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**THE ARMED FORCE OF THE PHILIPPINES AND
SPECIAL OPERATIONS**

by

Antonio R. Lastimado
Arturo G. Rojas

December 2004

Thesis Advisor:
Second Reader:

Kalev I. Sepp
Peter J. Gustaitis

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THE ARMED FORCES OF THE PHILIPPINES AND SPECIAL OPERATIONS

Antonio R. Lastimado
Major, Philippine Army
B.S. Civil Engineering, Far Eastern University, Philippines, 1987

and

Arturo G. Rojas
Major, Philippine Marine Corps
B.S., Philippine Military Academy, 1990

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December 2004**

Author: Antonio R. Lastimado
Arturo G. Rojas

Approved by: Kaley I. Sepp
Thesis Advisor

Peter J. Gustaitis
Second Reader

Gordon McCormick
Chairman, Department of Defense Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Since World War II, the Philippines has confronted threats from communist insurgents, Muslim secessionists, and a few other agitators. Recently, however, a new threat has emerged-- this time coming from a terrorist organization known as the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG). Although the ASG is a relatively small group, it has wrought great injury to the Philippine image as of late. Common among the groups presenting a threat to internal security are that their strategies and tactics tend to be unconventional and asymmetric.

This thesis seeks to determine how special operations can improve the AFP's capability to address internal security threats. The study begins by examining the security environments in which the AFP currently operates, and then proceeds to study emerging security environments in which it will likely operate. The current special operations capability of the AFP is explored and assessed, while inquiring whether it needs enhancing. Case studies of past AFP special operations against groups which posed major internal threats are analyzed to determine whether or not the doctrine and strategy of the AFP was correct, especially regarding its use of Special Operations Forces (SOF). Furthermore, this study considers the United States (U.S.) model for special operations, namely the U.S. Special Operations Forces, in proposing a special operations strategy for the AFP that is feasible, suitable, and sustainable. It is suggested that such an examination will produce a strategy that is relevant, adaptable, and responsive to dealing with the internal security environments likely to be encountered by the Philippine government.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND

Since its founding in 1935, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has been forced to confront various threats to its existence as a sovereign and democratic nation. During the post-World War II period, the AFP has had to confront the Communist-led Hukbalahap, also called the “Huk rebels.” The Huk rebels were the forerunners of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), founded in 1968 by a combination of remnants of the Huk rebels and new radicals.

Two decades later, in the early 1970s, the AFP was again forced to confront a major challenge to upholding the government’s integrity and sovereignty, this time presented by the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF)¹, a Muslim secessionist group in the southern Philippines. In 2000, the AFP faced another threat posed by a Muslim separatist movement, this time in central Mindanao by a group called the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), a break-away faction of MNLF². The 1980’s saw the AFP advance significantly in the government’s campaign against counterinsurgencies. Finally, in the early 1990’s, the AFP observed the emergence of a new radical Islamic terrorist organization, the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG).

The emergence of the ASG has caught the attention of both political and military leaders of the Philippines. The ASG conducts many kinds of terrorist actions, including bombing and kidnapping for ransom, targeting both locals and internationals noncombatants. Thus, the AFP leadership had shifted its focus to combat the threat posed by the ASG because of the damage that the ASG could potentially inflict upon the Philippine government. Recently, the armed forces have conducted numerous hostage rescue missions in territories held by the terrorist forces. For instance, in the early

¹ The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) was founded in the 1960s. Its aim is to establish Moro autonomy in the southern Philippines. The MNLF mounted an offensive against the Philippine government in 1972. After more than two decades of fighting, its leader, Nur Misuari, signed a peace agreement with the government in 1996. Misuari then became the governor of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). In 2001, Misuari was removed as governor on charges of graft and corruption. Thereafter, loyal followers of Misuari formed the Misuari Renegade Group (MRG).

² The MILF was established in 1978 after some MNLF fighters were upset with Nur Misuari’s leadership. The late Hasim Salamat became its first leader. The current leader is Alraj Murad.

1990's, the Philippine Marines seized the ASG main camp, Al-Madinah, resulting in the safe recovery of hostages, Anthony Biel and Father Bernardo Blanco (a Spanish priest). Later, the Marines were able to free Filipino priest, Father Cirilo Nacorda, and American national, Jeffrey Schillings, in a subsequent hostage rescue operation. Furthermore, in 2002, a U.S. assisted joint task force from the Army, Navy, and Marines rescued, Gracia Burnham, an American national, from the hands of the ASG. In a follow up operation to this most recent crisis, Abu Sabaya, the leader in charge of the terrorist group who abducted the hostages was killed by the Philippine Naval Special Warfare Group (NSWG).

These recent accomplishments are significant because, they not only demonstrated the capability of the AFP to conduct special operations, but also because they showed the need to enhance the AFP's capabilities to engage in this kind of warfare. The AFP has a long and distinguished history in fighting according to irregular warfare tactics. As discussed previously, in this century the Philippines has provided a supportive home for the development of special operations units. As early as the late 1940's, during the campaign against the Huk rebels, the AFP has engaged in special operations against its enemy. This was also evidenced by the Force X raid in 1948.

B. PURPOSE

Threats to internal security remain the number one priority of the Philippine government, and particularly of the AFP. The CPP has waged an insurgency against the government for over 35 years. The MILF secessionists and ASG terrorists continue to pose a major security concern. In this thesis it will be argued that: 1) a correct use of special operations can improve the AFP's capability to address internal security threats and 2) the conduct of special operations in the past has not been maximally effective. Furthermore, the study will propose a special operations scheme for the AFP that is feasible, suitable, and sustainable to the unique security environment in which the Philippine government exists.

C. RELEVANCE

A majority of the literature dealing with special operations in the Philippines focuses primarily on the capabilities of the different branches of its armed forces. Whereas many of these studies have documented well the capabilities and utility of some

of the special units, they have limited themselves to analyzing only tactical and operational levels. On the other hand, the present study provides insights into the strategic use of special operations in combating the internal security threats, while also examining other security challenges currently being faced by the Philippine government (as well as threats it will likely have to face in the future). The intent of the study is threefold: 1) to validate current doctrines and programs of the AFP in the field of special operations, 2) to highlight the different activities under special operations which the AFP leadership should consider in future endeavors and 3) to demonstrate to the AFP the critical nature of special operations in facing the dangers posed by current and future threats to the security environment.

D. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study will limit its examination to the following: 1) the current and future security environments in the Philippines, 2) environments in which its armed forces are likely to be called upon to operate; 3) specific, local, internal security threats (i.e., the Local Communist Movement (LCM), the Southern Philippines Separatist Group (SPSG), and the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG); and finally, 4) the current status of the AFP's capabilities with regard to special operations, as seen from the perspective of the AFP.

Selected, unclassified case studies of past AFP missions will be examined in order to help determine some of the recurring problems that have marred the success of past special operations. These serve to highlight the impact of such operations on the threats posed by groups employing unconventional methods.

Finally, this study carefully considers a successful model for special operations--the U.S. Special Operations Forces--to propose an operations system for the Philippines that is feasible, suitable, and applicable to the unique Philippine situation.

E. CASE STUDY METHODOLOGY

The principal method for achieving the aims of this study is to analyze experiences gathered from past cases. Therefore, the study will examine three cases where special operations of the AFP were used in fighting against different groups that posed a threat to the Philippine government, including a case where the AFP engaged the Hukbalahap (Huks), Communist-inspired insurgents, and two cases in which the AFP fought the radical Muslim Islamist terrorist group, ASG.

Although the cases are not large in scale or definitive in their execution, nonetheless they are sufficiently useful in devising plausible conclusions. The AFP combat operations examined here were carefully selected and are significant based on their strategic nature. The diverse settings of these combat operations permit comparisons between the successes and failures that have occurred over time, extending from the Huk campaign of the 1940's, to the ASG of today. The comparison of military actions against the groups that have posed a threat to Philippine national security serves to reinforce the usefulness of this study.

Each of the cases, presented in Chapter V, reviews past action, dividing its analysis into two sections: 1) a synopsis of the background, provided in the form of a narrative of the salient events and 2) a brief discussion and observations about what can be learned from the case.

F. STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

Chapter II will examine the current security environment in the Philippines, including an assessment of the main groups posing a threat, and an estimate of the future security landscape in the Philippines. Based on the information generated by this examination, Chapter II will also analyze the relevance of special operations to the AFP. Chapter III, in order to provide the reader with a better understanding of the study, will then present a description of the AFP's special operations units, as well as its current capabilities. Chapter IV will provide insight into the U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF) which serves as a good paradigm to propose a special operations strategy for the AFP that is feasible, suitable and sustainable. Next, Chapter V will analyze three earlier cases where the AFP conducted special operations in order to determine whether the doctrine and strategy of the AFP has been effective in the past.

The last chapter of the study, Chapter VI, provides answers to the research questions proposed in this study:

- 1) Are special operations relevant to the internal security operations of the AFP?
- 2) Is the current special operations capability of the AFP adequate to deal with the internal security threats posed by certain groups?

- 3) Did special operations play a key role in past AFP operations?
- 4) Were special operations forces used effectively in past operations?
- 5) How can the AFP improve its special operations capabilities to most effectively deal with the internal security threats?
- 6) What type of special operations strategy is most feasible, suitable, and sustainable for the AFP in order to be maximally relevant, adaptable, and responsive to the security environment of the Philippines?

G. SPECIAL OPERATIONS DEFINED

Because the scope of special operations tends to encompass such a broad range of practices, it is difficult to define “special operations” in precise terms. As a result, in the literature, definitions have often been vague and under-inclusive. However, special operations is frequently associated with missions involving the following: raids, reconnaissance, demolitions, sabotage and assassinations, counter-terrorism, training and organizing indigenous forces, unconventional warfare, irregular warfare, covert operations, and the like. The danger in a proffering a definition that might be both vague and under-inclusive is that it provides little meaningful guidance to understanding the term. On the other hand, if the definition is too rigid and narrowly focused, it unnecessarily hinders imagination in conducting special operations. In efforts to avoid either danger, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) has broadly defined special operations as:

Operations conducted in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments to achieve military, diplomatic, informational, and/or economic objectives employing military capabilities for which there is no broad conventional requirement. These operations often require covert, clandestine, or low visibility capabilities. Special operations are applicable across the range of military operations. They can be conducted independently or in conjunction with operations of conventional forces or other government agencies and may include operations through, with, or by indigenous or surrogate forces. Special operations differ from conventional operations in degree of physical and political risk, operational techniques, mode of employment, independence from friendly support, and dependence on detailed operational intelligence and indigenous assets.³

³ Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms (Joint Pub 1-02)

This comprehensive definition is then added to by the U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM) when it says that special operations encompass the use of small units, in direct or indirect military actions, that are focused on strategic or operational objectives. Additionally, it says, special operations often require units having a combination of specialized personnel, equipment, training, or tactics that exceeds the routine capabilities of conventional military forces. In light of the foregoing, the Philippine Navy Manual, *Philippine Marine Corps Special Operations* (PNM3-27), defines special operations as “operations conducted by specially trained, equipped, and organized forces against strategic or tactical targets in pursuit of national objectives.”⁴

According to Maurice Tugwell and David Charters, “Special operations are small, clandestine, covert or overt operations of an unorthodox, frequently high-risk in nature, undertaken to achieve political or military objectives in support of foreign policy.”⁵ This definition will be used in the present study because it captures six of the significant elements most often mentioned as being part of special operations, namely that they tend to: 1) be small in scale, 2) be clandestine, 3) be either covert or overt, 4) be unorthodox, 5) be high-risk, 6) have significant political and/or military objectives, and 6) be supportive of both foreign and/or national objectives⁶.

H. STRATEGIC UTILITY OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS

This study focuses on the strategic use of special operations and special operations forces. According to Colin Gray⁷, the term, “strategic use” can be defined as, “the contribution of a particular kind of military activity to the course and outcome of an entire conflict.”⁸ Gray categorized several strategic utilities of special operations, among

⁴ Philippine Navy Manual *Marine Special Operations* (PNM3-27). The definition proceed to state that “special operations can be prosecuted independently when the use of conventional forces is either inappropriate or infeasible during periods of peace or hostilities. These include operations launched and sustained from the sea.”

⁵ Gray, C. (1998). *Explorations in Strategy*. Westport, CT: Praeger. (p. 145).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Colin Gray is Professor of International Politics and Strategic Studies at the University of Reading, UK. He worked in the U.S. for 17 years, where he was the founding president of a defense-oriented Washington think tank, the National Institute for Public Policy. He held a presidential appointment for five years in the Reagan administration, and was the recipient of the Distinguished Public Service Award from the US Navy. (NPS, Library)

⁸ Gray, C. (1988). *Explorations in Strategy*. Westport, CT: Praeger. (p. 165).

which are: economy of force, expansion of choice, innovation, morale, reassurance, humiliation of the enemy, shaping the future, showcasing competence, and control of escalation.⁹ In this study, the first two categories, namely economy of force and expansion of choice, are the most important. On the one hand, economy of force pertains to the achievement of significant results with only a limited use of forces. This is important because it is commonly recognized that a primary military virtue is to achieve maximum results with only a minimum of effort. On the other hand, expansion of choice refers to the tendency of special operations to expand the options available to political and military leaders of a country.

⁹ Gray, C. (1988). *Explorations in Strategy*. Westport, CT: Praeger. (p. 168).

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II. THE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

A. INTRODUCTION

The most active and significant threats to the Philippine's national security are posed by those who threaten its internal security. The government, particularly the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), is faced with three major internal security threats: the Local Communist Movement, or LCM, the Southern Philippines Secessionist Group, or SPSG, and the Abu Sayyaf Group, or ASG. The continued existence of these terrorist groups has brought great damage to the country, in terms of stresses to its financial status, breaches in its national security, and injury to its national prestige. The AFP has been given the mission of responding to threats to the Philippine internal security. It has been a primary objective of the AFP to defeat these adversaries.

Communist-inspired insurgencies pose the greatest security threat to the Philippine's national security because they tend to be larger in scope than those posed by Muslim extremist groups---groups usually tied to foreign terrorist networks. The renewal of Communist-led insurgencies has resulted in the AFP's being given the primary responsibility for heading up the Internal Security Operations, or ISO (prior to this, it had been the domain of the Philippine National Police [PNP]).¹⁰ As of 2002, the LCM strength was placed at 9,257 men equipped with 6,126 firearms. The number of affected barangays, or villages, was approximately 2,394, about 6% of the 42,000 barangays nationwide. The number of guerrilla fronts was placed at 105 nationwide.¹¹

Aside from internal threats from the LCM, there are several other security challenges looming on the horizon for the Philippines. Among these are: other forms of terrorism, external threats to territorial integrity, threats to regional peace and stability, security threats that are both transnational and nontraditional, the safety and security of Overseas Filipino Investors (OFI), and dangers to national economic development.

¹⁰ Republic Act 8551 or *The PNP Reform and Reorganization Law* returns the primary responsibility for counterinsurgency to the AFP. It superseded RA 6975, which transferred the responsibility of internal security to the Department of Interior and Local Government and Philippine National Police.

¹¹ AFP Letter of Instruction 11-2003, *Contingency Plan (Pisces "Bravo")*. Undated.

B. PHILIPPINE INTERNAL SECURITY THREAT GROUPS

1. The Local Communist Movement (LCM)

Communists have been waging a Maoist type insurgency in the Philippines for over 35 years and pose a greater security threat to the Philippines than do the many Muslim secessionist and terrorist groups that are often tied to foreign subversive networks. The Communist Party of the Philippines, or CPP, and its armed guerrilla wing- (8,600-strong New People's Army, or NPA), are considered to be the main security threat to the peace and security of the Philippines because of its nationwide presence and advanced capability to mount an armed rebellion. Aside from pursuing an armed struggle, the CPP maximizes their so-called "legal struggle" by using many different front organizations under its umbrella front, the National Democratic Front, or NDF, to organize, agitate the populace. Such front organizations accomplish CPP goals by "working" closely with the government while keeping clandestine ties to the rebels. Following Chinese and Vietnamese model, the CPP, the NPA, and the NDF, acting together, wages a protracted struggle by seizing political power. They do this by encircling the cities from the countryside with armed guerrillas. The CPP/NPA complex executes this armed struggle, while establishing- "mass base"¹² areas in the countryside, as well as organizing mass movements in urban centers to support and sustain the organization.

Despite some set backs in the late 1980's and early 1990's, the CPP/ NPA/ NDF conglomerate continues to conduct political, economic, social, and psychological activities to drive a wedge between the people and the government. Communist guerrillas have been able to infiltrate many legitimate organizations, such as those in labor, those in student/ youth groups, and those in urban poor sectors, and stay involved in activities to build a united-front. The Communist Party is responsible for politicizing, agitating, and organizing the aforementioned sectors to participate in CPP-initiated rallies, demonstrations, strikes, and other forms of protest actions against the government.

¹² Guerrilla mass base areas are areas in the countryside consisting of several *barangays* or villages, covering two or more towns or provinces, where guerrilla units have established their control and influence through their own mass organizations and local organs of political power. It is also called "influenced" areas in the country.

NPA elements are responsible for confronting the AFP, and for protecting guerrilla members, their movements, and supporters. The NDF is the legal front organization for the CPP.¹³

Although the LCM split in the mid-1990's into two main groups—1) “the Reaffirmist,” or the mainstream CPP/NPA/NDF, and 2) the new Rejectionist Faction-- both factions share a common strategic objective, namely: seizing political power and establishing a Communist-ruled government. In recent years, e.g., when it took advantage of the renewed conflict in Mindanao, the LCM has seen a resurgence in terms of the number of guerrilla fighters, firearms, mass bases, and guerrilla fronts.¹⁴ In response to the growing number of insurgents, the AFP has made it a goal to dismantle a total of 101 guerrilla fronts nationwide in the next five years.¹⁵ In 2002, alone, the AFP had to clear 400 LCM-affected barangays, suggesting that the CPP/NPA has grown considerably in recent years.

The NPA is capable of conducting terrorist actions which are both selective and discriminate, such as liquidation, murder, assassination, bombing, kidnapping for ransom, intimidation and coercion, arson, and extortion. All activities are conducted in order to gain control over people and their areas of operation. The NPA is also able to conduct many other activities, including harassment, raids, and ambushes against government forces and military targets, as evidenced by three separate incidents: 1) on February 6, 2004 against CAA patrol bases in Limos, Pinukpok, Kalinga, 2) on February 28, 2004 against the Echo Company, 77th Infantry Battalion in Poswoy, Balbalan, Kalinga, and 3) on March 1, 2004 in the ambush against Army elements in Tamban Tinambac,

¹³ The prime function of the NDF is to win the over all possible allies to totally isolate the ruling regime and to give direct and indirect support to the armed struggle being waged by the NPA in the countryside. The NDF also forms the nucleus of the provisional coalition government that will assume governmental functions once the revolution succeeds. (Corpuz, 1989, p. 57).

¹⁴ Guerrilla Front is a politico-military-geographical unit of the CPP/NPA which consists of: 1) a political organization usually made up of a front committee, with districts, sections, and barrio revolutionary committees under it; 2) a military organization made up of a regular mobile force or forces varying in size from platoon up to several companies, armed propaganda teams, and local militias; 3) a front territory or AOR consisting of several municipalities. Most of these guerrilla fronts are located along provincial boundaries with mountainous/forested terrain, but there are some which are located in the plains, along coastlines, and in depressed areas in urban centers. (Corpuz, 1989, p. 139).

¹⁵ AFP 1st Quarter CY 2004 Internal Security Operations Assessment Briefing on April 16, 2004.

Camarines Sur.¹⁶ Guerrilla operations, such as these, are inevitably aimed at weakening the government's security forces, eventually in order to destroy them, and with them, the political will of the people.

Because of the inclusion of the LCM on the current U.S. terrorist watch list, its external financial support has been dwindling. Thus, the insurgents have stepped-up their campaign of extortion in the form of their "revolutionary tax,"¹⁷ levied from business establishments in the cities and countryside to generate much needed funds. During the last national elections, for instance, guerrillas demanded exorbitant amounts of money from the candidates in exchange for being allowed to campaign in rebel controlled areas. Additionally, in order to sustain and bolster their declining ranks, the Communist guerrillas have resorted to the recruiting of minors.

Despite the fact that LCM has been added to the U.S. terrorist list, the Philippine government continues to pursue peace talks with CPP. The CPP, on its latest bid to acquire greater strength, has demanded that they be taken off the list before pursuing peace talks. The Philippine military, however, has found fresh evidence of growing links between the CPP and foreign terrorist organizations, allegations that the CPP has vehemently denied. Thus, in October 2004, President Macapagal-Arroyo has ordered a reassessment of the government's strategy in addressing the 35-year-old insurgency.¹⁸ In response, a spokesman of the Communist rebels said, "The rebels no longer believe the government was serious in pursuing a political settlement to the insurgency that has claimed thousands of lives."¹⁹

2. The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)

The MILF is a breakaway faction of the Moro National Liberation Front, or MNLF. The MILF is now the main entity threatening the Philippine's internal security in

¹⁶ AFP 1st Quarter CY 2004 Internal Security Operations Assessment Briefing on April 16, 2004.

¹⁷ The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has placed damage to properties caused by the New People's Army (NPA) in Western Visayas owned by private corporations that have refused to pay revolutionary taxes from January to August of 2004 to be P42 million. It represents almost one-third of the P66.2 million worth of properties destroyed by the rebel group nationwide.
(<http://www.philstar.com/philstar/NEWS200409079904.htm>)

¹⁸ Dalangin-Fernandez, L. (2004). Arroyo: RP still a U.S. Ally in War vs Communists, Terrorists. *Inquirer*. Retrieved October 20, 2004, from http://news.inq7.net/top/index.php?index=1&story_id=15531

¹⁹ Ibid.

central and western Mindanao (hence, the MILF is also known as the “Southern Philippines Secessionist Group,” or SPSG). It was formed in 1978 by the late Hashim Salamat and other disgruntled Central Committee members who left the mainstream MNLF. Its goal is to establish an independent Islamic state in Mindanao. Towards the achievement of this goal, the MILF has outlined a four-point program, namely: 1) instigating military offensives, 2) intensifying diplomatic offensives, 3) sustaining mass actions, and 4) pursuing negotiations with the government.²⁰ The struggle, however, has largely been confined to central Mindanao, particularly in the provinces of Maguindanao, -Lanao del Sur, Lanao del Norte, and North Cotabato.

In order to sustain its goal of building a Muslim state, the MILF, like the other threat groups, have carried out kidnap-for-ransom and extortion activities ranging from soliciting funds support from local populations laboring to get the support of some international Islamic organizations. Unlike the CPP/NPA, however, the MILF’s armed division, the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF), has engaged government forces in “quasi-conventional” warfare. Due to a military offensive in 2000 that eventuated in the destruction of most of its camps, including Camp Abubakar (the main headquarters of the MILF), the MILF has abandoned its more conventional strategies in favor of conducting guerrilla warfare. The BIAF, though numbering only in the thousands, is still capable of conducting small-scale raids, ambushes and harassments outside its area of operations.

The MILF has also been linked to international terrorist organization in the past. In the late 1990, some foreign terrorists of unknown nationalities were killed during an assault on Army Camp Awang in Cotabato, together with MILF fighters. The MILF has also been blamed for a series of kidnappings and killings of foreign hostages in recent years. For example, in October 2001 MILF guerrillas seized Italian priest Guiseppe Pierantoni, while he was officiating at a mass near the town of Dimataling in Mindanao.²¹ He was freed six months later after extensive government negotiations, allegedly in exchange for ransom. Lately, the AFP has found evidence of growing links

²⁰ National Internal Security Plan dated 2002.

²¹ Ortega, R. & Rosauero, R. (2004). *Italian Abducted in Lanao del Norte*. Retrieved on November 1, 2004 from http://news.inq7.net/top/index.php?index=1&story_id=17618.

between the MILF and the Indonesian-based Jemaah Islamiya, or JI. Additionally, there are growing concerns over reports of JI terrorists undergoing training inside MILF camps.

Despite these developments, the MILF is expected to engage the Philippine government in extensive peace negotiations²², even while continuing to build-up its manpower and logistics, just as it has done in the past. In November 2004, for example, an Italian, non-government organization worker was abducted by armed men and was reportedly taken to an MILF-controlled area.²³ Moreover, the MILF is expected to exploit the peace process by eliciting widespread sympathy and international recognition of its right to exist as an independent, Islamic state in Mindanao. Although the MILF threat is concentrated in central Mindanao, it has become a major concern regarding the internal security of the entire country due to its substantial popular support and continued aid from foreign Islamic organization and personalities. In terms of its membership and firepower, the strength of the MILF has also risen. As of this writing, MILF armed fighters number in the thousands.

3. Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)

The Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) is also a major security concern primarily due to its kidnap-for-ransom tactics and other terrorist activities. Although a relatively small group, the ASG has wrought more damage to the country's image as of late than any other group. The threat posed by locally based terrorism is well illustrated by the ASG. For example, it is responsible for numerous raids and kidnappings, such as those in the Sipadan, Malaysia and the Dos Palmas Beach Resort, Palawan incidents²⁴, all of which have been international concerns.

The members of the ASG are former MNLF fighters who left the organization after it entered into peace negotiations with the Philippine government. Furthermore, the core members of the ASG are veterans of the Afghan War, where they had fought as

²² The MILF has been waging a rebellion since 1978, but has signed a truce with the Philippine government and is to begin formal peace talks in late 2004.

²³ Ortega, R. & Rosauero, R. (2004). *Italian Abducted in Lanao del Norte*. Retrieved on November 1, 2004 from http://news.inq7.net/top/index.php?index=1&story_id=17618.

²⁴ In 2000 and 2001, ASG raided resorts in Sipadan, Malaysia and Palawan, Philippines, respectively. The group kidnapped foreign tourists and locals and brought them to their jungle hideouts in Southern Philippines. The ASG received large ransom payments for releasing the foreign and Filipino hostages.

mujahadeens against the Soviets, after having been motivated by extremist Islamic teachings while residing in the Middle East. In the beginning of its existence, the ASG used religion as its driving force. Its aim was to propagate Muslim fundamentalism, with a main thrust of establishing an Islamic state in the southern Philippines. This had been the vision of its charismatic founder, the late Abdurajak Janjalani, who was killed in late 1990's.

The ASG is now a lawless, bandit group (labeled terrorists by the government), claiming Islamic, theocratic objectives. In 1998, after the government had killed Abdurajak Janjalani, the organization was not only brought to the verge of disintegration, but also lost its ideological direction. Thus, the ASF has slowly deteriorated into a group of "terrorist bandits" who were seemingly content with collecting ransom money from kidnapped victims, and other criminal activities.²⁵ However, the ASG continues to exert a broad influence and enjoy support in the provinces of Basilan, Sulu, Zamboanga del Sur, Zamoanga del Norte, and Sarangani.

The ASG resorts to terrorist tactics as its strategy such as kidnapping-for-ransom, executing civilians, and bombings. This is done in order to sow fear among the people so that the ASG can wield authority and maintain control in areas in which they operate. The ransom money collected from previous kidnapping activities was often used, not only to procure modern communications equipment, other gear, and weapons, but also to buy the loyalty of the populace.

Additionally, of major concern has been the ASG's reported close connections with convicted terrorist, Ramzi Yousef, and its alleged links with the al Qaeda network. The latter possibility has been raised because of ASG's close association with Islamic NGOs (and other front business firms) established by Muhammad Jamal Khalifa, a brother-in-law of Osama Bin Ladin.

Although its strength has been greatly reduced to about 240 fighters from a peak of 1,200, the ASG remains a threat in southern Mindanao. The ASG continues to project an image of strength and invincibility, despite numerous setbacks incurred from intensive

²⁵ Philippine Marine Corps. (2002). *Field handout: Doctrinal Extract for the ASG, (FH02A1)*. Manila: PMC. (p. 12).

government operations. Despite these AFP successes, ASG special operations groups continue to lurk in several urban centers, and to conduct surprise terror attacks against civilian and military targets. According to Wayne Downing, “the ASG serves as a cautionary tale of how independent, networked groups can quickly reconstitute following a setback.”²⁶ Even after the killing of one of its top leaders, Abu Sabaya, in June 2002 by a combined Filipino/U.S. operation, the ASG has seemed to recover. Lastly, the ASG continues to enjoy a great degree of support from the local Muslim population, even though many in southern Philippine communities do not agree with the means by which the ASG attains its goal.

C. CHALLENGES AND OTHER CONCERNS

1. International Terrorism

As a society, Filipinos have not been spared from the horrors of terrorism. International terrorism could easily spill over into the region and could, thereby, become the greatest security challenge the country has to face in the future. Al Qaeda has allegedly already provided equipment and training assistance to both the MILF and the ASG.²⁷ The government blamed Jemaah Islamiya (JI)²⁸ and renegade members of the separatist MILF for the bombings of targets throughout the Philippines in 2000 which killed 22 people, including an overhead railway in Manila. Moreover, JI was incriminated for a car bomb outside the residence of the Philippine envoy to Jakarta, Leonides Caday, in August 2000 that severely wounded Caday and his driver. Furthermore, a captured JI bomber, Fathur Rohman al-Ghozi, confessed to wiring money to Filipino militants who used it to buy explosives for the attacks. Al-Ghozi escaped from a Manila jail in 2003 but was subsequently killed by the police during a pursuit operation.

The JI terror attacks in the region might provide the ASG with inspiration in the same manner that al Qaeda inspired JI and other international terrorist organizations. According to Wayne Downing, “The terrorist groups are taking advantage of freedom of

²⁶ Downing, W. (2003). *The Global War on Terrorism: Focusing the National Strategy. Defeating Terrorism*. Guilford, CT: McGraw Hill. (p. 155).

²⁷ National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States. (2004). *The 9/11 Commission Report*. New York: W.W Norton & Company. (p. 58).

²⁸ Jemaah Islamiya is nascent organization headed by Indonesian Islamists which is known to have cells in the country as well as in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia. JI is considered the regional chapter of al Qaeda. The Philippine government has reported that there are JI members hiding in the southern Philippines.

information to increase their geographic reach.”²⁹ Downing argues that ASG and JI have been inspired by al Qaeda, becoming al Qaeda franchises by sharing resources, information, people, and ideology. The September 2004 attack by JI on the Australian embassy in Jakarta, for example, can be emulated by ASG in Manila at some time in the future. In November of 2004, the Philippine military attacked an alleged terrorist hideout where suspected JI and ASG members were meeting.³⁰ Philippine intelligence officials claim that renegade Muslim rebels are currently sheltering JI members in their camps in the southern Philippines. Despite recent victories against terrorists, the bomb attack in Jakarta clearly indicates that challenges from international terrorist activities are far from being over.

2. Regional Peace and Stability

Regional peace and stability has been another concern of security forces in the Philippines. Problems that have global ramifications, such as the menace posed by radical Islamists, will have a growing impact in the Philippines. The September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States had tremendous security implications worldwide. Al Qaeda’s declaration of *jihad* against the United States has encouraged Muslim Islamic groups around the world, including those in Asia, to increase their own terrorist activities against the U.S. and its allies.

The JI bombing incident in Bali and the car bomb attack on the Australian embassy in Jakarta, Indonesia, also allegedly by JI terrorists, have contributed to a worsening of the security environment in the region. After the attack, the JI warned, "It is the first of a series of attacks... We advise Australians in Indonesia to leave this country or else we will transform it into a cemetery for them."³¹ Also, JI pressured the Australian government to withdraw its troops from Iraq, just as the Iraqi insurgents had done to the Philippine government earlier. JI vowed more attacks of greater magnitude if their demand was not met: “We will deal them many painful blows. The lines of booby-

²⁹ Downing, W. (2003). *The Global War on Terrorism: Focusing the National Strategy. Defeating Terrorism*. Guilford, CT: McGraw Hill. (p. 151).

³⁰ Unson, J. (2004). *Military Pounds JI-Abu Meet; 10 Killed*. Retrieved on November 20, 2004 from <http://www.philstar.com/philstar/News200411210404.htm>.

³¹ Retrieved on September 10, 2004 from <http://www.philstar.com/philstar/News200409110401.htm>.

trapped cars will have no end,"³² The recent clashes between Thai Muslim extremists with alleged ties to JI and the Royal Thai military in southern Thailand suggests that the security situation is worsening. Indonesia, the largest Muslim state in the region, is a potential safe haven and training sites for the members of al Qaeda cells. The Philippines had been reported to have 30-50 JI operatives training in southern provinces coming in through its "southern backdoors."³³

Equally important, the situation on the Korean peninsula, the dispute in the Kalayaan Island Group (KIG)³⁴, and the China-Taiwan conflict all present potential flashpoints for military conflict in the region. Not too long ago in the 1990's, the Indonesian government faced secessionist and sectarian violence problem of its own in Aceh and East Timor.

3. Transnational, Nontraditional Security Threats

Another security concern that can have great impacts on both the security environment and the nation's socio-economic stability is transnational and non-traditional threats, such as drugs and narco-terrorism, international and transnational organized crimes, smuggling, money laundering, piracy, cyber and e-commerce crimes, and other forms of illegal competition in economic sphere. The significance of these threats tends to be relative with the other challenges already discussed. The Philippine National Police is the lead agency in addressing these problems. The threat groups in this category, however, usually over-extend the capabilities of the Philippine police forces. Organized crime groups present the foremost formidable challenge to maintaining peace and order with the number of powerful domestic and international syndicate groups rising in recent years. Transnational, nontraditional threats are difficult to find, reach, and neutralize. The profitability of transnational crimes such as piracy, drug trafficking, smuggling, etc. have had a tremendous impact on the national economy and the Philippines' socio-political stability. The country loses billions of pesos annually to these groups.

³² Retrieved on September 10, 2004 from <http://www.philstar.com/philstar/News200409110401.htm>.

³³ Southern Philippines border is very vast which the AFP cannot totally protect from intruders, smugglers, pirates, etc. The Philippine Navy has limited patrol crafts and few scout airplanes. Most of its assets are utilized in counterinsurgency operations.

³⁴ Kalayaan Island Group are disputed group of approximately 100 reefs and islets in the South China Sea. They are part of the South China Sea Islands. They are surrounded by rich fishing grounds and potentially by gas and oil deposits. Other claimant countries include: China, Vietnam, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Brunei. All claimants have security outposts in some islands they have occupied except for Brunei.

4. Safety and Security of Filipinos Abroad

The Filipino's quest for a better life for his/her family has led many take up residence in distant places throughout the world, including the Middle East. To the present date, the Philippines has a total of over a million Overseas Filipino Investors (OFIs).³⁵ Together, the OFIs remit much needed foreign currency to the Philippines, an amount estimated to exceed a billion U.S. dollars of their contribution to the economic well being of the country is so tremendous, the government its required to seek the safety and security of not only OFIs, but also other Filipinos working abroad. Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has emphasized the government's commitment to safeguarding their security abroad. For example, the Philippine government pulled out its 50-man troop contingent from Iraq for exchange to the freedom of a Filipino OFI who was kidnapped by Iraqi insurgents.

5. Threats to Territorial Integrity

External threats to the Philippine's territorial integrity have always been present, primarily because of the country's strategic location along the vital sea-lanes of the South China Sea, a major trade route and where many countries' military forces pass through. The country also provides a strategic post for maintaining a military presence power in the Pacific and Indian Ocean.

A dispute over the Kalayaan Island Group (KIG)³⁶ appears far from being resolved, as different countries lay claim to the KIG. China's incursions, including its construction of structures on Mischief Reef in the mid 1990's added more fuel to the existing volatility of the situation. In 1998, tensions increased further when China renovated previously built structures and proceeded to build new, more permanent ones. then built new more permanent ones. Another threat to Philippine territorial integrity is the overlapping claims over the Exclusive Economic Zone, or EEZ, with Taiwan, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Although the prospect of an attack or invasion is remote, the possibility of intrusions into national territory remains an immediate concern of the country.

³⁵ According to the Philippine National Statistics Office, there are a total 1,056,000 OFI as of year 2002 survey. There around 285, 000 OFI in Saudi Arabia alone as of 1999 survey. (Source: <http://www.census.gov.ph/data/sectordata/datasof.html>. Retrieved on October 20, 2004)

³⁶ Among the other claimant countries are Brunei, China, Malaysia, Taiwan, and Vietnam.

D. THREAT ASSESSMENT

Defeating the internal security threats involves a comprehensive solution. This likely implies the application of other elements of national power, such as, political, economic, intelligence, information, financial, diplomatic, law enforcement, and military. To date, the LCM remains the top priority of the government among the internal threat groups. The insurgents have retained their politico-military capabilities. They also have intensified their nationwide recruitment activities in an attempt to influence the masses through actions in urban areas and armed struggle in the countryside.

The NPA will continue to use unconventional means to fight, including using guerrilla warfare as a method, if necessary, trying to maintain the conflict at a low intensity levels. Their strategy, for the most part, will be to engage the AFP asymmetrically. The NPA will avoid engaging its government forces in conventional or positional warfare. One of their strategies is the adapting of guerrilla warfare tactics into mobile warfare situations, often characterized by the absence of fixed battle lines. They will, by all means, continue to strive for control and win the support of the people in order to remain in the fight.

The LCM might present a formidable challenge to the Philippines' security. But it appears to be vulnerable to a concentrated government effort; aimed at decisively defeating its main armed groups; dismantling its politico-military infrastructures; reestablishing government control and authority in contested areas; and reducing the root causes of insurgency through good governance.

On the other hand, the threat posed by the MILF and ASG appears to be more manageable. After the 2000 AFP offensive in Central Mindanao the MILF's strength has been reduced to a great extent. MILF activities will continue to be isolated in Muslim areas in Central Mindanao where it enjoys a high level of popular support. Its capability to conduct both medium to large-scale offensive and defensive operations against the government has been greatly reduced. However, its recent change of its strategy from using semi-conventional tactics to guerrilla warfare tactics will prove more challenging. The ongoing truce between the government and MILF combined with the presence of the

Malaysian-led, international monitoring team (IMT) makes the prospects of another offensive remote in the foreseeable future.

The ASG had been weakened to a great degree by the death of one of its leaders, Abu Sabaya, in an encounter with AFP forces in 2002. The recent killing and neutralization of some of the other leaders and members of terrorist groups has resulted in a diminished capability of them doing harm. The main ASG elements are isolated in the southern Philippines particularly in the islands of Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi. The ASG, however, should not be underestimated—it has access to the funds necessary to mobilize and radicalize the people in its strongholds, later exploiting them to the point that some join their ranks. The ASG's links to international terrorist groups like al Qaeda and JI increases its potential to grow and build up its capabilities. The ASG fighters are experienced and well-trained. Most of their leaders have undergone training and combat in the Middle East during the Afghan-Soviet War.

These threat groups continue to embrace the strategy of attrition, as they have before. That is, the different threat groups will continue to become less defined and more dispersed. As a result, it is inevitable that the AFP will employ, and continue to operate, at a lower ends of the combat spectrum, specifically, employing Low Intensity Conflict (LIC) strategies. Thus, overall, LIC will become the main security challenge of the Philippines. These conflicts, as Efraim Inbar³⁷ suggests, will be asymmetric, “due to the gap in the discernible power of the different threat groups.”³⁸ Because of the weaknesses and limited capabilities of the contending adversaries when compared to the strength of the government, threat groups will likely continue their strategy of attrition in an attempt to exhaust the government over time. The LCM and SPSG have both employed such long-term strategies since their birth. Therefore, the conflicts they are involved in will take more time unless the government is able to negotiate a successful peace initiative.

Indeed, the future security environment in which the AFP forces will have to operate is made even more complex because it is frequently characterized by disorder and crises in local, regional, and international scenes. The threats coming from well-

³⁷ Efraim Inbar is a Professor of Political Studies at Bar-Ian University and Director of the BESA Center for Strategic Studies, as well as Series Editor of the BESA Studies in International Security.

³⁸ Inbar, E. (2003). *Democracies and Small Wars*. Portland, OR: Frank Cass. (p. vii).

networked terrorist organizations, such as al Qaeda and JI, will continue to present a great challenge to the AFP. The new kinds of terrorists are difficult to find and destroy. The threats today are determined more by the fault lines within societies than by the territorial boundaries. The challenges they pose have become transnational, rather than merely international, i.e., al Qaeda. Because these threat groups often perceived that they have less to lose, than government forces, they are difficult to deter.

III. AFP SPECIAL OPERATIONS CAPABILITY

Though the AFP possess the capability for special operations, it does not have a command and control system at the joint level, i.e., one that oversees the operation of all special operations forces (SOF). There is also currently no doctrine at the joint level to guide the units in their operations against the threats of the country. Therefore, the organization, training, and sustaining of SOF are left to the individual major service command; its utilization being handled by the geographic unified commands who oversee the overall Internal Security Operations (ISO) campaign in its area of responsibility. However, similarly, there is no command and control structure that orchestrates SOF operations at geographic Unified Commands level.

This chapter analyzes the capabilities of the Armed Forces of the Philippines Special Operations Forces (AFPSOF), as well as its missions. This chapter will also assess the relevance and effectiveness of the current missions, functions, and capabilities of AFPSOF.

A. THE FORCES

1. Philippine Army Special Operations Force

The Philippine Army Special Operations Forces consist of the Special Forces Regiment (Airborne), the First Scout Ranger Regiment, the Light Reaction Battalion, and the Civil Affairs Group. The Special Forces, Scout Ranger, and Light Reaction units are all under the Special Operations Command (SOCOM) of the Philippine Army. The Civil Affairs Group is directly under the control of the Headquarters of the Philippine Army.

Since its inception in 1962, the Special Forces Regiment (Airborne) (SFRA) has continuously grown and evolved from being simply a company, to being a group, then to, today, being a regiment. At present, the unit has approximately 1,200 personnel and is organized into a Headquarters and Headquarters Company, three Special Forces Battalions with three Special Forces Companies each, and a Special Forces School³⁹. Special Forces units are deployed from northern Luzon to southern Mindanao, supporting

³⁹ Headquarters Philippine Army Letter Directive dated February 24, 2004, Subject: *Rightsizing of SOCOM*.

AFP area commands and Army divisions. SFRA headquarters, together with the Special Forces School, are based in Fort Magsaysay, Nueva Ecija.

Organized primarily to confront the alarming Huk-initiated insurgency problem in the country during the late 1940's, the First Scout Ranger Regiment (FSRR) evolved from being simply a training unit to its present organization. The First Scout Ranger Regiment (FSRR) has approximately 1,800 personnel and is organized into a Headquarters and Headquarters Service Company, three Scout Ranger battalions with three Scout Ranger companies each, and a Scout Ranger School⁴⁰. Considered the most seasoned, unconventional fighters in the Philippine Armed Forces, the Scout Ranger units are deployed all over the country, their role being to support the AFP area commands and Army divisions. FSRR headquarters and the Scout Ranger School are based in Camp Tecson, San Miguel, Bulacan.

The Light Reaction Battalion (LRB) is the counter-terrorist unit of the Philippine Army. The battalion is composed of Special Forces and Scout Ranger personnel, which were trained and organized for counter-terrorist operations. It has approximately 400 personnel and is organized into a Headquarters, and Headquarters Company, and three Light Reaction companies⁴¹. At present, the unit is under the operational control of the AFP Joint Special Operations Group based in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City.

The Civil Affairs Group (CAG) of the Philippine Army traces its roots to the Public Relations Office (PRO), organized in the 1950's. The group was once part of the SOCOM, but was placed under the direct control of the Headquarters of the Philippine Army in the late 1990's. CAG has about 130 personnel and is presently organized into a Headquarters and Headquarters Service Company, an Information Development Center, a Livelihood Training Center, a Civil-Military Operations School, and three Civil Affairs Teams. The group is based in Fort Boinfacio, Makati City, serving as a combat support unit for the Philippine Army.

⁴⁰ Headquarters Philippine Army Letter Directive dated February 24, 2004, Subject: *Rightsizing of SOCOM*.

⁴¹ Ibid.

2. Philippine Navy Special Operations Forces

The Philippine Navy Special Operations Forces consist of the Naval Special Warfare Group and the Force Reconnaissance Battalion. Although both units are under the Philippine Navy, they do not belong to a single, unified command. Whereas the Naval Special Warfare Group is under the Philippine Fleet, the Force Reconnaissance Battalion is under the Philippine Marine Corps.

The Naval Special Warfare Group (NSWG) is the Fleet's unit capable of engaging in unconventional warfare and special operations. The group specializes in sea, air and land (SEAL) missions, i.e., operations ranging from reconnaissance, close combat, demolition, intelligence and those performed underwater, in support of overall naval operations. The NSWAG has about 400 personnel and is organized into eight company-sized, Naval Special Warfare Units (NSWU), each deployed along with the Fleet. It also has a Headquarters Support Unit and a Naval Special Warfare Training that are based in Sangley Point, Cavite City, along with the Headquarters of NSWG. One NSWU unit is attached to the AFP Joint Special Operations Group. The NSWU consists of three operating teams, each capable of operating either as an integral team or as detached elements.

The Force Reconnaissance Battalion (FRBn) started out as the Scout Raider Platoon, part of the Weapons Company of the Philippine Marine Battalion in the 1950's. In 1972, the Scout Raider Platoon became the 1st Reconnaissance Company, reactivated as the 61st Marine (Recon) Company in 1985. Presently, the FRBn has about 500 personnel consisting three Recon Companies that are deployed along with the Marine Brigades. The Battalion's headquarters is based in Fort Bonifacio, Makati City, located in the same facility as the Philippine Marine Corps headquarters.

3. Philippine Air Force Special Operations Forces

The 710th Special Operations Wing (SPOW) is the unit of the Philippine Air Force with special operations capability. It has approximately 2,000 personnel organized into a Special Operations Group, a Civil Security Group, a Combat Group, a Mission Support Squadron, and a Special Operations Combat Support Group. The 710th SPOW headquarters is based in Clark Field, Pampanga, while its operating units are strategically deployed in different areas of Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao to include

Palawan performing Internal Security Operations (ISO) missions. The Wing is under the direct command of the headquarters of the Philippine Air Force. However, its operating elements that conduct ISOs are under the operational control of area commands. One squadron of the Special Operations Group, however, is attached to the AFP Joint Special Operations Group.

4. Armed Forces of the Philippines Joint Special Operations Group

Assigned to the Armed Forces of the Philippines counter-terrorism force, the Armed Forces of the Philippines Joint Special Operations Group (JSOG) is composed of a Headquarters and Headquarters Company, the Light Reaction Battalion of the Philippine Army SOCOM, the SEAL Team Company 8 of the NSWG, the 723rd Special Operations Squadron of the 710th SPOW, a Special Operations Tactical Helicopter *Flight*, a Special Operations Tactical Airlift *Flight*, three K-9 teams, and three Explosive Ordnance and Disposal (EOD) teams⁴². JSOG has an approximate total strength of 400 personnel. The group is based in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City at the AFP General Headquarters.

B. MISSIONS AND CAPABILITIES

The Philippine Army Special Operations Forces (PASOF) are organized, trained, and equipped to perform their principal missions in Internal Security Operations (ISO). PASOF is the unconventional combat arm of the AFP, whose mission it is to plan for, and conduct Unconventional Warfare and other Special Operations activities in all operational environments, including during times of peace, conflict, or war. In spite of this, PASOF's missions are dynamic and constantly evolving in response to political-military considerations and other factors that affect military operations, especially in response to the conduct of the ISO. A change in the national security policy or the national military strategy may radically alter the manner in which PASOF conducts its missions. An example of this was seen when the Philippine government's security apparatus shifted its focus from external defenses to ISOs, as well as in the constant shift of focus from one campaign to another with regard to local threats.

In the present setting, where the Philippine insurgency problem has consumed so much of the country's resources, PASOF, considering its ability to function at many

⁴² AFP Table of Organization and Equipment Number G31-3, dated January 27, 2004.

different levels and its flexibility in shaping the environment for combat, is one of the significant means of resolving the threat posed by insurgencies.

The mission of the Special Forces Regiment (Airborne) in Internal Security Operations environment is to plan for and conduct Direct Action Operations, Special Reconnaissance Operations, and Combat Readiness Assessment. It is also responsible for the training of maneuver units in support of the AFP's mission.⁴³ The First Scout Ranger Regiment does its traditional Direct Action and Special Reconnaissance operations.

Direct Action Operations (DAO)⁴⁴ are normally short-duration operations with a limited scope. They may require a PASOF team to infiltrate a hostile area, attack a target, and conduct a preplanned exfiltration, which may include long-term, stay-behind operations. The DAO achieves specific, well-defined, time-sensitive results of strategic and operational significance. These are often characterized by surgical precision, typically leaving smaller "footprints" than conventional operations. As a result, they can create greater adverse effects on the enemy than a conventional force of similar size.

Special Reconnaissance Operations (SRO)⁴⁵ are reconnaissance and surveillance actions conducted by PASOF, either unilaterally, or through other AFP units or indigenous forces. The objective of SRO is to confirm, refute, or obtain – by visual observation or other collection methods – information on the capabilities, intentions, and activities of an actual or potential enemy. Reconnaissance missions conducted by PASOF normally have objectives that are either strategic or operational in nature, although they occur at the tactical level.

The primary role of the SF in Combat Readiness Assessment and Training (CRAT)⁴⁶ of maneuver units is to provide training assistance tailored to meet the specific requirements of the requesting unit. This tailoring serves to improve unit's readiness for

⁴³ Philippine Army Field Circular 03-071, *Special Forces Operations in Internal Security Operations Manual* (Draft).

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

combat, while improving its effectiveness and efficiency in all types of operations. SF personnel train individual soldiers and units of light infantry battalions to fight in combat. They possess the technical expertise and knowledge to enhance the soldier's individual skills and shape the unit's capabilities, discipline, and morale.

The Special Forces basic unit is a SF team composed of twelve, highly skilled soldiers (one officer and 11 enlisted personnel). It is proficient in performing small-scale tactics, training, and in operations that are airborne, waterborne and in jungle or mountainous regions. The team is composed of personnel who are skilled in five (5) respective fields of specialization, including; operations and intelligence, demolition and sabotage, communication, weapons, and medical. Furthermore, every member is cross-trained with other specializations, so as to enhance his skills. Each SF trooper has the ability to use Psychological Operations (PSYOPS) to influence a target community or individual. The SF Team is a unique, unconventional combat organization that can plan and conduct special operations across a wide range of military missions. Its tactical actions often have effects upon operational or strategic objectives.

On the other extreme, the Scout Ranger's basic unit is the 7-man team that is highly proficient in small-unit infantry tactics with the capability to operate independently. The team specializes in conducting commando raids, snipings, demolitions, reconnaissance missions and other guerilla warfare tactics and techniques. The training of Scout Ranger is designed to develop a person's skill, stamina, and spirit.

The Light Reaction Battalion's (LRB) task is to conduct counter-terrorist operations in support of the AFP's missions. The LRB's capabilities include the ability to perform reconnaissance of terrorist incidents and locations, to eliminate and/or capture terrorists (and other high value targets), and involvement in hostage rescue and personnel recovery operations. The LRB is made up of individuals who are highly trained in engaging in close quarter combat and sniping operations. Moreover, since it is the only AFP unit that is trained and equipped by the U.S. Army Special Forces, it is considered as the most capable force for military operations in urbanized terrain (MOUT).

The Civil Affairs Group (CAG) conducts civil affairs and psychological operations in support of Army units conducting ISO. It engages in Civil-Military

Operations (CMO) in order to gain public support for the Army's role in ISO, and engages in Psychological Operations (PSYOPS) to both weaken the insurgent's will to fight and to strengthen the fighting spirit of the troops. The unit develops, produces, and evaluates PSYOPS products, using all forms of media. The CAG is also tasked with conducting the training of Army personnel on CMO, PSYOPS, TRI-Media (print, radio, and TV), and Public Affairs courses.

The Naval Special Warfare Group specializes in sea, air and land (SEAL) operations. Its capabilities include the ability to perform: reconnaissance operations, close combat, demolition operations, under water operations, counter-guerilla operations, counter-insurgency and intelligence operations, and special operations in maritime area and riverine environments in support of overall naval operations. All personnel are tactically trained to act as divers, parachutists, demolitionists, and in the execution of special warfare operation from the sea, air and land. Personnel are evaluated based on these skills, and must pass a qualification exam in order to become members of the Naval Special Warfare Group.

The Philippine Marine special operations missions are conducted as part of the Marine Amphibious Brigade. Marine special operations include riverine operations, mountain operations, jungle operations, amphibious reconnaissance, counter-terrorism, and airborne operations.⁴⁷ The Force Recon Battalion's primary function is to conduct reconnaissance in support of Marine Brigade operations and amphibious landings of the Philippine Marine Corps. Its capabilities include the ability to conduct operations in built-up and urbanized areas; and the abilities to perform demolitions; air, land, and water insertions; interdiction; and counter-guerilla operations. This specialized unit relies heavily on speed and stealth to effectively carry out its reconnaissance missions. They are also used as counter-terrorist units by the Marine Brigades in its operations in southern Philippines. Its three Companies are regularly attached to the Marine Brigades, thus complementing them with units capable of conducting special operations. Some personnel of the Force Recon have received formal training from the Philippine Army Special Forces, those who were members of its forerunner, the Scout Raider Platoon.

⁴⁷ Philippine Navy Manual 3-27. *Philippine Marine Corps Special Operations* dated April 15, 2002

The Philippine Air Force 710th Special Operations Wing's organizational mission is to conduct contingency operations against hostile elements and civilian mass actions.⁴⁸ Its capabilities include the ability to conduct combat operations against enemy forces, coordination of air strikes, explosive ordnance operations, K-9 and handler training on explosives and bomb detection, and civil disturbance control. One squadron of the Special Operations Group is attached to the AFP JSOG, doing counter-terrorist operations. The Combat Group is tasked with conducting ISOs, with a specific area of operations under the Southern Luzon Command. Other units of the SPOW perform ISO and Air Force base security operations in other parts of the country.

The AFP Joint Special Operations Group conducts special military operations to counter terrorist activity throughout the country in order to protect its interests, citizens and properties.⁴⁹ Its capabilities include the ability to engage in direct action operations against terrorists, special reconnaissance of terrorist targets, and military operations in urbanized terrain (MOUT). Aside from its mandate to oppose terrorism, it is also tasked with supporting the anti-organized crime campaign efforts of the Philippine National Police. The Army and Navy components of the AFPSOG are well trained and equipped but have limited air component capability.

C. ASSESSMENT

AFPSOF are sometimes used incorrectly, or underutilized, in the overall campaign against the threats to the Philippine government. This is reflected in the different missions and functions given to the major service SOF and their actual utilization in the field. There is neither a common understanding of what constitutes a special operations force among AFPSOF, nor of its capabilities. Also, there is no common guideline that will guide them in the conduct of their operations. The absence of a command and control structure at the joint operations level that will plan and orchestrate special operations hinders the effective utilization of SOF.

The vast majority of the current utilization of AFPSOFs lacks strategic significance in the overall national military strategy. SOFs of the three major services are

⁴⁸ Headquarters Philippine Air Force Organization. Retrieved on August 10, 2004 from <http://www.paf.mil.ph/HQ/hpaf.html>

⁴⁹ AFP Table of Organization and Equipment Number G31-3, dated January 27, 2004

utilized in support of their own service operations. The ARSOF, particularly the SF, for a long time was being utilized just like any other infantry battalion in the ISO campaign. SF battalions were given specific area of operations, along with other infantry battalions assigned to a controlling infantry brigade. In this scenario, Naval Special Warfare units operate in support of the fleet operations, while the Marine Force Reconnaissance units operate in support of the Marine brigades. Other subordinate units of the Special Operations Wing of the Air Force, on the other hand, are given specific area of operations along with infantry battalions for ISO mission.

The inappropriate utilization of the AFPSOF is further aggravated by the absence of a joint SOF command and control structure at a geographically Unified Command level. A geographically Unified Command is responsible for the overall conduct of AFP ISOs in its given areas of operations. The absence of SOF C2 at a Unified Command level leaves the planning of SO to subordinate units of the commands. Thus, at the highest level, in the Navy and Air Force SO is planned at the infantry division level, or its equivalent. In reality, then, most of the SOF operations in the Philippines are conducted at tactical levels without strategic significance.

The creation of AFPJSOG does not solve the problem faced by the SOF C2 system. AFPSOG has a specific function, which is to counter terrorism, and does not cover other SOF missions. It is a separate unit from the major services SOF, and there is no command relationship link among these units. Though the major services SOF components provided the troops that initially composed AFPJSOG, the unit is now under the administrative and operational control of the General Headquarters AFP (GHQAFP).

Thus, the often topsy-turvy functionality and under-utilization of the AFPSOFs, boil down to the absence of a joint doctrine for SOF and a command and control structure that will oversee the operations of the entirety. This inevitably leads to the formulation of missions, and assigning of functions to the SOF, to the major services based on the needs of their operating subordinate commands. The strategic utilization of AFPSOF is thereby undermined due to lack of collaboration and coordination, brought about by the absence of a common guiding principle. AFPSOF would be much more useful to the Philippines

if it worked to synchronize its missions, functions, and capabilities in order to optimize AFPSOF's utility.

IV. U. S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES

The U.S. Special Operations Forces is made up of the Army, Navy, and Air Force special operations forces (SOFs). It is a small, but critical, portion of the U.S. Armed Forces, being comprised of special operations, psychological operations, and civil affairs organizations that are task-organized to conduct contingency operations. According to General Wayne Downing, USA, former Commander in Chief of U.S. Special Operations Command,

SOFs provide an unprecedented range of capabilities, including regionally oriented assets for operations other than war (OOTW), specially tailored Joint Task Forces (JTFs) for unique missions in war, short-notice strategic strike forces for global deployment, and psychological operations (PSYOPS) and civil affairs (CA) capabilities for the entire range of military operations.⁵⁰

Special Operations Forces are designed to augment theater-based forces and, in response to crisis situation, normally operate with an appropriate mix of conventional forces under theater control. Almost all SOF missions require joint planning and, oftentimes, also require working with allied or coalition forces. The joint nature of SOF operations has been recognized as witnessed in the establishment of a permanent, unified command, namely the U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). USSOCOM provides the national command authority with “SOFs that are, arguably, the most capable in the world.”⁵¹ USSOCOM is composed of four subordinate commands: U.S. Army Special Operations Command, Naval Special Warfare Command, Air Force Special Operations Command, and Joint Special Operations Command.

A. THE FORCES

1. Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF)

The Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF) consist of Special Forces (SF), Ranger, special operations aviation (SOA), psychological operations (PSYOP), and civil affairs (CA) units both in the reserve and active components. The U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC), which has approximately 30,000 active and reserve

⁵⁰ Downing, W. (1995). *Joint Special Operations in Peace and War*. JFQ, Summer 1995, (p. 23).

⁵¹ Ibid.

personnel, serves as both the U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) Army component headquarters, and as a major Army command post.⁵² It provides trained and ready SF, Ranger, SOA, PSYOPS, and CA personnel to geographic Commander-in-Chiefs (CINCs) and U.S. ambassadors.⁵³ Operationally subordinate organizations of USASOC include the U.S. Army Special Forces Command (USASFC); the 75th Ranger Regiment; 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment; and the U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command (USACAPOC).⁵⁴

The SF make up a unique, unconventional combat arms organization. The SF has five active component groups and two National Guard groups. Approximately 1,400 soldiers are assigned to a typical Special Forces Group (Airborne) [SFG(A)]; the operating level is the 12-man “A-team” (all expert or cross-trained in weapons, engineering, communications, medical aid, and operations and intelligence).⁵⁵ The SFG(A) consists of a headquarters and headquarters company, a support company, and three battalions. The SF battalions consist of a headquarters detachment, a support company (with similar structure, functioning as a group support company), and two or more SF companies. SF companies consist of a company headquarters and six Special Forces operational detachments A (SFODAs) or the “A-teams”.⁵⁶

The Ranger is ARSOF’s light infantry force. A Ranger regiment is composed of the headquarters and three battalions of approximately 600 assigned personnel, the primary combat element within the regiment. It is similar to an airborne light infantry battalion, with the exception that it does not have anti-tank company or battalion mortars. The Ranger battalion consists of a headquarters and headquarters company (HHC) and three Ranger companies. Each company has three rifle platoons and a weapons platoon.⁵⁷

⁵² Collins, J. (1993). *Where Are Special Operations Forces?* JFQ, Autumn 1993. (p. 8).

⁵³ US Field Manual 100-25, *Doctrine for Army Special Operations Forces*, August 1999, (p. 4-4).

⁵⁴ C4I Handbook for Integrated Planning. *Appendix K: U.S. Special Operations Command C4I Systems and Networks*, December 1997, (pp. 1-14).

⁵⁵ Association of the US Army (AUSA) Background Brief. *Special Operations Forces: A Primer*. Retrieved on August 11, 2004 from <http://handle.dtic.mil/100.2/ADA277957> .

⁵⁶ US Field Manual 100-25, *Doctrine for Army Special Operations Forces*, August 1999, (p. 3-3).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, (p. 3-7).

The Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne) [SOAR(A)] is the U.S. Army's special operations aviation unit. It consists of a regimental HHC, three special operations aviation (SOA) battalions, and a special operations aviation support battalion. The regiment also has two table of distribution and allowance (TDA) units assigned to the HHC: the special operations aviation training company and a systems integration and maintenance office. SOA units can be task-organized based on the mission expected, the theater of operations, and sustenance requirements.⁵⁸

The U.S. Army PSYOPS force provides strategic, operational, and tactical support to the geographic CINCs. The U.S. Army PSYOPS force consists of one active component PSYOPS group and two tactical U.S. Army Reserve (USAR) groups. These forces comprise regional, tactical, enemy prisoner of war/civilian internee (EPW/CI), and dissemination PSYOPS battalions. The active component PSYOPS group comprises one-third of the U.S. Army PSYOPS force, consisting of regional, tactical, and dissemination battalions, and a strategic studies detachment (SSD).⁵⁹

Civil Affairs units support both conventional forces and SOF at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. The vast majority of the U.S. Army CA force consists of the reserve component. The reserve component of CA taps into a pool of skilled specialists who are experienced in government, economic, and other public administrative functions, such as transportation, communications, education, and public works and utilities. CA commands, brigades, and battalions support the five geographic CINCs and their supportive forces. There is also one active component CA battalion with a worldwide mission to serve as CA generalists.⁶⁰

2. Naval Special Operations Component (NAVSOC)

Naval special warfare (NSW) units include sea-air-land (SEAL) teams, SEAL delivery vehicle teams, and special boat teams, both in active and reserve components. The Naval Special Warfare Command (NAVSPECWARCOM) is the Naval component of USSOCOM. The NAVSPECWARCOM consists of four Naval Special Warfare groups (NSWGs), each composed of SEAL (Sea-Air-Land) teams, SEAL delivery

⁵⁸ US Field Manual 100-25, *Doctrine for Army Special Operations Forces*, August 1999, (p. 3-9).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, (p. 3-13).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, (p. 3-18).

vehicle teams and special boat team units. The command has approximately 5,400 total active-duty personnel, including 2,450 SEALs and 600 Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen (SWCC) and approximately 1,200 reserve personnel.⁶¹ The primary purpose of the Naval Reserve SEAL teams when they are called up is to augment active SEAL teams with individuals ready for duty. Other organizations include the Naval Special Warfare Center, each having six functional detachments, and the Naval Special Warfare Development Group that does research, development, testing, and evaluative functions.

The Naval Special Warfare Units (NSWUs), a subordinate unit of NSWG, is composed of three SEAL teams, a SEAL delivery vehicle (SDV) team, and a special boat team. The term “SEAL team” has two meanings: 1) a company-sized unit headquarters, or 2) a four-person team of combat swimmers. The larger organization has eight platoons that are subdivided into squads, and then elements. Forty-eight platoons of 16 men exist.⁶²

3. Air Force Special Operations Forces (AFSOF)

AFSOF consists of units from special operations aviation (fixed- and rotary-wing aircrafts; does not include aircrafts from the USAF rescue/combat search and rescue units), special tactics, combat weather, and foreign internal defense units, both of the reserve and active components.⁶³ The Air Force Special Operations Command represents the Air Force component of USSOCOM. The command is comprised of approximately 19,000 active-duty troops, Air Force Reserve, Air National Guard and civilian personnel.⁶⁴ It is organized into one active-duty Special Operations wing, one Reserve Special Operations wing, one National Guard Special Operations wing, and two active-duty Special Operations groups. Special operations aircraft are comprised of more than 200 highly specialized, fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft, including the AC-130H/U

⁶¹ U.S. Naval Special Warfare Command Missions & History. Retrieved on October 26, 2004 from http://www.navsoc.navy.mil/navsoc_missions.asp.

⁶² C4I Handbook for Integrated Planning. *Appendix K: U.S. Special Operations Command C4I Systems and Networks*, December 1997, (p. 1-20).

⁶³ Association of the US Army (AUSA) Background Brief. *Special Operations Forces: A Primer*. Retrieved on August 11, 2004 from <http://handle.dtic.mil/100.2/ADA277957>.

⁶⁴ U.S. Air Force Special Operations Command Fact Sheet. Retrieved on November 9, 2004 from <http://www.af.mil/factsheet>.

(Specter Gunships), EC-130 (Commando Solo), MC-130E/H (Combat Talon), MC-130P (Combat Shadow), MH-60G (Pave Hawk), and MH-53J (Pave Low III).⁶⁵

B. MISSIONS, FUNCTIONS, AND CAPABILITIES

The U.S. Armed Forces SOF missions fall into three broad areas: special operations, psychological operations, and civil affairs. The area of special operations further subdivides into principal missions and collateral activities. Special operations principal missions include direct action, special reconnaissance, unconventional warfare, foreign internal defense, combating terrorism, counterproliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and information operations.

Collateral activities include coalition support, engaging in combat search and rescue, counterdrug activities, countermine activities, foreign humanitarian assistance, security assistance, and special activities. SOF's principal missions are enduring, and infrequently, change while collateral activities might shift with the changing international environment. SOF are organized, trained, and equipped specifically to accomplish principal missions, rather than for their collateral activities. SOFs conduct collateral activities using the inherent capabilities resident in their primary missions.⁶⁶

1. Principal Missions

a. Direct Action (DA)

These are short-duration strikes and other small-scale offensive actions, conducted as a special operation in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments and which employ specialized military capabilities to seize, destroy, capture, exploit, recover, or damage designated targets. DA differs from conventional offensive actions in the level of physical and political risk, operational techniques, and the degree of discriminate and precise use of force to achieve specific objective.⁶⁷ DA activities

⁶⁵ C4I Handbook for Integrated Planning. *Appendix K: U.S. Special Operations Command C4I Systems and Networks*, December 1997, (p. 1-21).

⁶⁶ Joint Pub 3-05. *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*. April 17, 1998. (p. II-11).

⁶⁷ Joint Pub 1-02. *US Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*. April 12, 2001 (As amended through October 7, 2004).

include raids, ambushes, and direct assaults; stand-off attacks; terminal attack control and terminal guidance operations; recovery operations; precision destruction operations; and anti-surface operations.⁶⁸

b. *Special Reconnaissance (SR)*

These are reconnaissance and surveillance actions conducted as a special operation in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments to collect or verify information of strategic or operational significance, employing military capabilities not normally found in conventional forces. These actions provide an additive capability for commanders and supplement other conventional reconnaissance and surveillance actions.⁶⁹ SR activities include environmental reconnaissance, armed reconnaissance, target and threat assessment, and post-strike reconnaissance.⁷⁰

c. *Foreign Internal Defense (FID)*

These are operations that involve the participation of civilian and military agencies of governments in any of the action programs taken by another government (or other designated organization) to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency.⁷¹ SOF's primary role in this inter-agency activity is to assess, train, advise, and assist host nation (HN) military and paramilitary forces with the tasks requiring their unique capabilities. FID activities include HN military assistance and security of civilian populations.⁷²

d. *Unconventional Warfare (UW)*

These are operations that involve a broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations, normally of long duration, predominantly conducted through, with, or by indigenous or surrogate forces who are organized, trained, equipped, supported, and directed in varying degrees by an external source. It includes, but not limited to, guerrilla warfare, subversion, sabotage, intelligence activities, and

⁶⁸ Joint Pub 3-05. *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*. December 17, 2003. (p. II-4).

⁶⁹ Joint Pub 1-02. *US Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*. April 12, 2001 (As amended through October 7, 2004).

⁷⁰ Joint Pub 3-05. *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*. December 17, 2003. (p. II-6).

⁷¹ Joint Pub 1-02. *US Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*. April 12, 2001 (As amended through October 7, 2004).

⁷² Joint Pub 3-05. *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*. December 17, 2003. (p. II-7).

unconventional assisted recovery (UAR).⁷³ UW is unique in that it is a special operation that can either be conducted as part of a geographic combatant commander's overall theater campaign, or as an independent, subordinate campaign.⁷⁴

e. Counterterrorism (CT)

These are operations that include the offensive measures taken to prevent, deter, preempt, and respond to terrorism.⁷⁵ SOFs conduct CT missions as special operations by covert, clandestine, or low visibility means. SOF's activities within CT include, but are not limited to, intelligence operations, network and infrastructure attacks, hostage or sensitive material recovery, and non-kinetic activities.⁷⁶

f. Counterproliferation (CP) of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)

CP refers to actions taken to locate, seize, destroy, render safe, capture or recover WMD. Major objectives of CP are: to prevent the acquisition of WMD (and their delivery systems); roll back proliferation of WMD, where it has already occurred; deter the use of WMD (and their delivery systems); and adapt U.S. military forces and planning to operate against the threats posed by WMD (and their delivery systems). The core capabilities of CP include skills in the following activities: counter-force, active defense, passive defense, and consequence management. SOF focuses on counter-force tasks, conducting CP missions as special operations by covert, clandestine, or low visibility means.⁷⁷

g. Civil Affairs Operations (CAO)

These consist of CA and other tasks conducted by CA, to support commanders in conducting civil-military operations (CMO). CA activities are either directed by higher authorities or enacted by sheer operational necessity. These activities include establishing and conducting a military government or civil administration within operational areas to maintain civil order until the government can be restored or transition

⁷³ Joint Pub 1-02. *US Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*. April 12, 2001 (As amended through October 7, 2004).

⁷⁴ Joint Pub 3-05. *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*. December 17, 2003. (p. II-8).

⁷⁵ Joint Pub 1-02. *US Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*. April 12, 2001 (As amended through 7 Oct 2004).

⁷⁶ Joint Pub 3-05. *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*. December 17, 2003. (p. II-9).

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, (p. II-10).

can peacefully be made to other appropriate authorities. Such activities are planned and conducted by the CA, involving application of functional specialty expertise in civil sector disciplines that are normally the responsibility of the civil government. CA operations are predominantly joint, inter-agency, and multinational in nature, and are conducted through or with indigenous populations, authorities and institutions, international organizations, and non-government organizations (NGOs).⁷⁸

h. Psychological Operations (PSYOP)

These are planned operations that convey selected information and indicators to foreign audiences in order to influence their emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately, the behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups, and individuals. The purpose of PSYOP is to induce or reinforce foreign attitudes and behaviors favorable to the originator's objectives.⁷⁹ PSYOP planning and employment considerations include, force multiplier, combatant commander responsibilities, PSYOP applications, and PSYOP support to information operations. The capabilities of PSYOP include, developing, producing, distributing, and disseminating PSYOP programs and products; coordinating and directing PSYOP programs; producing PSYOP studies and estimates; supporting enemy prisoner of war (EPW), civilian internee (CI), and dislocated civilian (DC) operations; providing support to host-nation assistance operation; and employing tactical PSYOP.⁸⁰

i. Information Operations (IO)

IOs involve actions taken to affect adversary information and information systems while, simultaneously, defending one's own information and information systems.⁸¹ IOs can be conducted in all phases of an operation, across the range of military operations, and at every level of war. IOs involve many different capabilities that are applied either individually or through integration. Major capabilities include computer network operations, electronic warfare, operational security, PSYOP, and military deception. Beyond intelligence support, other capabilities include counter-

⁷⁸ Joint Pub 3-05. *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*. December 17, 2003. (p. II-10).

⁷⁹ Joint Pub 1-02. *US Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*. April 12, 2001 (As amended through October 7, 2004).

⁸⁰ Joint Pub 3-05. *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*. December 17, 2003. (p. II-11).

⁸¹ Joint Pub 1-02. *US Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*. April 12, 2001 (As amended through October 7, 2004).

intelligence, physical security, information assurance, public affairs, and CMO. IOs may involve complex legal and policy issues, requiring careful review and national-level coordination and approval.⁸²

2. Collateral Activities

a. Coalition Support (CS)

CS improves the interaction of coalition partners and U.S. military forces. This might include training coalition partners on tactics and techniques, assisting with communications equipment in order to integrate them into the coalition command and intelligence structure, and establishing liaison to coordinate for combat support and combat service support. SOF teams assigned to coalition units often provide the joint force commander (JFC) with an accurate evaluation of the capabilities, location, and activities of coalition forces, thus facilitating JFC command and control.⁸³

b. Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR)

CSAR involves specific tasks performed by rescue forces to effect the recovery of distressed personnel during war, or military operations other than war (MOOTW).⁸⁴ SOF maintains an inherent and/or organic capability to conduct self-personnel recovery and/or CSAR within its core mission force structure. Several abilities unique to the SOF make these forces highly suited for this mission. For example, they possess the ability to operate in hostile defense systems and conduct joint air, ground, or sea operations deep within hostile or denied territory at night, or in adverse weather conditions.⁸⁵

c. Counterdrug (CD) Activities

CD activities are active measures taken to detect, monitor, and counter the production, trafficking, and use of illegal drugs.⁸⁶ The CD mission is very similar to FID

⁸² Joint Pub 3-05. *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*. December 17, 2003. (p. II-12).

⁸³ Joint Pub 3-05. *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*. April 17, 1998. (p. II-11).

⁸⁴ Joint Pub 1-02. *US Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*. April 12, 2001 (As amended through October 7, 2004).

⁸⁵ Joint Pub 3-05. *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*. April 17, 1998. (p. II-12).

⁸⁶ Joint Pub 1-02. *US Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*. April 12, 2001 (As amended through October 7, 2004).

and UW missions. Using their skill in cross-cultural communication, SOF train HN CD forces on critical skills required to conduct small-unit CD operations.⁸⁷

d. *Countermine (CM) Activities*

CM activities attempt to reduce or eliminate the threat to noncombatants and friendly military forces posed by mines, booby-traps, and other explosive devices. Using their organic engineering and demolition capability, SOF teams train HN forces in techniques to locate, recognize, and safely dispose of mines and other explosive devices.⁸⁸

e. *Foreign Humanitarian Assistance (FHA)*

FHA involves programs conducted to relieve or reduce the results of disasters (natural or manmade), or other endemic conditions--such as human pain, disease, hunger, or privation--that might present a serious threat to life or result in great damage or loss of property. FHA provided by U.S. forces is limited in scope and duration; the assistance provided being designed to complement the efforts of the HN civil authorities or agencies that may have the primary responsibility for providing FHA. SOF units are well-suited to perform FHA activities in remote areas because of their ability to deploy rapidly, regional orientation, organic communications ability, and ability to sustain operations under adverse environmental conditions.⁸⁹

f. *Security Assistance (SA)*

SA consists of groups of programs authorized by the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 and the Arms Export Control Act of 1976, both as amended, or other related statutes by which the US provides defense articles, military training, and other defense-related services, by grant, loan, credit, or cash sales in the furtherance of national policies and objectives.⁹⁰ The primary SOF role in SA is to provide mobile training teams (MTTs) and other forms of training assistance. SOFs are particularly

⁸⁷ Joint Pub 3-05. *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*. April 17, 1998. (p. II-12).

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Joint Pub 1-02. *US Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*. April 12, 2001 (As amended through October 7, 2004).

effective in SA because they use the same regional orientation, communications, mobility, and expertise developed for FID and UW missions.⁹¹

g. Special Activities

These are activities conducted in support of national foreign policy objectives that are planned and executed so that the role of the U.S. government is not apparent or publicly acknowledged. They also function in support of such activities, but are not intended to influence U.S. political processes, public opinion, policies, or media. They also do not include diplomatic activities or the collection and production of intelligence, or related support functions.⁹² SOF may perform any of their primary missions during special activities, subject to limitations imposed by laws. Special activities require authorization by the President and Congressional approval and oversight.⁹³

3. Functions and Capabilities

a. Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF)

Special Forces units perform seven primary missions: Unconventional Warfare, Foreign Internal Defense, Special Reconnaissance, Direct Action and Counterterrorism, Information Operations, and Counterproliferation of WMD. Special Forces can plan and conduct special operations across the entire range of military operations. Often Special Forces units are required to perform collateral activities in addition to their primary missions. The unique SF skills that are keys to the successes experienced by the SF units in the field include their: language/linguistic qualifications, regional orientation, area studies, and interpersonal relations.

The Special Forces Group (Airborne) [SFG(A)] constitutes the largest combat element of Army SOF. SFG(A) is regionally oriented, supporting a regional CINC, and is a flexible organization designed to have self-contained command and

⁹¹ Joint Pub 3-05. *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*. April 17, 1998. (p. II-13).

⁹² Joint Pub 1-02. *US Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*. April 12, 2001 (As amended through October 7, 2004).

⁹³ Joint Pub 3-05. *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*. April 17, 1998. (p. II-13).

control and support elements for missions of long duration. Because of this, the SFG(A) has the capability to form the nucleus of the Army special operations task force (ARSOTF).⁹⁴

Rangers are often referred to as the “masters” of special light infantry operations. Rangers emphasize DA operations that include attacks to temporarily seize and secure key objectives and other light infantry operations requiring unique abilities. Ranger DA operations are normally deep penetration raids or interdiction operations against targets of strategic or operational significance. Typical DA missions for Rangers include forced-entry operations, airfield seizures, and the capture or destruction of enemy targets. The Rangers, unlike other ARSOF, have a global orientation, as opposed to being regionally oriented. They can deploy worldwide when it is felt that a U.S. military presence would serve U.S. interests. Ranger units do not have the capability or mission to provide mobile training team (MTT) assistance to indigenous military or paramilitary forces. They may, however, participate in joint or multinational training exercises with allied or friendly military forces.⁹⁵

Special operations aviation provides the special operations component commander with the capability to infiltrate, resupply, and exfiltrate SOF elements engaged in all core and collateral missions. The mission of Army Special Operations Aviation (ARSOA) is to plan, conduct, and support special air operations by clandestinely penetrating hostile and denied airspace. ARSOA aircraft operate in all environments and terrain: deserts, mountains, jungles, arctic areas, urban areas, and over water. They can operate from maritime platforms, conduct long-range precision navigation to point targets, and operate in high-risk environments. ARSOA medium-assault and heavy-assault aircraft have the capability to refuel in mid-flight, thereby increasing their range. Its aircraft can be employed in flying at night (using night vision goggles or other night vision systems), and is able to keep a low-level profile for

⁹⁴ US Field Manual 100-25, *Doctrine for Army Special Operations Forces*, August 1999, (p. 3-3).

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, (p. 3-7).

clandestine infiltration or exfiltration operations. In addition to providing worldwide aviation support to the SOF community, these units can also provide forward air control and close air support.⁹⁶

Psychological operations are aimed at demoralizing the enemy by causing dissension and unrest among military units, while, simultaneously, convincing local populations to support U.S. objectives and troops. Commanders plan PSYOP activities to convey selected information aimed at influencing the emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately, the behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups, and individuals. PSYOP activities are planned, coordinated, and executed before, during, and after conflicts. For example, units might disseminate propaganda messages in the form of leaflets, posters, broadcasts and audiovisual tapes. Because of the unique nature of PSYOP activity, each unit has its own intelligence and audiovisual specialists.⁹⁷

Civil affairs units are designed to assist commanders in discharging their responsibilities toward the civilian population. They accomplish this by providing civilian government agencies with a liaison to prevent civilian interference with tactical operations. CA elements are force multipliers that perform the non-military aspects and phases of an operation to enhance military efforts and promote the legitimacy of military operations. CA taps into a pool of skilled specialists experienced in government, economic, and other public administrative functions, such as public transportation, communications, education, and public works and utilities.⁹⁸

b. Naval Special Operations Component (NAVSOC)

NAVSPECWARCOM is a Navy Echelon II unit, i.e., it responds to USSOCOM (and the theater CINCs) for its joint role, and responds to the Department of the Navy for its service responsibilities. Active and reserve component SEAL teams, SDV teams, and special boat teams are task-organized and designated by the U.S. Secretary of Defense to conduct special operations.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ US Field Manual 100-25, *Doctrine for Army Special Operations Forces*, August 1999, (p. 3-9).

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, (p. 3-12).

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, (p. 3-17).

⁹⁹ C4I Handbook for Integrated Planning. *Appendix K: U.S. Special Operations Command C4I Systems and Networks*, December 1997, (p. 1-18).

SEAL teams are organized, trained, and equipped to conduct DA, UW, FID, SR, and CT operations, primarily in maritime and riverine environments. These operations include sabotage, demolition, intelligence collection, hydrographic reconnaissance, and training, as well as advising friendly military and paramilitary forces in the conduct of naval and joint special operations. SEAL teams may also be employed in direct support of conventional naval and maritime operations. Infiltration and exfiltration of SEAL teams from the target areas can be carried out via submarine, surface vessel, aircraft, or land vehicle. SEAL teams can also perform limited civic action tasks that are incidental to FID, as well as other collateral activities.¹⁰⁰

SEAL Delivery Vehicle teams are maritime combat forces organized, trained, and equipped to operate and maintain combat submersible systems in maritime or riverine environments. SDV teams are tasked with employing, operating, and maintaining combat submersible systems in the conduct of naval and joint special operations. Typical mission include launch and recovery via submarine, surface combatant, or noncombatant craft. SDV teams also conduct limited DA missions, such as port and harbor anti-shipping attacks and raids. They can also conduct hydrographic reconnaissance and other intelligence-gathering missions.¹⁰¹

Special Boat teams are organized, trained, and equipped to operate a variety of surface combatant craft in both maritime and riverine environments. SBTs are tasked with employing, operating, and maintaining a variety of surface combatant craft used to conduct and support naval and joint special operations, riverine warfare, and coastal patrol and interdiction. SBTs employ offshore, open-water, fast patrol boats and shallow-draft riverine patrol craft. They employ different types of water craft to meet different needs. These needs depend on such factors as the needs for endurance or the ability to draft, range, seaworthiness, and carrying capacity. The SBT's primary mission is coastal interdiction and SEAL insertion/extraction. They can also provide small-caliber gunfire support and limited shore bombardment. Other tasks include riverine support, intelligence collection, and operational deception.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Joint Pub 3-05. *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*. October 28, 1992. Appendix B.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

c. Air Force Special Operations Forces (AFSOF)

Special operations aircraft are highly specialized, fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft equipped for deep penetration of hostile areas under all weather conditions. These aircraft are capable of operating in hostile airspace, at low altitudes, under conditions of minimum visibility, all with precision navigation. They are specially configured with electronic defense systems and navigational aids. The crews can operate from airfields, conduct classified missions, and fly combat SAR missions. Some AFSOF aircraft are capable of performing autonomous DA and SR missions, as well as PSYOP support missions.¹⁰³

The AFSOC Special Tactics Squadron and Special Tactics Teams (STT) are designed to have a short reaction time, i.e. possessing the ability to rapidly deploy forces that are capable of providing positive control of the air/ground interface during joint or unilateral special operations missions. Members of the STT include primarily combat controllers and para-rescue personnel. An STT conducts reconnaissance, surveillance, assessment, and establishment of potential selected assault zone sites. They position and monitor terminal and en route navigational aids and target designation equipment.

The teams provide visual flight rules, with limited instrument flight rules, air traffic control, and long-range secure command and control communications in the objective area. Para-rescue provides personnel recovery and casualty treatment and staging areas. The teams can also provide limited ground direction for close air support within the objective area. The STTs use several infiltration techniques; the teams can parachute in using high-altitude low-opening (HALO) or high-altitude high-opening (HAHO); swing in; or other methods. STTs are trained to remove obstacles with demolitions, gather intelligence information, provide local weather observations, and train U.S. and allied personnel. STTs can also be trained for special rescue operations.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Joint Pub 3-05. *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*. October 28, 1992. Appendix C.

¹⁰⁴ C4I Handbook for Integrated Planning. *Appendix K: U.S. Special Operations Command C4I Systems and Networks*, December 1997, (p. 1-23).

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V. MAJOR AFP SPECIAL OPERATIONS

A. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter three case studies of major AFP special operations will be examined. All three were conducted by the Armed Forces of the Philippines, or AFP, utilizing special operations units against threat groups that have perennially threatened the country. These operations were designed to obtain some strategic objectives for the Philippine government and, thus, involved the participation of high-ranking officials. A case study in which the AFP engaged the Communist-inspired Hukbalahap, or Huk insurgents, in the 1940's is included. The other two cases both examine two different instances when the AFP's forces engaged the radical Muslim Islamist terrorist group, Abu Sayyaf Group, or ASG. Allegedly, the ASG has links to al Qaeda, the world's leading terrorist organization.

Other special operations that have been conducted by the AFP and special operations units were considered for study, such as the Philippine Naval Special Warfare Group (NSWG), Army Special Forces and Scout Rangers from the late 1940's to the present, including operations against the Local Communist Movement (LCM) and Southern Philippines Separatist Groups (SPSG). However, the three episodes chosen were the most relevant to this study of strategic special operations conducted by the AFP and were carefully selected for their strategic nature. Although the cases are not large in scale and definitive of the AFP in their style of execution, they are adequate for deriving plausible conclusions. The three operations all sought to achieve major national policy aims, rather than just tactical objectives. Given the importance of their objectives and their high-risk nature, they tend to demonstrate that the success or failure of special operations could have strategic implications for the Philippines. Failure of these operations could result in damage to Philippine national prestige, as evidenced by the Lamitan incident, discussed below.

The following case histories will help answer the questions that have been laid down in Chapter I of this thesis. They may also help to determine some of the recurrent problems in the past that have marred the conduct of special operations in the Philippines.

Moreover, the cases demonstrate the strategic utility of special operations and the units that execute them. Lastly, the case studies highlight the impact of special operations upon the threat groups that employ unconventional methods and its contribution to the course and outcome to the conflict.

B. CASE STUDIES

Right after World War II, many countries, especially those in Southeast Asia, became trouble spots due to the threat of Communism. The Philippines was not spared the same problem that the Chinese, Koreans, and Vietnamese people had come to face. The Communist insurgency in the Philippines was (and is still) rooted in the nation's history of peasant rebellions. Discontentment among peasants over land tenancy and pressures over land reforms inspired increasing violence during the post-war period, leading to the Communist-led Hukbalahap, or “Huk” rebellion. The Huks fought unconventionally-- they were initially successful by using guerrilla warfare tactics. The fighting from 1947-1949 seemed to favor the enemy of the government (i.e., the Huks).

By 1954, with the government’s effective and successful strategy of counter-insurgency, the insurgents’ influence over the populace died out. However, a remnant of the Communist-led Huks and a handful of new young revolutionaries continued the fight in succeeding years. In December 1968, this revolutionary coalition founded the CPP and the NPA, its armed component. The CCP/NPA has now waged an insurgent war against the Philippine government for 35 –years.

After World War II, the AFP was not prepared to fight an insurgency.¹⁰⁵ The armed forces had been organized and trained for conventional wars by their American trainers. The soldiers drilled in conventional tactics, techniques, and procedures by platoons, companies, and battalions. History suggests that “conventional style” or “sweeping-type” military operations usually do not work in stopping a

¹⁰⁵ The Post-WWII period saw a transition for the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Units were being demobilized slowly to peacetime status. The army started organizing units to take over the functions of the pre-war Philippine Constabulary which was a military organization with national police functions. The new post-war organization was called the Military Police Command, Philippine Army. During this period, General McArthur's headquarters authorized the organization, training and equipment of some 13 military police companies, with the necessary headquarters organizations, in order that these companies when deployed would be properly coordinated, supervised and controlled.

counterinsurgency, often producing little more than abuse of civilians.¹⁰⁶ A good example of such an operation was “Operations Supercharge.” According to Kerkvliet, infantry units that were supported by tanks rumbled across the rice fields and charged through villages. Air Force planes dropped bombs, including napalm, on suspected Huk hideouts and strongholds.¹⁰⁷

In order to minimize the collateral damage of big conventional forces, Secretary of Defense, Ramon Magsaysay, set the stage for the creation of special units for conducting counter-insurgencies. It was during his time in office that the Scout Rangers¹⁰⁸ and the Philippine Marines were established. Other formations that evolved during this period included the “Nenita”¹⁰⁹ unit of the 7th Battalion Combat Team (BCT) and “Force X” of the 16th Philippine Constabulary (PC) Company. These special units were very effective in counter-insurgency operations. They were extremely useful in: small unit operations, gathering of intelligence, and tracking down and neutralizing Huk leaders. Their effectiveness and usefulness has seldom been better exemplified than in the operations conducted by Force X of the 16th PC Company in 1948.

1. The Undercover Patrol: Force X Raid in Central Luzon, April 1948

The forces initially arrayed against the Huk were PC companies. They were lightly armed and had a nominal strength of less than 100 officers and men. The PC was not well organized, well trained, or well equipped to face the much more organized and armed guerrillas. For political reasons, the PC units were garrisoned in a camp within the villages, where they were isolated from the local population. Whenever the PC units were called into action, the guerrillas would attack before they could arrive at the objective. Thus, the constraints this put on the PC units created problems which usually

¹⁰⁶ The ineffectiveness of the strategy was evident because by 1948 the Huk movement almost doubled in size.

¹⁰⁷ Kerkvliet, B. (1977). *The Huk Rebellion*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. (p. 211)

¹⁰⁸ Scout Ranger teams were conventionally trained and carefully screened personnel of the AFP, who were taken to Fort McKinley and given special instructions on ranger tactics. They formed deep penetration units which went far into the guerrilla areas in the Sierra Madre Mountains and the Zambales Mountains. From the accumulation of reports from these Scout Ranger teams, the military commanders were able to determine the location of the enemy established base areas.

¹⁰⁹ The Nenita unit was organized as a small semi-independent hunter-killer detachment to seek out and destroy top Huk leaders. From 1946 to 1949, some of the most effective military operations against the Huks were conducted by this unit. The name “Nenita” was gotten from a girl’s name known to the first commander of 7th BCT.

would prevent a small detachment from staying for long periods of time. Staying inside the garrison for most of their time also resulted in the PC's being poor at intelligence collection, poor in civil-military relations, and having behavioral problems among its troops. This kind of situation was no help in the counter-insurgency program of the government. According to Valeriano and Bohannon, "The situation was discouraging. Patrols were seldom successful. There seemed to be neither a reason nor capability for anti-guerrilla action."¹¹⁰

With the continued constraints put upon the PC by politicians, as well as by the Army in the operational areas, the peace and order situation steadily deteriorated. It finally reached a point that the defense leadership embraced the strategy of targeting the top leadership of the Huk. The government wanted Luis Taruc, the Huk "Supremo," and other top guerrilla leaders to be neutralized in order to tip the balance of the fight in favor of the government. Thus the PC formed Force X, tasked with locating, and then neutralizing, guerrilla leaders.

However, in order to accomplish this highly sensitive and high-risk mission that had been assigned to them by higher, headquarters staff, Force X first had to contend with a challenge common to any counter-insurgency, i.e., obtaining adequate intelligence for the task. The force needed to infiltrate the guerrillas in order to collect information about the organization. At that time, little was known about the underground revolutionary movement by those above ground. As a result, the enemy had strongholds with a robust "underground" infrastructure. The Huks also enjoyed the strong support of many of the local people. Force X, therefore, found the need to conduct special operations against the guerrillas.

Force X was organized in 1948 when the Huk movement was at its peak and ready for expansion to other areas. Despite this impressive development, however, the Huks lacked firearms and most importantly communications, which contributed to their inflexibility and unresponsiveness.¹¹¹ This period provided the best opportunity for the

¹¹⁰ Valeriano, N & Bohannon, C. (1962). *Counter-Guerrilla Operations: The Philippine Experience*. New York: Praeger. (p. 115).

¹¹¹ Undated. *Chapter IV: The Insurrection- Phase I (1946-1950)*. Retrieved on November 1, 2004 from <http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/books/coldwar/huk/ch4.htm>

government to infiltrate and conduct deception operations against the Huks, reflected Colonel Valeriano, the Commander of 7th BCT, of which 16th PC Company was under. According to Valeriano and Bohannan,

Their command structure was not well organized or well understood by the Huks themselves. Just prior to this time, the Huk in Southern Luzon had thought themselves to be independent. When their commander, a Colonel Villegas, died, some of their units tried to establish contact with the more highly developed and organized forces in Central Luzon under Taruc, who was also eager to contact them.¹¹²

The 16th PC Company, under a certain Lieutenant Maraña, was tasked to form Force X. Maraña screened and selected forty-four enlisted personnel, and three officers of his men to undergo special training for the conduct of a highly sensitive, clandestine operation.¹¹³ This select group was trained at an undisclosed training base camp, deep in the rain forest, where they remained isolated for several months. The mission of this unit was so secret that only selected officers were authorized to visit.

The training, designed to enable the force to conduct “Large-Unit Infiltration,” included training in: the use of small-unit tactics, language (dialects), intelligence, communication, first aid, escape and evasion techniques, etc. According to Valeriano, “The basic idea was to turn this special unit into a realistic pseudo-Huk unit that could, in enemy disguise, infiltrate deep into enemy territory.”¹¹⁴ They were organized, equipped, and armed the same way as the Huks they were fighting. At the very start of their training, the chosen men were dressed in civilian clothes and armed with guerrilla firearms (supplied by the unit’s intelligence officer). An important phase of the training focused on indoctrination, where the troops were taught by converted, captured rebels, or rebels who had surrendered. Troops were given instructions on matters only known within the guerrilla community, such as the manner of greeting, the manner of addressing senior guerrillas, certain ways of eating and dressing, and certain special operating procedures (SOPs) for their daily ablutions in the river. Valeriano adds:

¹¹²Valeriano, N & Bohannan, C. (1962). *Counter-Guerrilla Operations: The Philippine Experience*. New York: Praeger. (p. 143).

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., (p. 144).

They were dressed in civilian clothes and armed only with captured weapons that had been accumulated by my S2 (intelligence officer). They were given indoctrination booklets, propaganda publications, and other reading material of sort carried by Huks. They were given things generally found on Huk dead, such as soiled handkerchiefs and love mementos from girlfriends. During the four-week training period, all conversation was conducted in terms of the pre-assigned enemy identities—the enemy ranks, aliases, and pet names commonly used in guerrilla units in Southern Luzon. The men were addressed as comrades, brothers, members of the proletariat. They were taught to sing Huk songs. They learned to deliver speeches in Huk style.¹¹⁵

Prior to the deployment of Force X to their area of operation (i.e., the Candaba Swamp), two things were done to reinforce the persuasiveness of their cover story: 1) a special reconnaissance was conducted around the infiltration route and the general area between central and southern Luzon, the proposed operational area, and 2) wounded soldiers from the Army hospital who could manage to walk were recruited and used as props during the operation. Two of these soldiers volunteered later to join Force X. The special patrol took notes about the trails, observed the attitude of the local populace, and identified some obstacles, all of which were disseminated to Force X. All this was done to ensure that Force X would be able to blend in, without any suspicions, when it immersed itself into Huk territory-- the Candaba Swamp.

On April 14, 1948, Force X was ready to march. They crossed their designated line of departure that evening and, within a few minutes, a carefully staged encounter with another government unit ensued. The members of Force X, carrying their “wounded” volunteers from the Army hospital, then withdrew towards deep, enemy territory. By later in the evening of that same day, Force X had managed to link-up with real Huk units, Squadrons 5 and 17, after being intercepted by a Huk sentry deep inside enemy grounds. They were interrogated as to their identities, unit, and intentions. They were asked about their area of operations and the route they had taken from southern Luzon, which they described perfectly. Because of their extensive preparations, their cover stories stood up well to the numerous interrogations that followed, to the point that they were promised to be introduced to Luis Taruc, himself.

¹¹⁵ Valeriano, N & Bohannan, C. (1962). *Counter-Guerrilla Operations: The Philippine Experience*. New York: Praeger. (p. 144).

The combined force of Force X and two Huk squadrons stayed together for almost two days, exchanging stories about guerrilla life and their experiences in operations. Force X delivered their rehearsed stories about southern Luzon guerrilla units, while Squadrons 2 and 17 talked about the prowess of the central Luzon Huks, particularly their Supremo. From their conversations with the Huk squadrons, Force X collected vital information about the guerrilla movement, including the local conditions, propaganda activities, supply systems, etc. They also learned the names of those local officials who were in collusion with the guerrillas, including the names of Mayors and Chiefs of Police. Moreover, Force X found out that some PC soldiers were giving information to the guerrillas.

On April 18, four days into the operation, two more Huk squadrons, including the “enforcing squadron” under a certain commander, Bundalian, who was charged by Luis Taruc to enforce Huk justice, linked up with the combined Huk force. With the arrival of Squadrons 4 and 21, the ratio between the real Huks and Force X was 1:3. Still, by the end of fifth day, the real Huks had no idea of Force X’s actual identity. According to Valeriano, “During those five days, the Huk squadrons showed no indication of suspecting that Force X was other than what it seemed to be.”¹¹⁶ Finally, on the sixth day, Lieutenant Maraña gave the order to attack. According to Valeriano, “There was actually a slaughter in the area. Two Huk squadrons were practically deactivated as of that moment.”¹¹⁷

The bold and daring operation had been a success. Valeriano recounts:

At the end of the battle, when the Huk withdrew, we counted 82 killed in the action that did not last more than 30 minutes. Among those identified by the town mayor of that region were three commanders including Commander Bundalian, the commander of the assassin group. Two others were commanders sent by the Huk Supremo to make a personal screening of Force X. 118

¹¹⁶ Valeriano, N & Bohannon, C. (1962). *Counter-Guerrilla Operations: The Philippine Experience*. New York: Praeger. (p. 146).

¹¹⁷ Valeriano, N. (1961). *Military Operations*. Retrieved on 02 November 2004 from <http://www.icdc.com/~paulwolf/colombia/hukcampaign15june1961III.htm>.

¹¹⁸ Bohannon, C. (1961). *Unconventional Operations*. Counter-Guerrilla Seminar Fort Bragg, 15 June 1961. Retrieved on 15 August 2004 from <http://www.icdc.com/~paulwolf/colombia/hukcampaign15june1961V.htm>.

Lieutenant Maraña immediately contacted his higher headquarters to update them of the progress of the operation, and advised them to intercept the withdrawing Huks. The follow-on operations in the area by conventional forces resulted to the killing of 21 Huks and the capture of nine more. Out of more than 100 local inhabitants detained for interrogation, 17 turned out to be members of the squadrons that Force X had decimated.¹¹⁹ Additionally, about three weeks later, after the operation, a firefight between two groups of Huks was monitored by intelligence operatives. Investigation disclosed that a Huk squadron from the adjoining province, on a foraging mission, had met another squadron from central Luzon. Each thought they had stumbled on another "Force X" unit, with a resulting casualty list of 11 dead and three seriously wounded.

2. Father Blanco Rescue Operation: Basilan Province, May 7-15, 1993.

The threat posed by the Abu Sayyaf Group, or ASG, has increased the demand for AFP special operations units in recent years, such as the Army's Scout Rangers and Special Forces, the Navy's Special Warfare Group and the Marine's Force Reconnaissance Battalion.¹²⁰ Up until this time, it had been a practice in the Philippines to rely upon ad hoc organizations and collection of disparate units to plan and execute special operations mission, as evidenced by the Lamitan incident which will be discussed below.

The 1990's witnessed the emergence of a new terrorist group, the Abu Sayyaf Group, in the Philippines. In the early part of 1990, the ASG was all over the front page of major national and international daily newspapers when they launched a series of kidnappings in the island province of Basilan in southern Philippines, targeting foreign nationals, wealthy local businessmen, and religious leaders.¹²¹ Although a relatively small group, the ASG has wrought immense damage to the country's image as of late. For example, kidnapping incidents in the Philippines have tremendously affected its

¹¹⁹ Bohannon, C. (1961). *Unconventional Operations*. Counter-Guerrilla Seminar Fort Bragg, 15 June 1961. Retrieved on 15 August 2004 from <http://www.icdc.com/~paulwolf/colombia/hukcampaign15june1961V.htm>

¹²⁰ The Marine Force Recon Battalion was tasked by higher command to conduct rescue operations in 1993 (Father Bernardo Blanco), in 1994 (Father Cirilo Nacorda), and in August 29, 2000 (Jeffrey Schilling). The Scout Rangers conducted the rescue operations of Gracia Burnham in 2002 and the Naval Special Warfare Group was responsible for the killing ASG leader, Abu Sabaya in 2002.

¹²¹ AFP Field Circular 3-7-1. (2001). *Knowing the Terrorists: The Abu Sayyaf Study*. Manila: AFP J3/Military Writers Guild Inc. (p. 1).

economy; many foreign investors have backed out or frozen their expansion plans in the country; and tourism was at its lowest after the ASG started targeting internationals.

The emergence of this new threat to national security has contributed to the rise in instability in the southern Philippines. Consequently, this signaled to military and political leaders the need for developing and improving the armed forces' capability in special operations to meet the security challenges posed by terrorist groups, such as the Abu Sayyaf Group, Jemaah Islamiya (JI), and al Qaeda.

The southern Philippines, particularly the province of Basilan, has been in turmoil since the Mindanao crisis in the mid-1970's. It was at that time that the Muslim, secessionist movement, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), started their offensive against the government, during the administration of President Ferdinand Marcos. Hostilities against the government and the crime rate of had been building up in the province for years. As security and economic problems started to trigger unrest among the populations in the area, it became the breeding ground of the Abu Sayyaf Group.

The first recorded atrocities committed by the ASG were the 1991 attack on a military checkpoint in Sumagdang, on the outskirts of Isabela, and the bombing of the missionary ship, M/V Doulous, in Zamboanga City, killing two foreign Christian missionaries and wounding forty others.¹²² In 1992, the group claimed responsibility for bomb attacks in Zamboanga City and Davao City. According to Zamora,

In the same year, Edwin Angeles, the operations officer of the group, offered the public a view of the Abu Sayyaf's criminal bent. Disguised as a policeman, Angeles abducted a businesswoman in Davao and hid her in the house of Abdurajack Janjalani, the founder of the ASG, in Basilan, where she was later released after paying a one million peso ransom (\$18,000 in U.S. dollars).¹²³

In March of 1993, Abdurajack Janjalani, the founding leader of the ASG, took custody of Spanish Claretian priest, Bernardo Blanco, the parish priest of Lantawan

¹²² AFP Field Circular 3-7-1. (2001). *Knowing the Terrorists: The Abu Sayyaf Study*. Manila: AFP J3/Military Writers Guild Inc. (p. 4).

¹²³ Zamora, F. (2001). *Al Harakatul al Islamiya: The Beginnings of Abu Sayyaf*. Retrieved on August 30, 2004 from http://www.inq7.net/specials/inside_abusayyaf/2001/features/formative_years.htm

Municipality, Basilan. Reverend Bernardo Blanco was abducted at gunpoint in a remote *barangay*, village on the island in March 18, 1993 by a, so-called, MNLF “Lost Command,”¹²⁴ led by Jul Jilang.¹²⁵ In April, the Abu Sayyaf Group hit the front pages of major national newspapers when it master-minded the kidnapping of Luis Anthony “Ton-Ton” Biel III, a five-year old boy, and his grandfather, Luis Biel Sr., owner of a bus company in Basilan.¹²⁶ The ASG released Luis Biel Sr., after receiving ransom money, but held the boy. Abdul Ashmad, the intelligence officer of the Abu Sayyaf, later announced, in a press conference, that the ASG would hold the little boy until their other demands were met. Among the demands were: 1) the removal of all Catholic symbols in Muslim communities; 2) the banning of all foreign fishing vessels in the Sulu and Basilan seas; and, 3) that an *Ulama* be brought into the negotiations.

Thus began the first hostage crisis involving the Abu Sayyaf Group--the 3-month ordeal that was to become the new, Ramos administration’s most serious crisis. The incident was, at that time, the fourth abduction of a Roman Catholic cleric in the Philippines in five months. In the hours following the abduction, the ASG demanded that ransom shall be paid for the release of the hostages, and that the three other demands must be met in order to put an end to the crisis. In response, the administration set up a group of negotiators, composed of local government officials and prominent Muslim religious leaders, to work for the peaceful resolution of the crisis. Days, then weeks, and then months passed, as the progress of the negotiation slowed down, with no end at sight.

The Ramos administration geared up for the worst in the event that negotiation failed. General Lisandro Abadia, the AFP’s Chief-of-Staff at that time, in preparation for a hostage rescue scenario should the negotiation fail, directed the Southern Mindanao Command, or SOUTHCOM, to step up its intelligence gathering about the ASG. SOUTHCOM, upon receiving the instructions, immediately tasked Marine Brigadier General, Guillermo Ruiz, the Commander of the 2nd Marine Brigade, and,

¹²⁴ MNLF or MILF “Lost Commands” are groups of former guerrillas who no longer follow orders from rebel chiefs and who turned to banditry.

¹²⁵ AFP Field Circular 3-7-1. (2001). *Knowing the Terrorists: The Abu Sayyaf Study*. Manila: AFP J3/Military Writers Guild Inc. (p. 5).

¹²⁶ Zamora, F. (2001). *Al Harakatul al Islamiya: The Beginnings of Abu Sayyaf*. Retrieved on August 30, 2004 from http://www.inq7.net/specials/inside_abusayyaf/2001/features/formative_years.htm

simultaneously, the Commander of the Basilan Internal Command, to organize, plan and be ready to execute a special operations to rescue the hostages, neutralize the Muslim terrorists, and seize their stronghold, Camp Al-Madinah, the most likely place where the ASG was holding out.

In light of the very sensitive nature of the highly publicized crisis, which had now lasted three months, Marine Brigadier General Ruiz asked the Commandant of the Philippine Marine Corps, Major General Eduardo Cabanlig, for the services of the Corps' special operations unit, the 61st Marine Reconnaissance Company (61st MC)¹²⁷. At that time, the 61st MC was under the command of Marine Captain Custodio Parcon Jr., an Army Special Forces qualified officer. Brigadier General Ruiz felt that the negotiations would soon fail because he understood the nature of the ASG. He knew that the ASG was a newly organized Islamic fundamentalist group; that its leaders had just arrived from Afghanistan from fighting with the Mujahideens; and that it was trying to prove itself to both the locals, their "would be" supporters, and also to their own members. The group, as Ruiz understood it, was in its initial stages of establishing its credibility and reputation as a terrorist organization and, thus, that negotiations might be difficult.

As soon as the 61st MC received the warning order from a higher command, Marine Captain Parcon, himself, was faced with several problems. Among other things, the company did not have enough special equipment in its inventory. Thus, Parcon had to request night vision goggles (NVG), global positioning systems (GPS), night scopes for their weapons, extra radios, sniper rifles, and several silenced weapons. Fortunately, the Marine Corps had just received some NVGs, GPS, and night scopes. The 61st MC was also fortunate in that the Signal Company was able to loan extra radios for this mission. The problem of producing the sniper rifles and silenced weapons was answered by Marine Captain Juancho Sabban, the intelligence chief of Brigadier General Ruiz. Captain Sabban voluntarily offered some of his personally owned prize collections for the rescuer's use. All the testing and retesting of the newly acquired and loaned special equipment were done in a week's time upon the unit's arrival in Zamboanga City.

¹²⁷ The 61st Marine (Recon) Company is the predecessor of current Force Reconnaissance Battalion, which was formed in 1995.

The 61st MC was flown by C-130 transport aircraft to Zamboanga City from their headquarters at Fort Bonifacio, Metro Manila. Upon arrival, Captain Parcon immediately coordinated for a secure place where the Recon Marines could test their weapons with the new equipment. This process of working on new equipment prior to a mission has its own problems. Some suggested that they still did not have the confidence necessary to operate with their new weapons. Some complained that the equipment was unfit. For instance, complaint arose that the night scopes did not fit their firearms. The weapons specialist for the company later found out that the scopes had missing parts and, thus, could not be properly attached to the M-16s. The following day, the weapons specialist attempted to find a gunsmith who could design some sort of a bracket to hold the scope in place. The effort turned out to be a failure because the prototype bracket the gunsmith designed could not stand the recoil of the M-14 and M-16. Thus, the night scope that was intended to be attached to the M-16, instead became a hand held night scope. The loaned sniper rifle was given to one of the snipers of the company who had no problem with it. After a few days of preparations, the 61st MC was ready to board two Navy patrol crafts, and proceeded to Basilan Province.

Upon arrival, Captain Parcon carried out special reconnaissance of the area. Furthermore, he requested regular intelligence updates from the Brigade intelligence staff officer. Captain Parcon faced two initial problems. First, the intelligence on hand was inadequate. Not only did reports coming from different intelligence units conflict with each other, they also suggested that there were numerous targets and that the specific area where the hostages were kept could not be determined. A big break, however, came when a seemingly credible source, a lady reporter who earlier interviewed the ASG and the hostages, volunteered to share some information.¹²⁸ The reporter described the general characteristics and features of the area of the enemy's main camp. During her last interview, she had also been able to estimate the distances of the routes the ASG took. Despite the new development, the final plan of the task force incorporated a few of the reporter's information. Captain Parcon, however, considered the new information in

¹²⁸ The Marine Brigade intelligence officer was able to obtain information from recent visitors to the terrorist camp and a detailed intelligence picture was prepared from further interviews.

his final plan. The information provided by the recent visitors proved to be true and precise.

The second problem was the location of the ASG camp. The enemy camp was strategically located in the hinterlands of Basilan Island, covering a wide area that the locals called “Sampinit Complex.” The camp was surrounded with several satellite security outposts. Another problem was that the objective area was surrounded by difficult natural terrain features, i.e., a heavily dense forest on the North, a wide river on both the West and the South, and a commanding hill on the Eastern side. The river posed the biggest obstacle for the Recon Marines, particularly for the conventional forces that were assigned the task of supporting the assault.

Meanwhile, President Ramos’ exasperation was shared by the people, especially the local people of the province. In the early days of the crisis, the Filipino public, including the religious sector rallied around the president and responded approvingly to the restraint he displayed in dealing with the crisis. However, as the crisis wore on, the public’s impatience grew steadily, and its support for Ramos eroded. The Ramos administration had been absorbing pressure from both the national and the international communities during the first three months of the crisis. The pressure from various businesses and different religious orders for more direct action was building. Ramos, a West Point graduate, and a former Chief-of Staff of AFP and Defense Secretary, was prepared to use the military once negotiations failed. On the first week of May 1993, President Ramos ordered the military to execute the rescue mission and put an end to the crisis.

Since the early part of the crisis, intelligence units were already working hard to acquire new information on the exact location of the hostages. The inadequacy of the intelligence posed the biggest problem until the very last minute of the final planning. Although, the required intelligence could not specifically pin point the exact location of the ASG camp, the planners failed to carefully analyze the available information provided them. The chosen course of action called for a heavy assault. Aside from the 61st MC, the plan called for two Marine and two Army battalions to act as supporting/blocking forces in the periphery of the objective area. The conventional

forces were to preposition at strategic positions around the enemy main camp while the 61st MC was assigned to assault the main enemy camp and free the hostages. This plan definitely compromised the special operations mission. The planners did not appreciate the importance of the element of surprise in a hostage rescue mission. The preparation of the four battalions would send signals to the ASG terrorists. The battalions, indeed, violated the operational security that is very crucial in the success of any special operations.

The signal to proceed with the assault was given by Brigadier General Ruiz on May 7, 1993 after final negotiations failed. However, things did not go as planned. A few hours into the mission, one of the Marine battalions, the 1st Marine battalion, while proceeding to its designated blocking position, was suddenly attacked by ASG members who were manning a satellite security post across the river. The 1st Marine battalion was pinned down. The ASG managed to keep the Battalion from crossing the river for almost two days because of their vantage positions on the other bank of the river.

Sensing the futility of the situation, Brigadier General Ruiz gave the order to the 61st MC to support the 1st Marine Battalion. The 61st MC became the “supporting” instead of the “supported” battalion. On May 7, 1993, the 61st MC, with only three 16-man sections, stealthily crossed the river, infiltrating into the fortified enemy positions under the cover of darkness. Once inside enemy territory, the 61st MC conducted observation post (OP) activities and reconnaissance of the immediate surrounding areas during the day in order to locate enemy-held positions and fortified bunkers. Once they located the enemy, the sniper teams of the 61st MC employed the loaned sniper rifles to neutralize the terrorists. On May 8, the Recon Marines engaged six armed terrorists, instantly killing two and wounding two others. The effectiveness of the Recon Marine snipers created chaos and confusion within the ASG terrorists as indicated by their indiscriminate retaliatory fire. The AFP intelligence units provided damage assessment to the 61st MC, by way of intercepted radio conversation and human intelligence.

Because of their extensive special training and skills, the Recon Marines managed to wait patiently, under the heat of the sun, for the moment to strike again at the ASG. This went on for another two days deep in the ASG main camp. The deaths of the

terrorists manning the advance and inner security posts had tremendous psychological effect on the ASG. The enemy had no idea where the Marine snipers were firing from. There were several other significant contributions associated with the Recon Marines worth mentioning with regard to the rescue operations.

First, there was the effective calling of indirect fire support and air strikes, where the Recon Marines acted as forward observers for the artillery elements and provided effective and deadly fires. Second, the Marine Recon acted as guides to the follow-up forces to guide them across safe routes, as there were reports of landmines around the camp. Third, the 61st MC cleared booby traps within and around the enemy camp for the follow-on forces.

Finally, on May 10, the 61st MC made their final assault on the enemy's main headquarters which was defended by a .50 caliber machine gun. The Recon Marines maneuvered forward and delivered effective fires to the enemy until their last defense collapsed, forcing the remaining enemy to scamper in different directions carrying their dead and wounded. The element of surprise and shock caused by the assault created confusion among the ASG, providing the opportunity for Father Blanco to escape from his captors unhurt. Prior to Father Blanco's escape, the younger Biel was released by the ASG due to the pressure exerted by the government forces against them.

The capture of the ASG's Camp, Al-Madinah, and the killing of 46 ASG terrorists greatly pressured the enemy to release the little boy, Luis Anthony Biel III. One 50 caliber machine gun, one light anti-tank weapon, two M2 Carbine rifle, one M1 Garand rifle, an undetermined number of live mortar rounds, several land mines/home-made bombs, and voluminous documents were recovered from the enemy camp. The Marine reconnaissance unit did not incur a single casualty during the operation. By these achievements, the Commanding Officer, 61st MC, Captain Parcon, was awarded the highest military award, the Medal of Valor.

The success of the rescue mission had a huge psychological impact, not only on the ASG, but also on the government forces and the political leadership. The morale of other soldiers, especially the regular troops, was lifted upon observing the result of the operations and the capabilities of the 61st MC. It took the ASG a long while before it

struck again. This was the first encounter between the government forces and the ASG, a testing ground that would mark the beginning for the special operations units of the AFP.

3. Lamitan Fiasco: The Failed Rescue Mission, June 1-3, 2001

In 1994, following the setbacks the ASG had suffered, which included the loss of their main camp at Isabela, Basilan, the ASG regrouped and struck once again. Determined to establish a tough reputation, the ASG seized their first American kidnapping victim, Charles Walton, a language scholar who was doing research in Basilan. However, sensing that Washington would not give in, and knowing that Malacanang would not hesitate to repeat the same actions as it did a year earlier, Walton was released weeks later, without a ransom or condition of any kind.¹²⁹

In January, 1995, the ASG made headlines when it was linked to a plot to assassinate Pope John Paul II, who was visiting Manila at the time. Philippine security authorities, however, foiled the plot, rounding up several suspected foreign terrorists, allegedly involved with the ASG. The Ramos administration felt relieved by the results of the intelligence operation against the ASG. However, this did not last.

On April 4, 1995, Janjalani's Basilan-based, Abu Sayyaf, reinforced by MNLF fighters and the MNLF "Lost Command," attacked the bustling town of Ipil, in Zamboanga del Sur. This combined group of terrorists robbed banks, shot innocent civilians, and set the town on fire, before fleeing with several hostages. The daring daylight raid left 52 people dead and 32 others wounded, including unprepared Army soldiers. The raid also left more than three hundred million pesos in damaged property (five million in U.S. dollars).¹³⁰ The attack in Ipil reflected negatively against the reputation of the Ramos administration, which was scheduled to host the Asia-Pacific Economic Conference (APEC) summit in 1996. Because of the menace brought by the ASG, the government made a policy decision to shift the focus of the AFP and made the ASG threat the top priority.

¹²⁹ The intercession of Ambassador Abdurazak Rajab Azzarouq, the Libyan ambassador to the Philippines, contributed greatly to the peaceful resolution of the incident. The Libyan government has been contributing economic grants to support different non-government organizations in the Mindanao for many years.

¹³⁰ AFP Field Circular 3-7-1. (2001). *Knowing the Terrorists: The Abu Sayyaf Study*. Manila: AFP J3/Military Writers Guild Inc. (p. 5).

The ASG became President Joseph Estrada's biggest problem following the kidnappings of foreigners at a dive resort in Sipadan, Malaysia in April, 2000; and also of President Arroyo after the ASG abducted tourists and workers in the Dos Palmas Resort in Palawan, Philippines in May, 2001 (one of the case studies presented in the thesis). Among the hostages were three American citizens, Martin and Gracia Burnham, both missionaries, and Guillermo Sobero.¹³¹ Sobero was beheaded later by the ASG as a birthday present to President Arroyo.

In the early morning of May 27, 2001, 20 to 30 fully armed, Abu Sayyaf terrorists abducted 20 foreign and local tourists at gunpoint from the Dos Palmas Beach Resort in Palawan. This marked the beginning of the Dos Palmas crisis, a 376-day ordeal, which the newly installed Arroyo administration had to face. The government was immediately placed under great pressure from the public and the international community to take action to end the crisis.¹³² The ASG raid embarrassed the government because of the reaction of the military. First, the Western Command based in Palawan was not able to pursue the ASG after their raid. Second, the AFP was not able to locate or identify the place where the terrorists might have brought their victims. Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo appeared on national television the following day and declared an "all out war" on the ASG, warning them that she will "finish what you have started."¹³³

On May 29, following the announcement by the President, SOUTHCOM ordered the 103rd Infantry Brigade of the Army to conduct search-and rescue operations at the municipalities of Lantawan and Tuburan, Basilan, the most probable area the ASG had withdrawn to. The units tasked, however, were an *ad hoc* formation of two companies from the 55th Infantry Battalion (55th IB), 32nd Infantry Battalion (32nd IB), and a platoon of Special Forces.

¹³¹ Briscoe, C. (2004). Rescuing the Burnhams: The Unspoken SOCPAC Mission. *Special Warfare, September 2004, Vol. 17, No. 1*, (p. 46).

¹³² It was not long ago since the ASG raided the Malaysian resort at Sipadan Island and kidnapped 21 persons, including 10 foreign tourists. Separately in 2000, the group abducted several foreign journalists, three Malaysians, and a US citizen.

¹³³ Burnham, G. (2002). *In the Presence of My Enemies*. Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. (p. 18)

On May 31, the 9th Intelligence Service Unit sent a report suggesting that suspected ASG terrorists on board a 70-man boat had landed at Barangay Bato-Bato, Tuburan, Basilan. Upon learning of this development, SOUTHCOM again formed an *ad hoc* force, the 18th Infantry Battalion (18th IB), and a company from 32nd IB, not trained to undertake such sensitive operations in Tuburan, Basilan. Moreover, higher command informed the Commanding Officer, 103rd Infantry Brigade (CO,103rd Brigade) that Scout Rangers students (SR CL 142) would be sent from Manila to Basilan to join the search operations.

In the early morning on June 1, Army forces of the 18th IB and 32nd IB encountered approximately 100 ASG fighters at Barangay Penguengan, Tuburan, Basilan. Apparently, the government forces were not able to maintain contact with the enemy, as directed by higher command. With these developments, the CO, 103rd Brigade established a Tactical Command Post (TCP) at Campo Dos, Lamitan, Basilan, about 6 kilometers from Poblacion Lamitan.

At about 0100 hours on June 2, the Non-Commissioned Officer-in-Charge (NCOIC) of an 18th IB outpost at Poblacion Lamitan informed the Brigade TCP of gunfire near their vicinity. The gunfire was between a group of Civilian Volunteer Organization (CVOs)¹³⁴ and an element of the ASG. The ASG had come from Tuburan and managed to enter the Dr. Jose Torres Memorial Hospital-St. Peter's Church compound at Poblacion Lamitan by posing as soldiers with wounded comrades. Upon receiving the report, troops under the command of Major Eliseo Campued, Executive Officer of 18th IB, and Captain Acierto, the intelligence and operations officer of the 103rd Brigade, proceeded to the 18th IB outpost in order to find out what had transpired. Immediately after receiving the briefing, Major Campued and some troops proceeded to the hospital to verify the report, but were subjected to heavy enemy fire, prompting them to pull back to the 18th IB outpost.

Meanwhile, as the gun battle was erupting, the first unit of the Scout Ranger, students of Class 142, and their training staffs, headed by Captain Ruben Guinolbay, had arrived in Lamitan Wharf at around 0220 hours on June 2. They had no knowledge of the

¹³⁴ Civilian Volunteer Organization (CVO) is a local militia armed by the AFP and charged with defending the local communities against the ASG.

situation at Poblacion Lamitan. The 103rd Brigade failed to inform other troops in the vicinity, particularly the convoy of Scout Rangers that was expected to pass along the route where the incident was happening. As a result, the ASG ambushed the Scout Rangers on board two M35 trucks while they passed in front of the St. Peter's Church, killing two and wounding eight. Moreover, as indicated in the Inspector General's official report,

SR troops and elements at the outpost fired at/engaged each other. At about 0530 hours, Captain Guinolbay spotted and approached the V-150 Commando armored vehicle at the 18th IB outpost and requested assistance to evacuate his casualties. It was only at this time that SR CL 142 and 103rd Brigade elements learned of their disposition, which then consolidated at the 18 IB outpost.”¹³⁵

After the Scout Rangers linked up with the 18th IB, the Scout Rangers were ordered by Captain Guinolbay to position themselves at the back of the compound in order to block the possible escape route of the ASG, while the 18th IB elements under Major Campued positioned themselves in the front of the compound. At 0830 hours on June 02, the troops in front of the compound tried to assault it, but were repulsed by the ASG who were well positioned inside the compound. This prompted the government forces to retreat to their previous location. In the process of the assault, one military troop was killed in action (KIA) and another was wounded. Earlier in the morning, the CO of the 103rd Brigade had tried to link up with the troops at the hospital, but was also subjected to enemy sniper fire. Thus, he, too, was forced to return to his TCP at Campo Dos.

It was at this point that the CO of the 103rd Brigade ordered the bulk of the 18th IB, which was operating at nearby Tuburan town, to proceed to Poblacion Lamitan. This order, however, was later rescinded by the AFP Chief of Staff.¹³⁶ CSAFP suggested to the CO of the 18th IB that it could function as a diversionary force to ease the pressure in

¹³⁵ Office of the Army Inspector General, *Special Report Regarding the Lamitan Encounter on June 02, 2001* found in Philippine Army Lessons Learned Manual.

¹³⁶ Dominguez, R. (Undated). *In Retrospect: Lamitan Hearings*. Retrieved on October 31, 2004 from http://www.pmaclass71.org/in_retrospect.htm

Tuburan.¹³⁷ The CO, 18th IB was, instead, redirected to proceed north of Tuburan and clear Barangay Semut, where some 10 abducted fishermen had been recovered.¹³⁸

At 1000 hours on June 02, three hostages had managed to escape from the compound.¹³⁹ The three were then taken into custody and interrogated by Major Campued. The information divulged by the escaped hostages suggested that: 1) the main ASG fighters were inside, including its top leaders, Khaddafy Janjalani and Abu Sabaya, 2) the group came from Barangay Semut, having ridden a passenger jeep to the hospital, 3) the hostages were holed up in the right wing of the hospital, 4) the ASG intended to burn the town of Lamitan in order to embarrass President Arroyo, and 5) the ASG strength inside was approximately 30 to 50 fighters.¹⁴⁰ The escapees also mentioned that there were still 17 hostages remaining at the hospital building. It was only then that the government forces learned that the ASG elements inside the compound were the main forces.

Meanwhile, at around the same time, the commanding general of the 1st Infantry Division (CG, 1st ID) informed CO, 103rd Brigade that the Armed Forces of the Philippines Counter-Terrorist Force (AFP CTF)¹⁴¹ and a Marine company were on there way, and would be arriving within two hours. The CG, 1st ID likewise instructed CO, 103rd Brigade to take the compound by sundown.¹⁴²

Several other troops, equipped with armored vehicles (AVs), began arriving in the area; two armored vehicles arrived at around 1300 hours, June 2 and a second group of Scout Rangers students, this one 35 man-strong, arrived later, at around 1430 hours, immediately linking up with the first group of Scout Rangers. At 1500 hours of the same

¹³⁷ Mykkanen, P. (2002). *Greed of Philippine Army Elements May Be a Security Hazard for U.S. Troops*. Retrieved on October 30, 2004 from <http://www2.helsinginsanomat.fi/english/archive/news.asp?id=20020205IE2>

¹³⁸ Office of the Army Inspector General, *Special Report Regarding the Lamitan Encounter on June 02, 2001* found in Philippine Army Lessons Learned Manual. (p.3)

¹³⁹ Although there were reports that came out in the news later that ransom was paid for their release.

¹⁴⁰ Office of the Army Inspector General, *Special Report Regarding the Lamitan Encounter on June 02, 2001* found in Philippine Army Lessons Learned Manual. (p. 3).

¹⁴¹ The AFP CTF is composed of the Light Reaction Companies, or LRC, that were trained by the U.S. 1st Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group in 2001.

¹⁴² Office of the Army Inspector General, *Special Report Regarding the Lamitan Encounter on June 02, 2001* found in Philippine Army Lessons Learned Manual. (p. 3).

day, two platoons from the 55th IB arrived without a single officer leading them. The platoons were immediately deployed at the rear of the hospital by Captain Guinolbay.

The CO, 18th IB, communicated to the 103rd Brigade after their operation in Tuburan, requesting to proceed to Lamitan to reinforce the hapless force there. Their march to Poblacion Lamitan, he added, would only take them two hours. However, this request was put on hold by Captain Acierto, who suggested that the situation was under control.

After receiving reports that the ASG were trying to break out from the compound, volunteer troops under Captain Guinolbay, onboard two AVs, proceeded to St. Peter's Church to preemptively keep the ASG from escaping. Heavy fire, however, prevented the troops from dismounting the AVs. Again, the ASG forced the military to pull back. In their second attempt to assault, at around 1700 hours, one of the AVs was hit by an enemy rocket-propelled grenade (RPG), killing its officer and one crewmember. The neutralization of the AV devastated the morale of the troops. Their assaults had, again, been repulsed by the ASG.

The AFP CTF arrived in Lamitan late in the afternoon of June 2, while the main body of the AFP CTF and Marine contingent arrived at around 2100 hours on June 02. After sundown, while the Brigade was planning and preparing for another assault, the ASG unleashed heavy volumes of fire, which was believed to have signaled their escape from the compound. Apparently, only a few CVOs were positioned nearby to block the ASG withdrawal. In the process, a gunbattle between the ASG and the CVOs ensued, resulting in the escape of five hostages. These hostages remained at the house of a CVO until the next day, at which time they were turned over to the military.¹⁴³

The final assault was carried out by an *ad hoc* force comprised of many units, including the AFP CTF, one Marine company, and the members of Scout Rangers, Class 142. At around 0100 hours on June 03, the combined, *ad hoc* forces launched what proved to be its final assault on the compound. There was little resistance, such that they were able to occupy their objective by 0230 hours. The troops tasked to carry out the

¹⁴³ Nery, J. (2003). *Lamitan 'hospital of horror' Still Haunts Military*. Retrieved on October 30, 2004 from http://www.inq7.net/nat/2003/jun/02/nat_4-3.htm.

assault had not been trained to fight in an urban environment, such as that presented by the compound. Since they were not organized, trained, and equipped for this type of warfare, the task became difficult for the troops. According to the Inspector General's report, "Troops were hesitant to fire directly at the buildings and houses. Our troops were at a loss on how to advance in urbanized terrain where walls, fences and buildings are present."¹⁴⁴

As a result, neither dead ASG terrorists, nor any hostages were to be found. After the retaking of the compound, the military forces failed to conduct a hot-pursuit operation against the fleeing ASG. The compound was declared cleared by dawn. Ironically, the pursuit operation the following day was temporarily halted because the troops were utilized to secure Poblacion Lamitan for visiting national government officials, military top brass, and other VIPs who came to inspect the incident area.

The occupation of the hospital-church compound in Lamitan by the ASG had, indeed, been bold and daring. The military in the area had been taken totally by surprise by the raid. The forces on the ground also had significant tactical lapses. Because of these lapses, the ASG, together with four additional, new hostages, managed to escape.¹⁴⁵

The June 1-3, 2001 incident, later to be known as the "Lamitan Fiasco," has turned out to be one of the greatest debacles in Philippine military history. The ill-fated hostage rescue mission immediately appeared in the headlines of major national and international newspapers, thereby seizing the attention of lawmakers. Following the failed operation, Congress called for an inquiry to probe into the incident in order to determine the causes to ensure that this would not happen again. Congress also wanted to see that future special operations were conducted more wisely and with a greater chance of ending successfully. Reports of military collusion with the ASG served to further complicate the matter.

¹⁴⁴ Office of the Army Inspector General, *Special Report Regarding the Lamitan Encounter on June 02, 2001* found in Philippine Army Lessons Learned Manual. (p.7).

¹⁴⁵ Gracia Burnham named the four new hostages in her book *"In the Presence of My Enemies"*: Three nurses named Ediborah, Reina, and Sheila, and an orderly named Joel.

C. ANALYSIS

The missions discussed here conducted by Force X, 61st MC, and the *ad hoc* force in Lamitan, were strategic in nature, clearly falling into the realm of special operations. In this situation, the involvement of the higher leadership underscores the sensitivity of the operations. The Lamitan incident suggests that the failure of certain operations might result in the embarrassment of the government, both nationally and internationally. The strategic goal of each of these operations was to positively influence the course of the conflict and, ultimately, of its outcome. For example, the operations of Force X in central Luzon, to target top leadership of the Huks, greatly contributed to the early resolution of the Huk rebellion. While the successful rescue operations by the Marines of Father Blanco and Luis Anthony Biel from the hands of the ASG won back the trust and confidence of the people towards the government. Moreover, it demonstrated the Ramos administration's resolve to fight terrorism. Furthermore, the subsequent capture of the main camp of the ASG denied them a safe haven and sanctuary in which to train and plan future terrorist actions.

All of the operations examined in this study have demonstrated that special operations are neither easy, nor simple to conduct. For example, all Force X personnel were carefully screened for the suitability of individual troops. They all underwent a rigorous training designed to infiltrate Huk ranks. The approach of the AFP, in order to achieve a startling effect on the Huk rebels, had been unorthodox.

The cases that were examined, including the Lamitan incident, also showcased the two most important categories of the military utility of special operations. Colin Gray suggested several strategic uses of special operations, however, two are the most significant functions of special operations, namely: 1) economy of force and 2) expansion of choice for military and political leaders.¹⁴⁶ Special operations, according to Gray, can achieve significant results with limited forces, and are relatively inexpensive (in terms of money) and comparatively low cost in casualties, as well, and come out favorably when overall resources expended are set against the results achieved.¹⁴⁷ For example, Force X was composed of less than a hundred officers and men when it conducted "Large Unit

¹⁴⁶ Gray, C. (1998). *Explorations in Strategy*. Westport, CT: Praeger. (p. 168).

¹⁴⁷ Gray, C. (p. 169).

Infiltration” operations against the Huk guerrillas. However, Force X’s operations were particularly effective, in that their strategic objective of neutralizing top leadership paid off when the Huks finally accepted defeat. In the case of the 61st MC, they were able to influence or change the course of the rescue mission with less than fifty Marines.

The special operations examined demonstrated that the special units here acted as force multipliers for conventional AFP forces. Force multiplier is defined as “a capability that, when added to and employed by a combat force, significantly increases the combat potential of that force and, thus, enhances the probability of successful mission accomplishment.”¹⁴⁸

The Force X and 61st MC operations illustrate this point well. For example, the 61st MC performed this function when it supported the 1st Marine Battalion and Army infantry battalions that were involved in the 1993 hostage rescue operations in Basilan. Because of the small number of men in the 61st MC, it was able to release the pressure of the ASG attack against the 1st Marine Battalion in the early phases of the mission. The use of Force X during the Huk campaign, in a similar way, had not only been good for gathering intelligence, insertion, deception, etc., but it also undermined the “trust culture” within the Huk organization and, ultimately, helped break their will to fight. This would not have been possible by only utilization regular, conventional forces of the AFP.

These special units have also accelerated the pace of the military’s success. The special operations conducted by Force X were crucial to the counter-insurgency campaign of the newly independent Philippine government. Force X operations greatly contributed to the Hook’s decision to accept an amnesty offered by the Philippine government in the following years. According to Abueva,

Most noteworthy was the modus operandi of specially trained Scout Ranger teams within the BCTs, penetrated into Huk hideouts in the Sierra Madre and Zambales mountains. They usually spearhead the large scale attacks, pinpointed enemy concentrations and camps, assessed the effects of air strikes, and destroy small enemy formations. There was also the Undercover Patrol which disguises as civilians or as Huks. Third, was the Mountain Patrol, consisting not more than 24 men. The patrol penetrates the mountains and forest, being small enough to move quietly and fast, but

¹⁴⁸ Joint Publication 3-05.1

large enough to engage the guerrilla band. Finally, the Large Unit Infiltration, a most delicate and risky operation.¹⁴⁹

The heightened abilities of the armed forces in special operations units proved invaluable in the overall counter-insurgency program of President Ramon Magsaysay. The Army pursued the rebels in the mountains as never before, increasing the pressure on guerrillas until they were exhausted. “Soldiers pursued Huks where they had not before and did so with fewer abuses against the villagers.”¹⁵⁰ According to a former rebel, “We spent more and more of our time just trying to elude the soldiers and trying to get enough food and ammunition to stay alive.”¹⁵¹ Force X performed tasks that regular, conventional forces failed to perform. Their success suggested that insurgents, who have advantages in both knowledge of the terrain and intelligence, can be outfought on their own terms, thereby denying the enemy of its supposed superiority in terms of troop morale.

In the case of the Lamitan incident, had the AFP acted appropriately, i.e., utilized special operations units like the AFP CTF, the ASG could have been defeated earlier. In her book entitled, *In the Presence of my Enemies*, Gracia Burnham confirmed that most of the top level leaders of the ASG were with the other fighters inside the compound. The failure of the AFP to cordon off the ASG and rescue the hostages in Lamitan, not only tarnished the image of the military establishment, but also the highest office of the land. For example, the failure of the AFP to rescue the hostages and capture or kill the ASG triggered suspicion of collusion of the military and the ASG, prompting the Senate to investigate the Lamitan incident.¹⁵² Moreover, the Arroyo administration was also suspected of negotiating with the ASG, or paying ransoms, for the release of the hostages.

Notwithstanding the risks that a failed hostage rescue mission might bring upon the national reputation of the Philippines, the Arroyo administration allowed an *ad hoc*

¹⁴⁹ Abueva, J. (1971). *Ramon Magsaysay: A Political Biography*. Manila: Solidaridad Publishing House. (p. 180).

¹⁵⁰ Kerkvliet, B. (1977). *The Huk Rebellion*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. (p. 208).

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, (p. 208).

¹⁵² Javellana, J. (2003). *Ex-hostage Elated by Burnham Revelations*. Retrieved on September 29, 2004 from http://www.inq7.net/nat/2003/may/08/text/nat_9-1-p.htm.

force to conduct the rescue mission, instead of the AFP CTF. The Lamitan incident called for special warfare activity, as did the situation in central Luzon, where Force X and the 61st MC had intervened in Basilan..

The special operations units examined also increased the options available to political and military leaders of the Philippines at the time. For example, the Force X special operations in the 1940's facilitated the neutralization of key Huk leaders, deemed crucial at that time for tipping the balance of the conflict in favor of the Philippine government. In the case of President Ramos in the 1990's, the government could not have successfully resolved the crisis merely by resorting to the ordinary use of military force. When negotiations for the release of the hostages failed, Ramos still had the option to resolve the crisis by physical coercion. The availability of a special operations capability, not only enhanced the flexibility of the political leaders, but also the commanders in the field. The unique capabilities of special operations units provided the Philippine government with options other than the use of direct action, as evidenced by the cases examined. The Lamitan incident, however, was a different story; it was a disaster because of some problems in special operations in the AFP today and because of misuse of special operations and special operations units.

The Lamitan incident can provide a picture of some of the problem areas in the conduct of special operations missions in the Philippines. It is a case where the defense and military leadership fail to provide proper guidance as to how to best prosecute special operations. Moreover, there was neither proper oversight, nor the necessary control arrangements regarding the most effective conduct of special operations units in place. Furthermore, the case is an example where *ad hoc* forces are not sufficient to deal with situations that call for special warfare activity.

Among the problems identified in the special report of the Army Inspector General (IG) regarding the incident were: 1) poor coordination, 2) lack of training in urban environment, 3) failure of command and control, 4) insufficient number of tactical units in the area, and 5) inappropriate intervention of higher military leadership in mission execution.

A variety of poorly coordinated problems marred both the preparations and the execution of the operation in Lamitan. The lack of communication equipment has been one source of difficulties frequently cited; prior to the arrival of the AFP CTF, only three hand-held radios were available during the encounter at Poblacion Lamitan.¹⁵³ The Scout Rangers had no communication equipment at all, resulting in their being ambushed following their arrival, and also their bad encounter with the elements of 103rd Brigade. This same predicament, i.e., of a lack of radios, hampered coordination between the armor units and foot soldiers during the combined assaults. Additionally, the lack of communications equipment made coordination more difficult between the ground troops and the Air Force MG 520 helicopters that were supporting the operations.

Another major cause for coordination problems encountered in the operation was the *ad hoc* nature of the forces in planning and executing the mission. Rather than being efficiently coordinated, the force was a collection of disparate units.¹⁵⁴ Thus, the force was not a cohesively team forged through extensive training. In comparison, the Force X underwent extensive training that emphasized strong unit cohesion, prior to their operations. Teamwork is essential in special operations, and its absence may lead to disaster, as suggested by this rescue mission. Troops hesitated to maneuver during the height of the siege because Captain Guinolbay, who belonged to a different unit, the 1st Scout Ranger Regiment, was the one giving orders to 18th IB and 55th IB. The operating troops were not familiar with each other and had difficulties understanding one another's standing operating procedures (SOP).

In most instances, the AFP has the tendency to set up task forces instead of using existing commands to plan and execute special operations. The draw back of this approach, according to Lucien Vandenbroucke¹⁵⁵, is that "it makes it harder for those entrusted with the mission to enlist the assistance of other organizational units, both within and outside the military because ad hoc task forces lack regular, long-standing ties

¹⁵³ Office of the Army Inspector General, *Special Report Regarding the Lamitan Encounter on June 02, 2001* found in Philippine Army Lessons Learned Manual. (p. 5).

¹⁵⁴ The units that were involved were composed of: 103rd Brigade HQs personnel, 55th IB, 18th IB, SR CL 142, Armor unit, Air Force helicopter unit, and the AFP CTF.

¹⁵⁵ Lucien Vandenbroucke is a Foreign Service Officer at the U.S. Department of State. He is a former Brookings Institution Research Fellow.

to these organizations.”¹⁵⁶ The *ad hoc* nature of the force that composed the rescue force in Lamitan was a key ingredient to its breakdown at the command and control levels.

Command and control was another problem during the failed hostage rescue mission. Effective command and control at the operational level is essential for the successful conduct of special operations. In the Lamitan incident, observance of proper chain of command in issuing orders was violated. For example, the decision of CO, 103rd Brigade to shift his forces from Tuburan to Lamitan had been rescinded by higher command. The tactical units and the 103rd Brigade’s intelligence and operations officer had no continuous contact between one another because of the lack of communications equipment. “The officers and men were unnecessarily exposed to risk by running and crawling to different positions just to direct and coordinate the maneuvers,” according to the report of the IG. Moreover, the presence of the ground commander was not felt during the operation. CO, 103rd Brigade had positioned his TCP in Campo Dos which was several kilometers away from Poblacion Lamitan not until mid-morning of the following day, when the ASG and hostages were confirmed to be inside the compound. His decision to remain in Campo Dos was a result of inadequate intelligence. He thought all along that he was confronting two fronts, one in Lamitan and one in Tuburan, where the bulk of troops were positioned. His instructions to his operations officer were being issued by way of radio only. The special report adds:

With a very fluid tactical situation where decisions kept changing every now and then, his absence in the 18th IB outpost created anachronistic set-up where a consensual decision was being arrived at by the Brigade S2/3 (a captain), a Battalion executive officer (rank of major) and the course director of SR CL 142 (a captain). The physical presence of the Brigade Commander at the outpost could or may have made a difference in the tactical decisions and behavior of the troops coming from different units (Brigade HQ personnel, 55th IB, 18th IB, and SR CL 142).¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ Vandenbroucke, L. (1993). *Perilous Option: Special Operations As an Instrument of U.S. Foreign Policy*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc. (p. 158).

¹⁵⁷ Office of the Army Inspector General, *Special Report Regarding the Lamitan Encounter on June 02, 2001* found in Philippine Army Lessons Learned Manual. (p. 8).

The special report also suggests that the troops involved in Lamitan lacked training in urban warfare that included the Scout Ranger students. Urban warfare is not extensively taught in most training schools. The Army infantry battalions in Basilan had not undergone extensive training in this kind of operation. Moreover, the units on the ground were not properly organized and equipped to conduct such a kind of mission. Urban warfare, specifically building assaults, requires special skills, equipment, weapons, and extensive training and experience. The ASG effectively made use of the compound as a stronghold. The troops were at a loss regarding how to advance in urbanized terrain where walls, fences, and buildings were present.

Another finding of the IG was the lack of troops on the ground. The troops were concentrated in other parts of Basilan. The bulk of the troops of 18th IB were operating in Tuburan when the Lamitan incident broke out. Apparently, the order of CO, 103rd Brigade for 18th IB to reinforce the troops in Lamitan was rescinded by higher command. Although, the probability for a successful rescue mission was still questionable, the number of troops (100+: 14) on the ground was more than enough to have prevented the ASG, at the least, from escaping.

The “Lamitan Fiasco” could have been avoided had there been a stand-by special operations unit with robust special operations capabilities positioned in the SOUTHCOM operational area. The AFP CTF should have been pre-positioned in the island province for any occurrence immediately after the raid in Palawan. According to one of the inquiries after the incident, there is a suggestion that the failure of the AFP CTF to arrive within a two-hour period (that was promised by the Chief of Staff, the AFP) was one of the causes for the escape of the Abu Sayyaf.¹⁵⁸

A final finding was the intervention in mission execution by higher military headquarters in the operation, as it unfolded, had been inappropriate. Because of the high visibility and the high stakes involved in this case, higher authorities felt they needed to get involved. For example, the order of CO, 103rd Brigade for the 18th IB to reinforce him was rescinded by higher command. The 18th IB was, instead, ordered to wait for the AFP CTF. The Chief of Staff by-passed three command levels: SOUTHCOM, 1st

¹⁵⁸ Diaz, P. (2002). *Enough. Don't Wish for the Moon*. Retrieved on October 31, 2004 from http://www.inq7.net/nat/2003/jun/02/nat_4-3.htm

Infantry Division/ Task Force “Comet”, and 103rd Brigade.¹⁵⁹ Because of this, the commanders on the ground lost the initiative to prosecute the operations.

Based upon the facts of the case, one can observe that the IG failed to bring out three important factors to ensure that special operations are successful: 1) adequate intelligence upon what the objective is, and who the enemy is, 2) a force trained, equipped, and organized to conduct special operations, and 3) a sound doctrine for special operations. The IG findings failed to identify that there was inadequate intelligence, too. The lack of intelligence was a critical factor in the Lamitan incident. The inadequacy of intelligence resulted in the failure of the commanders to anticipate the most probable course of action of the ASG.

Moreover, a healthy appreciation of intelligence could have resulted in the pre-positioning of AFP CTF in Basilan area, the most probable place where the terrorists might bring their captives. Additionally, had the military immediately known that the ASG was inside the compound, the government forces could have focused their limited resources around the objective until the arrival of AFP CTF. The reports of diversionary attacks by ASG at other towns greatly contributed to the indecisiveness of CO, 103rd Brigade. The facts of the case suggest that the identity and composition of the ASG were actually known only after the battle had been going on for eight hours. The hostages who escaped were the ones who confirmed that the main ASG group was in the compound. According to the IG, “The sudden appearance of ASG in Lamitan deceived government forces of their whereabouts. With this information, maximum resources of the military should have been brought to the location with urgency, to the extent of commandeering civilian air and sea transportation to insert forces.”¹⁶⁰

The AFP, at the time of the Lamitan incident, already had a dedicated force for combating terrorism—i.e., the AFT CTF. However, there was no established doctrine to guides its proper use. There was also lack of guidance as to who had the responsibility to prosecute strategic special operations. For example, following the raid of the ASG in

¹⁵⁹ Dominguez, R. (Undated). *In Retrospect: Lamitan Hearings*. Retrieved on October 31, 2004 from http://www.pmaclass71.org/in_retrospect.htm

¹⁶⁰ Office of the Army Inspector General, *Special Report Regarding the Lamitan Encounter on June 02, 2001* found in Philippine Army Lessons Learned Manual. (p. 6).

Palawan, SOUTHCOM failed to request for the services of the AFP CTF from higher command to pre-position the AFP CTF to SOUTHCOM area of operations, the most probable withdrawal route of the ASG. Moreover, SOUTHCOM conducted its own operations to locate and rescue the hostages, utilizing troops that were not organized, trained, and equipped for counterterrorism activity. It conducted strategic special operations, utilizing disparate forces under its command. This clearly shows that the doctrine and strategy of the AFP, in terms of special operations, was incorrect.

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VI. CONCLUSION

The examination of the unique security environment of the Philippines presented in Chapter II suggests that the internal threats, specifically those posed by insurgencies, secessionist groups, and terrorists groups (e.g., the CPP/NPA, the MILF, and the ASG), should be the number one priority of the AFP. The Philippine government recognizes that defeating the internal security threats involves a comprehensive solution. However, it is essential to destroy the armed components of these threat groups so that long term solutions brought in by other government agencies could be implemented effectively.

The LCM threat among the internal threat groups remains the top priority of the government. It has retained its politico-military capability and nationwide influence which resulted in the AFP having primary responsibility for internal security operations. On the other hand, the threat posed by the MILF and ASG is quite manageable. MILF and ASG activities remain isolated in Muslim dominated areas in central and southern Mindanao where they enjoy popular support. The MILF and the government are having peace talks aimed to end the three-decade of fighting. The ASG, however, has been weakened to a great degree by the death and capture of its key leaders, and the continued military operations by the AFP. The ASG's capability to recuperate, however, should not be downplayed or underestimated. The ASG's link to international terrorist network groups, like al Qaeda and JI, increases its potential to grow and build up its strengths and capabilities.

These internal threat groups will continue to fight unconventionally, using guerrilla warfare as a method, and to maintain the conflict in the lower-intensity spectrum. Their strategy, for the most part, will be to engage the AFP asymmetrically. These groups do not have the capacity to engage the government forces conventionally. Thus, they will likely continue their strategy of attrition, which is to exhaust the government forces over time. Moreover, the nature of the conflict will continue to become less defined and more dispersed. Therefore, as these internal threat groups remain to embrace the strategy of attrition and continue to become less defined and more

dispersed, it is inevitable that the AFP will remain to operate at the lower end of the spectrum, specifically employing Low Intensity Conflict (LIC) strategies.

The AFP needs to have the capabilities to operate at the lower end of the spectrum. As the nature of the conflict stays on this course, the AFP must enhance its special operations capabilities and transform its forces to better fit the current internal threat as well as future challenges.

The rescue operations in Lamitan, Basilan has demonstrated the inadequacy of the AFP in the field of special operations. The operations in Basilan, designed to locate and rescue the hostages, was politically sensitive deploying only the best equipped and most proficient Philippine military forces, in order to avoid possible mission failure that can result in damaging Philippine prestige and interest. The Philippine Army Inspector General's report concluded that the failure of the rescue mission can be attributed to: 1) poor coordination, 2) lack of training in urban environment, 3) failure of command and control, 4) insufficient number of tactical units in the area, and 5) inappropriate intervention of higher military leadership in mission execution.

After further examination, however, three other important factors were identified that can be attributed to the failure of the rescue mission. The first, and most important factor, is the inadequate intelligence about the enemy and its objective. This resulted in the failure of AFP leadership and the commanders on the ground to anticipate the courses of action and capabilities of the ASG. Second, is the absence of an established doctrine and strategy for the use of special operations. The lack of guidance and oversight allowed commanders to misuse special operations forces and apply special operations without the benefit of its main purpose. The lack of established special operations doctrine allowed military commanders to utilize *ad hoc* units in conducting special operations missions, as evidenced by the Lamitan fiasco. Lastly, there is neither an established unified special operations force in the AFP that has the responsibility and mission to conduct special operations nor a force that is organized, trained, and equipped to conduct strategic special operations. Each branch of service has their own special operations unit designed to support their own operational needs.

The first two case studies in Chapter V have demonstrated that the AFP had utilized special operations forces correctly. The analysis highlighted some essential elements for a successful conduct of special operations, which are: 1) a force trained, equipped, and organized to conduct special operations; 2) effective command, control, communications, and intelligence support at the operational level; 3) clear national and theater strategic objectives; and 4) competent tactical planning and execution.

Special operations have contributed immensely to past AFP combat operations. The operations by Force X and the 61st Marine Company positively influenced the course and the outcome of the conflict. The operations that were conducted by Force X during the Philippine Huk campaign tipped the balance of the conflict in favor of the government. Equally significant, was the role of the 61st Marine Company during the rescue operations in Basilan in 1993. These Philippine special operations forces have increased the choices of options available to political and military leaders of the Philippines, as evidenced by the Huk campaign experience of the Philippine government. The availability of a special operations capability not only enhanced the flexibility of the political leaders, but also the commanders in the field. The unique capabilities of special operations units provided the Philippine government with options of direct actions as evidenced by the cases. Without the contributions of the special operations forces and its capabilities, the internal threat groups could have stepped-up their activities and expanded their forces until the Philippine central government collapsed.

The case studies have also provided insights into the real nature of special operations: Special operations are neither easy nor simple to conduct. *Ad hoc* and disparate units of Philippine conventional forces cannot perform such operations. Special operations demands that personnel are carefully screened and trained, properly organized, and well equipped. Furthermore, the study has showcased two most important strategic utility of special operations, namely: economy of force and expansion of choice.

The AFP has benefited from the dividends of special operations. Force X's operations were particularly effective against the Huks. It proved that limited forces can achieve significant results. Special operations proved to be relatively low in cost in terms of casualties and the expended resources set against the results achieved.

The study has shown that special operations forces can act as force multipliers for the rest of the AFP. The Force X and the 61st MC operations have illustrated this point. For example, they augmented the strength of the regular conventional forces of the AFP. Also, the use of special operations forces undermined the vulnerability of the internal threat groups. Force X operations have accelerated the pace of military success. The successful conduct of special operations during the Huk campaign greatly contributed to the decision of the Huks to accept an amnesty offered by the Philippine government in 1954.

The assessment in Chapter III suggests that the current AFPSOF capabilities are lacking in, not only enhancement, but also in the synchronization of their missions and capabilities. AFPSOF should, first and foremost, formulate a joint doctrine that will define their missions and capabilities and delineate its command and control system. Moreover, the doctrine should give emphasis to the strategic or operational utility of special operations. Given that almost the entire AFP is dedicated to the internal security operations of the country, the AFPSOF should possess capabilities that are distinct from the conventional forces and applicable to all the threats of the country and encompassing the range of military operations, i.e, war and military operations other than war (MOOTW).

AFPSOF should possess or enhance its capabilities in the following: intelligence operations, unconventional warfare, civil affairs and psychological operations, close air support and air mobility, maritime and riverine operations, urban operations, and information operations. The failures of past military operations where SOF were utilized, whether against terrorist groups or insurgents, indicate that intelligence was among its weaknesses. The AFP intelligence units, for instance, were always at a loss and could not track the ASG during the Dos Palmas incident and similar other operations against the ASG. The military commanders in Basilan were totally surprised when the kidnapers appeared with their hostages in the populous town of Lamitan. Military units were hunting the kidnapers somewhere else when the ASG appeared in Lamitan. The ability of the military intelligence units to locate the enemies of the state and foresee its activities and intentions had been a perennial problem in the AFP.

As the LCM continues to be the primary threat of the country, capabilities in unconventional warfare, civil affairs, psychological operations, and direct actions need to be enhanced. It is evident in the AFP's past campaigns and other models of counterinsurgency that military operations by itself, especially when conducted in a conventional fashion, do not succeed. Philippine President Ramon Magsaysay's strategy during the Huk campaign in the 1950s was successful, but failure of the succeeding administrations to sustain the non-military dimension of the campaign resulted in the insurgent's resurgence in the late 1960s.

Another example of the Philippine government's failure to sustain the military gains against the LCM was the success of the AFP campaign plan, "Lambat Bitag,"¹⁶¹ in the late 1980s. Here, the AFP effectively reduced the LCM members from 30,000 to about 6,000, and this trend of declining insurgent activities continued. However, the inability of the government to compliment the military's resulted, once again, in the resurgence of the LCM in the mid 1990s. Though the non-military portion of a counterinsurgency campaign is spearheaded by organizations of the civil government, the military has the critical task of linking, collaborating, and synchronizing the activities. Thus, the capabilities of the AFPSOF needs enhancement.

Chapter III makes it clear that the Air Force component of AFPSOF has a limited capability in air mobility and close air support. Enhancing these essential capabilities will entail much funding, and will likely be by-passed by the Philippine government due to the economic difficulty it is currently experiencing. This enhancement could be achieved, however, through prioritizing capabilities and equipment that will directly enhance AFPSOF operations. Maritime and riverine operations, on the other hand, are of paramount consideration for AFP special operations. Because the Philippines is an archipelago, being comprised of more than 7,000 islands and islets, this adds to the complexity of the internal security operations. Enhanced maritime and riverine operations capabilities of AFPSOF would greatly improve its effectiveness.

¹⁶¹ Literal translation: Fishnet Trap. Letter of Instruction 23-88 dated 16 September 1988, sets forth the AFP campaign plan for a general offensive against the Communist Party of the Philippines, its military arm the New People's Army, and the legal front the National Democratic Front, commonly referred to as CPP/NPA/NDF.

Finally, the threat of terrorism requires the AFPSOF to enhance its capabilities in direct action missions, urban operations and information operations. This will require the enhancement of skills and equipment. Emphasis should be given to computer network operations and electronic warfare of the information operations missions.

This study concludes that the following core missions, derived from the U.S. Special Operations Forces: direct action, special reconnaissance, unconventional warfare, counterterrorism, civil affairs operations, psychological operations, and information operations, are relevant, adaptable, and responsive to the security requirements of the Philippine government. Collateral activities would include: combat readiness assessment and training (CRAT), combat search and rescue, humanitarian assistance, and special activities. Some of these missions, however, should be redefined to fit with the Philippine government national objectives.

The capabilities that AFPSOF should possess include command and control systems at strategic and operational levels, urban operations, maritime and riverine operations, close air support and air mobility in all terrain and adverse weather conditions, electronic warfare, computer network operations, and civil affairs and PSYOP.

APPENDIX A

GLOSSARY

anti-surface air operations. An air operation conducted in an air/sea environment against enemy surface forces. (JP 1-02)

armed reconnaissance. A mission with the primary purpose of locating and attacking targets of opportunity, i.e., enemy materiel, personnel, and facilities, in assigned general areas or along assigned ground communications routes, and not for the purpose of attacking specific briefed targets. (JP 1-02)

campaign plan. A plan for a series of related military operations aimed at accomplishing a strategic or operational objective within a given time and space. (JP 1-02)

civilian internee. 1. A civilian who is interned during armed conflict or occupation for security reasons or for protection or because he or she has committed an offense against the detaining power. 2. A term to refer to persons interned and protected in accordance with the Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, 12 August 1949 (Geneva Convention). Also called CI. (JP 1-02)

civil-military operations. The activities of a commander that establish, maintain, influence, or exploit relations between military forces, governmental and non-governmental civilian organizations and authorities, and the civilian populace in a friendly, neutral, or hostile operational area in order to facilitate military operations, to consolidate and achieve operational objectives. Civil-military operations may include performance by military forces of activities and functions normally the responsibility of local, regional, or national government. These activities may also occur prior to, during, or subsequent to other military actions. They may occur, if directed, in the absence of other military operations. Civil-military operations may be performed by designated civil affairs, by other military forces, or by a combination of civil affairs and other forces. Also called CMO. (JP 1-02)

clandestine operation. An operation sponsored or conducted by governmental departments or agencies in such a way as to assure secrecy or concealment. A clandestine operation differs from a covert operation in that emphasis is placed on concealment of the operation rather than on concealment of the identity of the sponsor. In special operations, an activity may be both covert and clandestine and may focus equally on operational considerations and intelligence-related activities. (JP 1-02)

close air support. Air action by fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft against hostile targets that are in close proximity to friendly forces and that require detailed integration of each air mission with the fire and movement of those forces. Also called CAS. (JP 1-02)

conventional forces. 1. Those forces capable of conducting operations using nonnuclear weapons. 2. Those forces other than designated special operations forces. (JP 1-02)

covert operation. An operation that is so planned and executed as to conceal the identity of or permit plausible denial by the sponsor. A covert operation differs from a clandestine in that emphasis is placed on concealment of identity of sponsor rather than on concealment of the operation. (JP 1-02)

deception. Those measures designed to mislead the enemy by manipulation, distortion, or falsification of evidence to induce the enemy to react in a manner prejudicial to the enemy's interests. (JP 1-02)

dislocated civilian. A broad term that includes a displaced person, an evacuee, an expellee, an internally displaced person, a migrant, a refugee, or a stateless person. Also called DC. (JP 1-02)

force multiplier. A capability that, when added to and employed by a combat force, significantly increases the combat potential of that force and thus enhances the probability of successful mission accomplishment. (JP 1-02)

guerilla force. A group of irregular, predominantly indigenous personnel organized along military lines to conduct military and paramilitary operations in enemy-held, hostile, or denied territory. (JP 1-02)

guerrilla warfare. Military and paramilitary operations conducted in enemy-held or hostile territory by irregular, predominantly indigenous forces. Also called GW. (JP 1-02)

hydrographic reconnaissance. Reconnaissance of an area of water to determine depths, beach gradients, the nature of the bottom, and the location of coral reefs, rocks, shoals, and manmade obstacles. (JP 1-02)

information assurance. Information operations that protect and defend information and information systems by ensuring their availability, integrity, authentication, confidentiality, and nonrepudiation. This includes providing for restoration of information systems by incorporating protection, detection, and reaction capabilities. Also called IA. (JP 1-02)

insurgency. An organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict. (JP 1-02)

interdiction. An action to divert, disrupt, delay, or destroy the enemy's surface military potential before it can be used effectively against friendly forces. (JP 1-02)

joint force commander. A general term applied to a combatant commander, subunified commander, or joint task force commander authorized to exercise combatant command (command authority) or operational control over a joint force. Also called JFC. (JP 1-02)

low visibility operation. Sensitive operations wherein the political-military restrictions inherent in covert and clandestine operations are either not necessary or not feasible; actions are taken as required to limit exposure of those involved and/or their activities.

Execution of these operations is undertaken with the knowledge that the action and/or sponsorship of the operation may preclude plausible denial by the initiating power. (JP 1-02)

military operations other than war. Operations that encompass the use of military capabilities across the range of military operations short of war. These military actions can be applied to complement any combination of the other instruments of national power and occur before, during, and after war. Also called MOOTW. (JP 1-02)

paramilitary forces. Forces or groups distinct from the regular armed forces of any country, but resembling them in organization, equipment, training, or mission. (JP 1-02)

poststrike reconnaissance. Missions undertaken for the purpose of gathering information used to measure results of a strike. (JP 1-02)

public affairs. Those public information, command information, and community relations activities directed toward both the external and internal publics with interest in the Department of Defense. Also called PA. (JP 1-02)

recovery operations. Operations conducted to search for, locate, identify, rescue, and return personnel, sensitive equipment, or items critical to national security. (JP 1-02)

riverine area. An inland or coastal area comprising both land and water, characterized by limited land lines of communication, with extensive water surface and/or inland waterways that provide natural routes for surface transportation and communications. (JP 1-02)

riverine operations. Operations conducted by forces organized to cope with and exploit the unique characteristics of a riverine area, to locate and destroy hostile forces, and/or to achieve or maintain control of the riverine area. Joint riverine operations combine land, naval, and air operations, as appropriate, and are suited to the nature of the specific riverine area in which operations are to be conducted. (JP 1-02)

sabotage. An act or acts with intent to injure, interfere with, or obstruct the national defense of a country by willfully injuring or destroying, or attempting to injure or destroy, any national defense or war materiel, premises, or utilities, to include human and natural resources. (JP 1-02)

special operations. Operations conducted in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments to achieve military, diplomatic, informational, and/or economic objectives employing military capabilities for which there is no broad conventional force requirement. These operations often require covert, clandestine, or low visibility capabilities. Special operations are applicable across the range of military operations. They can be conducted independently or in conjunction with operations of conventional forces or other government agencies and may include operations through, with, or by indigenous or surrogate forces. Special operations differ from conventional operations in degree of physical and political risk, operational techniques, mode of employment,

independence from friendly support, and dependence on detailed operational intelligence and indigenous assets. Also called SO. (JP 1-02)

special tactics. US Air Force special operations forces organized, trained, and equipped to conduct special operations. They include combat control team, pararescue, and combat weather personnel who provide the interface between air and ground combat operations. Also called ST. (JP 1-02)

special tactics team. A task-organized element of special tactics that may include combat control, pararescue, and combat weather personnel. Functions include austere airfield and assault zone reconnaissance, surveillance, establishment, and terminal control; terminal attack control; combat search and rescue; combat casualty care and evacuation staging; and tactical weather observations and forecasting. Also called STT. (JP 1-02)

subversion. Action designed to undermine the military, economic, psychological, or political strength or morale of a regime. See also unconventional warfare. (JP 1-02)

terminal attack control. The authority to control the maneuver of and grant weapons release clearance to attacking aircraft. (JP 1-02)

terminal guidance. 1. The guidance applied to a guided missile between midcourse guidance and arrival in the vicinity of the target. 2. Electronic, mechanical, visual, or other assistance given an aircraft pilot to facilitate arrival at, operation within or over, landing upon, or departure from an air landing or airdrop facility. 3. Any electronic, mechanical, voice or visual communication that provides approaching aircraft or weapons additional information regarding a specific location or target. Terminal guidance is not a type of air control. Those providing terminal guidance do not have weapons release authority, or authority to direct the maneuver off aircraft. (JP 1-02)

terrorism. The calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological. (JP 1-02)

unconventional assisted recovery. Evader recovery conducted by directed unconventional warfare forces, dedicated extraction teams, and/or unconventional assisted recovery mechanisms operated by guerrilla groups or other clandestine organizations to seek out, contact, authenticate, support, and return evaders to friendly control. Also called UAR. (JP 1-02)

weapons of mass destruction. Weapons that are capable of a high order of destruction and/or of being used in such a manner as to destroy large number of people. Weapons of mass destruction can be high explosives or nuclear, biological, chemical, and radiological weapons, but exclude the means of transporting or propelling the weapon where such means is a separable and divisible part of the weapon. Also called WMD. (JP 1-02)

APPENDIX B

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
AFPSOF	Armed Forces of the Philippines special operations forces
AFSOC	Air Force Special Operations Command
AFSOF	Air Force special operations forces
ARSOA	Army special operations aviation
ARSOF	Army special operations forces
ARSOTF	Army special operations task force
ASG	Abu Sayyaf Group
CA	civil affairs
CAG	Civil Affairs Group
CAO	civil affairs operations
CD	counterdrug
CINC	commander in chief
CMO	civil military operations
CP	counterproliferation
CPP	Communist Party of the Philippines
CRAT	combat readiness assessment and training
CS	coalition support
CSAR	combat search and rescue
CT	counterterrorism
C2	command and control
DA	direct action
DAO	direct action operations
DC	dislocated civilian
EPW/CI	enemy prisoner of war/civilian internee
FHA	foreign humanitarian assistance
FID	foreign internal defense
FSRR	First Scout Ranger Regiment
FRBn	Force Reconnaissance Battalion
GHQAFP	General Headquarters Armed Forces of the Philippines
HALO	high-altitude low-opening
HAHO	high-altitude high-opening
HHC	headquarters and headquarters company
HN	host nation
<i>HUK (HMB)</i>	<i>Hukbong Mapagpalaya ng Bayan</i>
IO	information operations
ISO	internal security operations
JFC	joint force commander
JSOG	joint special operations group
JTF	joint task force
LRB	Light Reaction Battalion
LRC	Light Reaction Company

MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MOOTW	military operations other than war
MOUT	military operations in urbanized terrain
MTT	mobile training team
NAVSOC	Naval special operations component
NAVSPECWARCOM	Naval Special Warfare Command
NGO	non-government organization
NPA	New People's Army
NDF	National Democratic Front
NSW	Naval special warfare
NSWG	Naval Special Warfare Group
NSWU	Naval Special Warfare Unit
PASOF	Philippine Army special operations forces
PMC	Philippine Marine Corps
PNP	Philippine National Police
PSYOP	psychological operations
SA	security assistance
SBT	special boat team
SDV	SEAL delivery vehicle
SEAL	sea-air-land
SF	special forces
SFG(A)	Special Forces Group (Airborne)
SFODA	special forces operational detachment "A"
SFR(A)	Special Forces Regiment (Airborne)
SOA	special operations aviation
SOAR(A)	Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne)
SOF	special operations forces
SOCOM	Special Operations Command
SPOW	Special Operations Wing
SR	scout ranger/special reconnaissance
SRO	special reconnaissance operations
SSD	strategic studies detachment
STT	special tactics team
SWCC	special warfare combatant-craft crewmen
TDA	table of distribution and allowance
UAR	unconventional assisted recovery
USACAPOC	United States Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command
USAF	United States Air Force
USAR	United States Army Reserve
USASFC	United States Army Special Forces Command
USASOC	United States Army Special Operations Command
USSOCOM	United States Special Operations Command
UW	unconventional warfare
WMD	weapons of mass destruction

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