEABEE symbol was well known and respected. The reason for this is that in 1946 the U.S. Navy SEABEES came to Basilan, built a water treatment plant, and painted the SEABEE symbol on it. The water treatment plant continues to operate to this day and the people on Basilan remain grateful for the U.S. Navy's work there.

The most illustrative example of the importance of CMO is a statement by Khaled Musa who was the Deputy Chair of the MILF Committee on Information who described the AFP approach to insurgency by saying that "civil-military operations is more lethal than brute force." He saw the benefits of effective CMO in central Mindanao as the people increasingly turned to government forces for support. This led the MILF to begin its own form of CMO in attempt to maintain popular support.

While CMO operations are the most visible operations, the third line of effort often pays bigger dividends behind the scenes. Information Collection and Sharing is a critical function that supports the first two lines of effort. Although OEF-P was very low in priority when compared to the intelligence assets deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, the intelligence professionals within the JSOTF as well as the theater and national level intelligence personnel made effective use of scarce resources. Intelligence analysts exploited HUMINT developed by Philippine intelligence; integrated tactical and strategic signals intercepts; employed unmanned aerial systems from the Scan Eagle launched from maritime platforms and tactical UAVs such as the Raven, as well as such assets as the P-3 Orion and even Forward Looking Infrared Radar from helicopters. Intelligence fusion centers were established at the headquarters of the Philippine regional forces as well as at the task force and lower tactical headquarters to ensure timely integration and sharing of information and intelligence.

The fourth line of effort -- among the most complex conducted -- was Influence operations. The basic focus of influence operations was to emphasize the success of the AFP in the first two lines of effort in order to change the perceptions about Philippine government legitimacy in the Southern Philippines. The employment of myriad assets from Philippine and U.S. psychological operations forces (now military information support operations) to military public affairs in coordination with the Embassy's Public Diplomacy officer to combat camera and information operations specialists from the 1<sup>st</sup> IO Command all contributed to the effectiveness of this line of effort. While much of the focus was on the target audience of the local population to enhance popular perception of government legitimacy, influence operations also targeted insurgent/terrorist organizations with dissent and discord campaigns and support for the Department of State's Rewards for Justice program. All forms of media were exploited from word of mouth to posters and leaflets, comic books and educational materials to radio and television broadcast to text messaging.

Some of the baseline themes and messages that were emphasized in various campaigns include:

- Honorable vs. lawless conduct
- Empower the people to make a change



- Positive change is happening now
- Security equals economic development (and vice versa)
- Legitimacy of the GRP and AFP
- Demystify the U.S. presence and intentions; e.g. temporary stay
  - U.S. forces are to advise, assist, and support its ally in the fight against terrorism
- GRP/AFP/U.S. are winning the war on terrorism
- Peace and prosperity vs. lawlessness – the people’s choice
- Problem resolution other than through violence (rule of law vice rule of the gun)
- Dissent and discord among ASG/JI

### **THE KILLING OF ASG TERRORIST LEADER ABU SOLAIMAN**

One operation stands out among many and shows the effective integration of all the lines of effort. The death of ASG leader Abu Solaiman was the result of patience and persistence. In March 2006 the ASG bombed a food coop in Jolo City that resulted in the death of 5 Muslims and the wounding of some 26 more. One of the rank and file members questioned the idea that ASG would kill and wound fellow Muslims. In addition, his wife was disillusioned with her husband’s membership in the ASG and asking him how the ASG was helping his family because she could not even put milk on the table for her children. She also noted that (and had leaflets in hand produced jointly by U.S. and Philippine psychological operations forces) that the U.S. State Department had a \$5 million reward for information leading to the capture or killing of Abu Solaiman. As part of the Rewards for Justice program. This influenced the ASG member to become an informant and was recruited as a HUMINT source by Philippine intelligence. From the spring of 2006 to the early winter of 2007 this source was cultivated finally providing Abu Solaiman’s cell phone number. This allowed U.S. intelligence assets to track him and in January 2007 national level intelligence personnel located with the JSOTF headquarters received information on the location of Abu Solaiman on Jolo Island. The information was directly provided to Army SSG Krista Kovach in the JSOTF intelligence section (J2) because the national level analyst knew it was actionable intelligence and that the JSOTF could rapidly and most effectively exploit it.

SSG Kovach, understand the importance and time sensitivity of the information, immediately called her counterpart on Jolo and provided the details and recommended that the information be transmitted to the U.S. SF team that was advising the Philippine 8<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Company which had just completed a course on advanced tactical training and was going to conduct an operation that night.

The 8<sup>th</sup> SF Company quickly re-planned their mission while SSG Kovach and her fellow analysts put together a target intelligence package and transmitted it to the U.S. SF team to assist in planning. SSG Kovach had received the information at 1500 hours and by 1800 hours the SF Company began a ground infiltration that included scaling one of the higher mountains on Jolo Island. They moved all night in the jungle in the rain and at dawn they came to the exact location of Abu Solaiman’s camp. As Abu Solaiman left the perimeter at sun-up, he was confronted, resisted, and killed. The SF Company cleared the camp killing a

number of ASG. SF intelligence NCOs photographed Abu Solaiman and transmitted digital photos the headquarters of Joint Task Force Comet for identification by the informant who confirmed it was he. Then the commander of JTF Comet requested the deployment of U.S. FBI personnel to take DNA samples and confirm his identity.

After confirmation and receipt of the reward money from Washington, the informant and others who contributed to Abu Solaiman's death received part of the \$5 million reward and then entered the Philippine witness protection program.

This single vignette illustrates the integration and mutual support of the lines of effort and how the U.S. military can contribute support to effective operations to capture or kill high value targets.

## CONCLUSION

There are numerous operations and events and tactics, techniques and procedures worthy of study that are well beyond the scope of this paper. This paper has attempted to highlight some of the key lessons and principles for conducting Foreign Internal Defense in a sovereign country. In this type of operating environment where a US friend, partner or ally is threatened with lawless, subversion, insurgency, and terrorism, the US military as part of a joint, combined, and interagency team must be able to operate in a supporting role and not be in overall charge. OEF-P is an example of how the U.S. military instrument can be employed in supporting role. Some of the lessons that surely carry over in most operating environment include thorough and continuous assessment, integration with the U.S. Country Team, the value of long-term relationships with key leaders and the ability to creatively employ constrained resources.

In addition, traditional Special Forces operations and training provide a sound basis for conducting such operations. The traditional FID mission can provide a useful framework for developing ways and means to support strategic interests and ends.

To conclude, Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines may not be *the* model for operations in the future operating environment but it is worthy of study as it can be *a* model for how to think about using the military instrument of power in a supporting role.

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