

# **Joint Special Operations Task Force- Philippines**

**A Monograph  
by  
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## **Abstract**

JOINT SPECIAL OPERATIONS TASK FORCE- PHILIPPINES by MAJOR Stuart L. Farris, U.S. Army, 70 pages.

The Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines (JSOTF-P) indirect approach to irregular warfare (IW) offers senior U.S. policy makers and military commanders a suitable model worthy of consideration for conducting long-term military operations against terrorist networks inside a partner nation's sovereign territory. However, the indirect approach does not represent a one-size-fits-all solution or approved template for conducting successful IW and defeating terrorist networks abroad. The JSOTF-P's indirect approach to IW is tailored specifically to the unique conditions of the Philippines operational environment and the regional military objectives established by senior policy makers.

The indirect approach employed by the JSOTF-P offers a model for the U.S. military to combat regional/global terrorism inside a partner nation's sovereign territory under the following conditions: the U.S. has an established Country Team; the partner nation has established armed forces with an existing capacity to conduct counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations; the partner nation's political establishment is sensitive to a large-scale, overt presence of American military personnel operating within the country or region; or the partner nation has a constitutional or otherwise legal prohibition against foreign military forces directly conducting combat operations within their sovereign territory.

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## INTRODUCTION

We think there's a model here that's worth showcasing. There's another way of doing business. We've been doing it for four years with some decent results--not grand results, but some decent results. We think it's worthwhile.<sup>1</sup>

— Lieutenant General David P. Fridovich, USA,  
Director, Center for Special Operations, United  
States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM)

The U.S. is over seven years into the fight against terrorism. No clear end is in sight, and many challenges remain. In addition to fighting a protracted, potentially multi-generational conflict against an ideologically motivated non-state actor in the form of al-Qaeda (AQ) and its associates, the uncertain strategic security environment of the 21st Century also requires the U.S. military to be prepared to fight and win conventional major theater wars, deter rogue nations possessing or attempting to develop weapons of mass destruction (WMD), defeat asymmetric attacks, and provide support to civil authorities as required in the event of a declared domestic emergency or catastrophe. The key question then becomes, how can the U.S. military be prepared to successfully conduct and accomplish all of these tasks without exhausting its service members and their families, depleting other high demand, finite resources in the forms of money and materiel, and losing the essential support of the American people and the broader international community?

In support of the Long War,<sup>2</sup> Special Operations Command- Pacific (SOCPAC) has employed a Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF) to defeat terrorist organizations in the Philippines since September, 2002.<sup>3</sup> The Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines (JSOTF-P) uses Special Operations Forces (SOF) in conjunction with members of the interagency

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<sup>1</sup>CSM William Eckert, "Defeating the Idea: Unconventional Warfare in the Southern Philippines," *Special Warfare*, no. 6 (November-December 2006): 18. At the time of this quote, Lieutenant General Fridovich was a Major General and the Commander, Special Operations Command-Pacific.

<sup>2</sup>In this monograph the term *Long War* is synonymous with what was named the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) under the administration of former President George W. Bush.

<sup>3</sup>Special Operations Command, Pacific, Web Page, <http://www.socpac.socom.mil> (accessed January 29, 2009). SOCPAC is a subordinate unified command of U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM).

to build the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) capacity to defeat terrorist organizations and networks that threaten the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and regional stability. This indirect approach<sup>4</sup> to conducting irregular warfare (IW)<sup>5</sup> by, with, and through legitimate Filipino security forces maintains an extremely small and very limited American military signature and presence. This approach is perceived among many in the U.S. SOF community to be extremely successful in disrupting terrorist organizations in the Philippines. Yet this success has received only limited attention from U.S. service members outside of the SOF community and almost no attention from Western media. Some former members of SOCPAC argue that the success of JSOTF-P's approach to IW in the Philippines make it a model for future U.S. military operations in support of the Long War.

## **Purpose and Scope**

The purpose of this monograph is to research and analyze the JSOTF-P's approach to conducting IW in the Philippines to determine if it offers a model for future U.S. military IW operations in support of the Long War. To offer a worthy model, the approach must accomplish the mission of disrupting or defeating terrorist networks in a manner that supports the objectives and policies specified in U.S. national strategy documents, maintains political legitimacy in the eyes of the American people and broader international community, supports unity of effort and cooperation amongst the interagency, and employs sufficient resources and capabilities that can be feasibly sustained by the U.S. military for at least the next twenty years. This monograph shows that as of early 2009 the JSOTF-P's approach to conducting IW in the Philippines does

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<sup>4</sup>U.S. Department of Defense, Department of Defense Directive (DoDD) Number 3000.07, *Irregular Warfare (IW)* (Washington, DC: GPO, 2008): 14. This Directive defines *Indirect means* as: "Meeting security objectives by working with and through foreign partners." It is the opposite of *direct means*, defined as: "Meeting security objectives through the U.S.-led application of military power."

<sup>5</sup>Ibid. DoDD Number 3000.07 defines *IW* as: "A violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population(s). Irregular warfare favors indirect and asymmetric approaches, though it may employ the full range of military and other capacities, in order to erode an adversary's power, influence, and will."

indeed offer senior U.S. policy makers and military commanders a suitable model worthy of consideration for conducting long-term military operations against terrorist networks in cooperation with a partner nation in a complex and socio-politically sensitive environment.

The Philippines have a long history of insurgency and political instability, especially in the southern island of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago. This monograph will not speculate on or attempt to identify the root causes of insurgency in the Philippines. Entire books have been written on this subject, and the root causes of insurgency are something that the GRP must ultimately address and resolve. Nor will this paper specifically address or examine the collective application of U.S. diplomatic, informational, military, and economic instruments of national power as part of a comprehensive strategy to promote political stability in the Philippines. While the integrated and coordinated efforts of all four instruments are certainly necessary for success in promoting political stability within any country or region, again, a study of that magnitude is beyond the limits of this paper. Therefore, the scope of this monograph is strictly limited to an unclassified examination of the JSOTF-P as an application of the military instrument of national power, and its suitability as a model for future U.S. IW operations to disrupt and defeat terrorist organizations and networks in support of the Long War.

## **Literature Review**

Perhaps overshadowed by the on-going, large-scale, and highly scrutinized U.S. counterinsurgency (COIN) operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, as of early 2009 there is not an abundance of literature that examines the effectiveness of the JSOTF-P approach to IW in the Philippines.<sup>6</sup> Initially, there are three journal articles written by senior SOF leaders, two of

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<sup>6</sup>In August 2006, the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, in conjunction with the Combat Studies Institute, hosted a three day symposium at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas to discuss the history of U.S. Security Assistance (SA) to foreign countries. The symposium was attended by senior Army leaders, including General David Petraeus, along with numerous military historians and foreign policy academics. The topics of discussion and analysis spanned the history and lessons learned from U.S. SA efforts Haiti, Romania, Afghanistan, El Salvador, Africa, the Philippines from 1901 to 1917, and Iraq. There is no



whom were instrumental in establishing the JSOTF-P and its approach to combating terrorism in the Philippines, that are worthy of mention.

First, former SOCPAC Commander Lieutenant General David Fridovich and Lieutenant Colonel Fred Krawchuk's 2007 *Joint Forces Quarterly* article entitled, "Winning in the Pacific-- The Special Operations Forces Indirect Approach," warns that the U.S. military cannot violate a sovereign nation's territory to conduct unilateral kill or capture counterterrorism missions. The authors advocate an indirect approach to conducting IW of working by, with, and through indigenous forces and institutions in order to build their defense capacity to combat terrorism, dissuade potential terrorists, and address the root causes of terrorism. They specifically cite SOCPAC's operations in the Philippines as a successful application of the indirect approach and describe it as "an effective model for addressing asymmetric threats."<sup>7</sup>

Second, former JSOTF-P Commander Colonel David S. Maxwell's 2004 *Military Review* article entitled, "Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines: What Would Sun Tzu Say?" agrees in principle with Fridovich and Krawchuk's assessment that employing SOF to advise and assist an allied country in achieving mutual security objectives is an efficient, indirect use of the military for combating terrorism. However, Maxwell's discussion offers a candid and somewhat critical assessment of SOCPAC's initial operations on the Philippines island of Basilan from October 2001 to September 2002, citing several errors made by senior U.S. political and military leaders that limited the operations overall effectiveness. These errors included an overemphasis on force protection, a failure to adequately understand the various terrorist and insurgent forces in the

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mention or discussion of contemporary U.S. military efforts in the Philippines. See: U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command and Combat Studies Institute, "Security Assistance: U.S. and International Historical Perspectives," *The Proceedings of the Combat Studies Institute 2006 Military History Symposium* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, August 8-10, 2006): 1-692.

<sup>7</sup>David P. Fridovich and Fred T. Krawchuk, "The Special Operations Forces Indirect Approach," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, no. 44 (1st Quarter 2007): 24-27. Lieutenant General Fridovich is largely considered the architect of the approach employed by the JSOTF-P.

Philippines and how they interrelated, and an incomplete understanding of the Philippines Constitution concerning the operational limitations of foreign forces in the Philippines.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, in a 2006 *Military Review* article entitled, “Anatomy of a Successful COIN Operation: OEF-Philippines and The Indirect Approach,” Colonel Gregory Wilson describes the evolution of SOCPAC’s efforts in the Philippines and likewise argues the JSOTF-P’s approach, “offers a template for a sustainable, low-visibility approach to supporting America’s allies in the War on Terror.”<sup>9</sup> Wilson’s conclusion advocates employing Special Forces advisory teams in Iraq on a large scale, and contends that the U.S. “must employ a holistic approach that enhances the legitimacy of the host-nation government and its security forces in the eyes of the local populace.”<sup>10</sup>

More recently, two other articles have surfaced that specifically address the effectiveness of the JSOTF-P. In a 2007 article published in *Third World Quarterly*, Naval Postgraduate School Professor Hy Rothstein posits the thesis that, “U.S. success against irregular threats is inversely related to the priority senior U.S. officials (civilian and military) attach to the effort.”<sup>11</sup> Rothstein cites contemporary U.S. military operations in the Philippines to support his argument by stating, “When one investigates the return on investment in the global war on terror (GWOT), now increasingly described as the Long War, in Iraq versus the Philippines, it is clear that U.S. efforts in the Philippines are achieving great success with minimal resources, while efforts in Iraq are achieving limited success with almost unlimited resources.”<sup>12</sup> However, *Christian Science*

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<sup>8</sup>Colonel David S. Maxwell. “Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines: What Would Sun Tzu Say?” *Military Review* (May-June 2004): 20-23. Colonel Maxwell commanded the JSOTF-P from 2006 to 2007.

<sup>9</sup>Colonel Gregory Wilson, “Anatomy of a Successful COIN Operation: OEF-Philippines and the Indirect Approach,” *Military Review* (November-December 2006): 11.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Hy S. Rothstein, “Less is More: The Problematic Future of Irregular Warfare in an Era of Collapsing States,” *Third World Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (2007): 275.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

*Monitor* correspondent Jonathan Adams has questioned the success of the JSOTF-P approach to fighting terrorists in the Philippines, citing a resurgence of Abu Sayyaf Group activity on the island of Basilan, an island until recently believed by many Filipino and U.S. officials to be rid of terrorist presence.<sup>13</sup>

Until recently, there has been virtually no analysis or study on how terrorist groups end. Georgetown University Professor and the RAND Corporation Political Scientist, Dr. Seth G. Jones, addresses this troubling void in his September 2008 testimony before the House Armed Services Committee. In his study, Jones found that terrorist groups typically dissolve for two reasons: either members decide to employ non-violent tactics and join the political process, or local police and intelligence forces successfully kill or arrest key leaders within the group. He states that while historically counterterrorist strategies based on military force have not been effective, military force will be necessary when AQ is involved in the insurgency. Relevant to the JSOTF-P, Jones argues that when military force is required, indigenous forces are the forces of choice for reasons of legitimacy and possessing a better understanding of the environment in which they are operating.<sup>14</sup> He further states that U.S. military forces can play a vital role in developing indigenous military and counterterrorism capacity, but should maintain a small signature and avoid conducting direct combat operations in Muslim countries which could decrease the legitimacy of the host nation government and facilitate terrorist recruitment.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Jonathan Adams, "In Basilan, Philippines, a US Counterterrorism Model Frays," *The Christian Science Monitor* (December 11, 2008), <http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/1211/p04s04-wosc.html> (accessed December 19, 2008).

<sup>14</sup>U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication (JP) 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: GPO, 12 April 2001, as amended through 17 October 2008). JP 1-02 defines *operational environment* as: "A composite of the conditions, circumstances, and influences that affect the employment of capabilities and bear on the decisions of the commander."

<sup>15</sup>U.S. Congress, House, Testimony presented by Seth G. Jones, RAND Corporation, before the House Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Terrorism and Unconventional Threats and Capabilities on September 18, 2008.

In order to understand U.S. military policy and priorities for the armed forces with respect to the Long War and the broader strategic security environment, it is necessary to closely examine the 2008 *National Defense Strategy*, the 2006 *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, and the 2006 *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*. These documents are significant because they establish national level policy, priorities, and objectives for the U.S. armed forces and describe both the contemporary and foreseeable future military requirements for deterring or defeating threats and adversaries. Because these documents help shape and define the context of the contemporary strategic security environment, they are discussed in greater detail in the following section of this monograph.

Finally, a thorough review of numerous U.S. military doctrinal manuals is necessary in order to clearly define and comprehend a wide variety of military terms and concepts. Since today's military operations are inherently joint in nature,<sup>16</sup> and because joint military doctrine assumes the pinnacle position within the Department of Defense's (DoD) hierarchy of manuals, joint military doctrine is preferred as reference material over separate service (U.S. Army, U.S. Navy, U.S. Air Force, U.S. Marine Corps, or U.S. Coast Guard) doctrine. Specifically, the author focused on reviewing and incorporating the following Joint Publications (JP) into the framework of answering the research question: JP 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*; JP 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*; JP 3-0, *Joint Operations*; JP 3-05, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*; and JP 3-07.1, *Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Foreign Internal Defense (FID)*.

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<sup>16</sup>U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication (JP) 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington, DC: GPO, 2007): GL-8. JP 1 defines *joint* as: "Connotes activities, operations, organizations, etc., in which elements of two or more Military Departments participate."

## Paper Organization

This monograph is organized into five sections: Section I establishes the broad context for the paper by describing the nature of the Long War, IW, and the strategic security environment. Narrowing the scope, Section II provides additional relevant context by articulating the unique characteristics of the Philippines operational environment, the organization and capabilities of the AFP, and the distinct yet interrelated nature of the terrorist, secessionist, and communist threats to the GRP. Having established the necessary context for understanding and evaluating the JSOTF-P approach, Section III initially discusses the origins of the JSOTF-P mission and then describes in detail the development of the approach to IW in the Philippines and the specific manner in which it is employed as of February 2009. Section IV then analyzes the utility of the JSOTF-P approach to date using the following five criteria: Applies Capabilities Indirectly, Legitimacy, Unity of Effort, Ensures Long-Term Sustainment, and Economy of Force.<sup>17</sup> Finally, Section V concludes the paper by answering the research question and providing recommendations for potential countries and regions in which the JSOTF-P approach to IW might currently serve as a suitable means for disrupting or defeating terrorist threats in support of the Long War.

### **SECTION I: THE LONG WAR, IW, AND THE STRATEGIC SECURITY ENVIRONMENT**

It follows that to apply force with utility implies an understanding of the context in which one is acting, a clear definition of the result to be achieved, an identification of the point or target to which force is being applied- and, as important as all the others, an understanding of the nature of the force being applied.<sup>18</sup>

— General (Retired) Rupert Smith, British Army

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<sup>17</sup>The justification for selecting these criteria and their respective definitions are provided in Section IV.

<sup>18</sup>General Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007): 8.

In order to evaluate the utility of the JSOTF-P's approach to conducting IW in the Philippines, it is imperative to first appreciate the broader U.S. strategic security environment within which this approach is being applied. Therefore, the purpose of this section is to describe the nature of the Long War, IW, and the relevant functions that both direct and indirect military approaches serve in support of achieving objectives therein. Additionally, this section reviews several U.S. national strategy documents to understand national security objectives with respect to the Long War and the need for maintaining a military capability to conduct traditional warfare.<sup>19</sup>

### **The Military Implications of 9/11**

The terrorist attacks conducted by AQ on September 11, 2001 were watershed events for the U.S. military, signaling an abrupt and final end to the supposed "peace dividend" of the post-Cold War era.<sup>20</sup> Former President George W. Bush declared a "Global War on Terrorism" (GWOT), and the military is over seven years into two highly visible, large-scale counterinsurgency (COIN) campaigns in both Afghanistan and Iraq. Based largely on the political and military lessons-learned from the on-going U.S. efforts in these two theaters, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates succinctly captures the essence of the Long War, IW, and the role of military force in his statement:

What is dubbed the war on terror is, in grim reality, a prolonged, worldwide irregular campaign- a struggle between forces of violent extremism and those of moderation. Direct military force will continue to play a role in the long-term effort against terrorists

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<sup>19</sup>DoDD Number 3000.07 defines *traditional warfare* as: "A form of warfare between the regulated militaries of states, or alliances of states, in which the objective is to defeat an adversary's armed forces, destroy an adversary's war-making capacity, or seize or retain territory in order to force a change in an adversary's government or policies."

<sup>20</sup>Colonel (R) David H. Gurney and Dr. Jeffrey D. Smotherman, "An Interview with George W. Casey, Jr.," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, no. 52 (1st Quarter 2009): 15-19, [http://www.ndu.edu/inss/Press/jfq\\_pages/editions/i52/6.pdf](http://www.ndu.edu/inss/Press/jfq_pages/editions/i52/6.pdf) (accessed February 15, 2009).

and other extremists. But over the long term, the United States cannot capture or kill its way to victory.<sup>21</sup>

This acknowledgement that the U.S. is involved in a protracted, global conflict against ideologically driven and typically non-state sponsored actors has forced the U.S. military to shift its cognitive, doctrinal, and operational focus from conducting traditional warfare to conducting IW.

## A Paradigm Shift: IW and Indirect Approaches

DoD policy now recognizes that “IW is as strategically important as traditional warfare.”<sup>22</sup> DoD’s current concept for IW is embodied in the September 11, 2007, *Irregular Warfare (IW) Joint Operating Concept (JOC), Version 1.0*. While not doctrine, this document was co-authored by U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) and the U.S. Marine Corps (USMC), and approved by the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense. The *IW JOC* provides the current definition of IW and describes how future commanders might conduct protracted<sup>23</sup> IW operations in support of national objectives in the 2014 to 2026 timeframe. Additionally, the *IW JOC* provides senior policy makers and military commanders a framework strategy for conducting IW, as articulated below:

**Ends:** Friendly political authority and influence over host population are secured and adversary control, influence, and support are denied.

**Ways:** (This is the **central idea** of this concept.) The joint force will conduct protracted regional and global campaigns against state and non-state adversaries to subvert, coerce, attrite, and exhaust adversaries rather than defeating them through direct conventional military confrontation. IW emphasizes winning the support of the relevant populations, promoting friendly political authority, and eroding adversary control, influence, and

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<sup>21</sup>Robert M. Gates, “A Balanced Strategy: Reprogramming the Pentagon for a New Age,” *Foreign Affairs* (January-February 2009): 30.

<sup>22</sup>U.S. Department of Defense, DoDD Number 3000.07, 2.

<sup>23</sup>U.S. Department of Defense, *Irregular Warfare (IW) Joint Operating Concept (JOC) Version 1.0* (Washington, DC: GPO, 2007), 5. The *IW JOC* defines *protracted* as: “An operation, campaign, or war of such long duration that it requires multiple unit rotations for an indefinite period of time.”

support. Unified action by the USG and its strategic partners is essential to winning an irregular war or campaign. While the direct application of military power may not be the primary means of winning IW, joint forces will often be required to support non-military instruments of power and set the conditions for strategic success.

**Means:** Fully integrated US and partner conventional and nonconventional forces and capabilities.

**The key elements of the central idea are:**

- Using indirect approaches
- Conducting protracted IW campaigns
- Conducting campaigns on a regional or global scale
- Focusing on the will of the people
- Employing unified action

**Supporting ideas are:**

- Establishing a persistent presence for IW
- Protracted intelligence preparation of the environment
- Protracted operational preparation of the environment
- Establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships to support IW
- Expanding the role of general purpose forces to support and execute IW
- Creating alternative command and control mechanisms for conducting and supporting IW.<sup>24</sup>

Central to this strategy and this monograph is the acknowledged importance of “winning the support of the relevant populations, promoting friendly political authority, and eroding adversary control, influence, and support,”<sup>25</sup> in conjunction with the idea of using indirect approaches as a key element in achieving the stated ends.

The value of the indirect approach to the Long War and IW is further established by the Commander of USSOCOM, Admiral Eric T. Olson, whose command has lead responsibility for planning and synchronizing operations against global terrorist networks.<sup>26</sup> During his March 5, 2008 testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, Olson stated that the command’s first priority is to “deter, disrupt, and defeat terrorist threats.” In pursuing that end, Olson

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 19.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>The mission of USSOCOM is to, “Provide fully capable Special Operations Forces to defend the United States and its interests. Plan and synchronize operations against terrorist networks.” United States Special Operations Command, Web Page, <http://www.socom.mil> (accessed October 15, 2008).



described USSOCOM's strategy of employing "two essential, mutually supporting and often intertwined approaches--direct and indirect."<sup>27</sup> The direct approach "addresses the immediate requirement to immediately disrupt violent extremist organizations," while the indirect approach "addresses the underlying causes of terrorism and the environments in which terrorism activities occur. The indirect approach requires more time than the direct approach to achieve results, but ultimately will be the decisive effort."<sup>28</sup>

## **Balancing Military Capabilities for an Uncertain Future**

To fully appreciate U.S. military objectives and requirements within the context of the Long War, IW, and the broader strategic security environment, U.S. national strategy documents must be examined. These documents are important because they describe and define America's strategic security policies, objectives and military capability requirements as envisioned by the President of the United States and the Secretary of Defense. Specifically germane to the topic of this monograph are the *National Defense Strategy (NDS)*, the *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism (NSCT)*, and the *Quadrennial Defense Review Report (QDR)*.

The June 2008 *NDS* is DoD's capstone document for providing strategic guidance to the U.S. military for campaign and contingency planning, force development, and intelligence. The document describes a strategic environment for the foreseeable future that consists of long-term challenges posed by terrorists and violent extremist ideology, rogue states seeking nuclear weapons, the rising military power of other states, and a variety of irregular challenges. The strategy states that success will require long-term, innovative approaches, and emphasizes the critical role international partners will play. Five objectives are outlined: (1) Defend the

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<sup>27</sup>U.S. Congress, House, Statement of Admiral Eric T. Olson, U.S. Navy, Commander, United States Special Operations Command before the House Armed Services Committee on the Posture of Special Operations Forces, Combatant Commander Statement to the United States House Armed Services Committee (March 5, 2008): 3.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

Homeland, (2) Win the Long War, (3) Promote Security, (4) Deter Conflict, and (5) Win our Nation's Wars.<sup>29</sup> In discussing the objective "Win the Long War," the strategy declares, "arguably the most important military component of the struggle against violent extremists is not the fighting we do ourselves, but how well we help prepare our partners to defend and govern themselves." The strategy then goes on to state, "Working with and through local actors whenever possible to confront common security challenges is the best and most sustainable approach to combat violent extremism."<sup>30</sup> However, equal emphasis must be given to the objective of "Win our Nation's Wars," which states, "Although improving the U.S. Armed Forces' proficiency in IW is the Defense Department's top priority, the United States does not have the luxury of preparing exclusively for such challenges. Even though the likelihood of interstate conflict has declined in recent years, we ignore it at our peril. . . . We must maintain the edge in our conventional forces."<sup>31</sup> In other words, the military must maintain a balanced ability to conduct both IW and traditional warfare.

The *NSCT* is America's pinnacle document for articulating the strategic security environment and U.S. strategic objectives with respect to combating terrorism. The 2006 *NSCT* declares that America is in a Long War against transnational terrorists motivated by a hateful, oppressive, and murderous ideology. The strategy lays out six objectives for winning the War on Terror: (1) Advance effective democracies as the long-term antidote to the ideology of terrorism; (2) Prevent attacks by terrorist networks; (3) Deny weapons of mass destruction to rogue states and terrorist allies who seek to use them; (4) Deny terrorists the support and sanctuary of rogue states; (5) Deny terrorists control of any nation they would use as a base and launching pad for terror; and (6) Lay the foundations and build institutions and structures we need to carry the fight

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<sup>29</sup>U.S. Department of Defense, *National Defense Strategy* (Washington, DC: GPO, 2008): 6.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, 13.

forward against terror and help ensure our ultimate success.<sup>32</sup> It is important here to note that, upon close examination of the JSOTF-P's mission and operational design that follows in Section III, it becomes readily apparent that the JSOTF-P efforts do in fact support all of the objectives stated above, either directly or indirectly.

Finally, the *QDR* establishes a baseline for where DoD currently is with respect to strategic military requirements and capabilities and sets an azimuth for where it needs to go in order to remain relevant and dominant in defending the American people. The focus of the 2006 *QDR* centers on Fighting the Long War, Operationalizing the Strategy, Reorienting Capabilities and Forces, Reshaping the Defense Enterprise, Developing a 21st Century Total Force, and Achieving Unity of Effort.<sup>33</sup> The *QDR* describes an era of conflict defined by irregular warfare--operations in which the enemy is not the regular or conventional military force of a nation-state.<sup>34</sup> In dealing with these threats, the *QDR* further suggests that the U.S. must often adopt, "an indirect approach, building up and working with others. This indirect approach seeks to unbalance adversaries physically and psychologically, rather than attacking them where they are strongest or in the manner they expect to be attacked."<sup>35</sup> However, consistent with the *NDS*, the *QDR* also acknowledges that the U.S. military cannot afford to put all of its proverbial eggs into the IW basket and must maintain a capability to, "Conduct and Win Conventional Campaigns."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>The White House, *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism (NSCT)* (Washington, DC: GPO, 2006), 1.

<sup>33</sup>U.S. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report (QDR)* (Washington, DC: GPO, 2006): i.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 38.

## Summary

The U.S. is fighting a protracted, global IW campaign against an ideologically motivated, non-state actor. Winning this Long War is the military's number two priority, second only to defending the homeland. Support from, and cooperation with, international partners is critical. At the center of the conflict is a battle for the support of relevant populations, not a battle to defeat or destroy an adversary's army or military capacity. Therefore, the direct application of U.S. military force, although necessary at times, has limited utility. Indirect approaches, which require more time and patience to see results, are the preferred methods of attaining and sustaining long-term gains in this battle for legitimacy amongst the populace.<sup>37</sup>

Yet despite the priority of the Long War and the emphasis on IW, the U.S. military must maintain a qualitative edge in conducting traditional warfare. A lapse in traditional warfare capability will likely tempt potential peer military competitors such as Russia and China to seek an advantage within it. The requirement to maintain traditional warfare capabilities while simultaneously conducting a protracted, global IW campaign implies the need for an economy of force in the Long War. It is within this broad strategic context that the foundation for understanding the JSOTF-P's approach to IW in the Philippines is initially established, and it is within this context that the utility of their approach is largely evaluated.

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<sup>37</sup>“The prize, globally, is the population.” Remarks made by Lieutenant General David Fridovich to students attending the School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, January 14, 2009. Used with permission of Lieutenant General Fridovich, January 14, 2009. AQ agrees with Fridovich. In his 2005 letter to Al'Qaeda in Iraq leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, Ayman al'Zawahiri (deputy to Usama bin Laden and chief Al'Qaeda strategist) writes, “the strongest weapon which the mujahedeen enjoy-after the help and granting of success by God-is popular support from the Muslim masses in Iraq, and the surrounding Muslim countries. . . . In the absence of this popular support, the Islamic mujahed movement would be crushed in the shadows, far from the masses who are distracted or fearful, and the struggle between the Jihadist elite and the arrogant authorities would be confined to prison dungeons far from the public and the light of day.” Ayman al'Zawahiri. “English Translation of Ayman al-Zawahiri's letter to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi,” *The Weekly Standard*, (December 10, 2005), <http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/006/203gpuul.asp> (accessed February 2, 2009).

## SECTION II: THE PHILIPPINES OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

And therefore I say: Know the enemy, know yourself; your victory will never be endangered. Know the ground, know the weather; your victory will then be total.<sup>38</sup>  
— Sun Tzu

Now that an appreciation for the nature of the Long War, IW, and the strategic security environment is established, it is equally important to develop an understanding of the Philippines operational environment: the governmental, geographic, cultural, military, and threat characteristics that make the situation in the Philippines unique and distinct from other countries and conflicts throughout the world. To be clear, this section does not make the reader an expert on the Philippines. Rather, the purpose is to provide a broad overview of the Philippines operational environment in order to establish the additional context necessary to understand the conditions under which the JSOTF-P has developed its approach to IW and the logic behind which it conducts operations.

### The Importance of History and Governance

The U.S. has a long history of political, economic, and military involvement in the Philippines. Following the defeat of the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay in 1899, the U.S. occupation of the Philippines was initially met by Filipino resistance. This led to the Philippine-American War which lasted until 1902, ending shortly after the Americans captured revolutionary leader General Emilio Aquinaldo.<sup>39</sup> Following the victory, U.S. political oversight in the Philippines was intended to be very temporary, lasting only long enough to create conditions sufficient for creating a stable democratic government. However, it took over forty years for the Philippines to become an independent republic. After surrendering the Philippines to Japan in 1942 and then retaking it with the help of Filipino guerrilla forces from 1944 to 1945, the U.S. recognized the

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<sup>38</sup>Sun Tzu, *The Art of War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971): 129.

<sup>39</sup>U.S. Department of State, “Background Note: Philippines,” November 2008, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2794.htm> (accessed November 10, 2008).

independent Republic of the Philippines on July 4, 1946.<sup>40</sup> With a significant portion of its infrastructure and countryside destroyed the majority of post-World War II American involvement in the Philippines focused on reconstruction and assisting the Filipino people in establishing and maintaining functional democratic governance, economic livelihood, and sufficient military capacity to disrupt and defeat insurgent movements.<sup>41</sup>

With such enduring American political presence and influence, it comes as no surprise that in 2009 the GRP is a representative democracy modeled closely after that of the U.S. The Philippines' Constitution, ratified in 1987, established an executive branch consisting of a president and vice president, a legislative branch consisting of a Senate and House of Representatives, and a judicial branch consisting of a Supreme Court.<sup>42</sup> It is important to clarify that the Philippines' Constitution does not explicitly prohibit or restrict U.S. military forces from conducting combat operations in the Philippines. It only prohibits the basing of foreign forces in the Philippines after the 1991 expiration of the Philippines-U.S. agreement on military bases.<sup>43</sup> However, the constitution provides for an exception to this policy if there is a ratified treaty and such a treaty has in fact existed between the U.S. and the Philippines since 1951.<sup>44</sup> Thus, it is false to believe that the JSOTF-P approach to IW was selected simply by default or imposed de-facto due to prohibitions contained in the Philippines' Constitution.

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid. In 1962 Philippines Independence Day was changed to July 12, commemorating the date they declared independence from Spain in 1898.

<sup>41</sup>U.S. Department of State.

<sup>42</sup>The Philippines Constitution can be viewed on-line at: The Official Website Of The Republic Of The Philippines: <http://www.gov.ph/aboutphil/constitution.asp> (accessed November 14, 2008).

<sup>43</sup>Article 18, Section 25 of the Philippines Constitution specifically states, "After the expiration in 1991 of the Agreement between the Republic of the Philippines and the United States of America concerning Military Bases, foreign military bases, troops, or facilities shall not be allowed in the Philippines except under a treaty duly concurred in by the Senate and, when the Congress so requires, ratified by a majority of the votes cast by the people in a national referendum held for that purpose, and recognized as a treaty by the other contracting state."

<sup>44</sup>Maxwell, "Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines," 22; The Avalon Project, "The Mutual Defense Treaty Between the United States and the Republic of the Philippines; August 30, 1951," [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/phil001.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/phil001.asp) (accessed February 5, 2009).

## Geography, Climate, and Infrastructure

The geography, climate, and physical infrastructure of the Philippines offer significant military challenges as well as some advantages from a combating terrorism perspective. The Philippines archipelago consists of over 7,000 islands, occupying an area slightly larger than the state of Arizona, with over 3,200 kilometers of open waterways connecting the islands (see figure 1).<sup>45</sup> The numerous islands and interconnected waterways present a challenge for military forces to effectively isolate terrorist cells and contain their movement between the islands. However, in the broader sense, the fact that the Philippines is an island nation makes it likewise extremely difficult for terrorists to seek sanctuary in a neighboring country, and hinders their ability to directly receive external support from a foreign sponsor. Unlike terrorists in many other parts of the world, terrorists in the Philippines do not have the convenient luxury of seeking sanctuary inside an unstable or sympathetic nation with shared borders.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Central Intelligence Agency, "CIA The World Factbook-Philippines," November 2008, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/print/rp.html> (accessed November 10, 2008).

<sup>46</sup>This stands in stark contrast to the American military's experience fighting insurgencies and terrorists in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan. In Vietnam, the Viet Cong were able to use areas within the sovereign neighboring countries of Laos and Cambodia for sanctuary to establish training and logistics bases that could not be overtly targeted by the U.S. military. Similarly in Iraq, terrorists and insurgents are able to move in to Iran and Syria in order to avoid combat with the U.S. military and Iraqi security forces. Finally, in Afghanistan, the Taliban and AQ are currently able to use the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) in Pakistan as a sanctuary for logistical, ideological, and operational support that again, the U.S. military cannot directly target without violating Pakistani national sovereignty.



Figure 1. The Philippines

Source: Malcolm Cook and Kit Collier, *Mindanao: A Gamble Worth Taking* (International Policy Publication, 2006): vi. Copyright reprint permission for this figure was granted on February 18, 2009 by the Command and General Staff College copyrights coordinator.

The terrain in the Philippines is generally mountainous jungle with narrow and densely vegetated lowlands along the coast. Monsoon seasons run from November to April in the northeastern part of the country and from May to October in the southwest. Not surprisingly, the transportation infrastructure is austere by Western standards. Available airports, improved road



networks--less than 20,000 kilometers are paved--and rail lines are limited.<sup>47</sup> The densely forested and rugged terrain, combined with a lack of sufficient roads and transportation infrastructure, provides excellent sanctuary for terrorist camps and makes it difficult for military forces to conduct, supply, and sustain continuous operations. Additionally, these conditions make it more difficult for the GRP to extend their influence in to the rural and more remote areas of the country, especially within the southern island of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago, the regions in which the current population is most at risk for sympathizing with terrorists and/or insurgents.<sup>48</sup>

## **Population**

As of 2009, the Philippines have a diverse population of over 96,000,000 people and six distinct ethnic groups. The common religion is Christianity, with Roman Catholics alone constituting over 80 percent of the population. Muslims make up only 5 percent of the population, the majority of who live in the Sulu Archipelago and in central and western Mindanao.<sup>49</sup> Literacy rates are high, with over 92 percent of the population aged fifteen and older able to read and write. While the official national language is Filipino (based on Tagalog), English is the language used both in the government and in educational instruction.<sup>50</sup> The Philippines has approximately 5.3 million Internet users and an estimated cellular phone density of 60 mobile-cell phones per 100 people. There are an estimated 11.5 million radios in the country that can receive up to 381 AM and 628 FM channels and an estimated 3.7 million

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<sup>47</sup>Central Intelligence Agency.

<sup>48</sup>Malcolm Cook and Kit Collier, *Mindanao: A Gamble Worth Taking* (Lowy Institute for International Policy Publication, 2006): 62-63.

<sup>49</sup>U.S. Department of State.

<sup>50</sup>Central Intelligence Agency. Other languages and dialects spoken in the Philippines include Tagalog, Cebuano, Ilocano, Hiligaynon, Bicol, Waray, Pampango, and Pangasinan.

televisions that can receive over 250 broadcast stations.<sup>51</sup> This demonstrates that in addition to sharing a common practice of governance and belief in democratic principles, the people of the U.S. and the Philippines largely share a common religion, a common language, and the education level and communication infrastructure required to communicate messages that can be received and at least acknowledged by a vast majority of the populace. Cultural differences aside, these commonalities undoubtedly facilitate cooperation between the two governments, the two militaries, and the ability to communicate their messages to a majority of the Filipino population.

### **The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP)**

Based on the long standing political and military ties, it should come as no surprise that the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) also bear close resemblance to those of the U.S. The AFP were established in 1935 and are a volunteer force of approximately 118,000 service members consisting of an Army, Navy (including Marine Corps), and Air Force.<sup>52</sup> The 1987 Philippines Constitution, much like the U.S. Constitution, places control of the AFP under civilian leadership with the president acting as commander-in-chief. Likewise, the Philippines' Army, Navy, and Air Force fall under the Department of National Defense, which is led by the Secretary of National Defense who fulfills a role similar to the United States Secretary of Defense. The AFP are equipped with western military weapons, vehicles, aircraft, and equipment (primarily from the U.S., United Kingdom, and Germany) and is widely considered one of the more capable militaries in the region.<sup>53</sup>

Especially significant with respect to combating terrorism is the fact that the AFP has an established special operations capability within its Army, Navy, and Air Force, as well as a joint

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Armed Forces of the Philippines, "About Us," 2004, <http://www.afp.mil.ph/0/about.php> (accessed November 18, 2008).

special operations capability in the form of the Joint Special Operations Group (JSOG).

Philippines Army Special Operations Forces consist of four units: the Special Forces Regiment (Airborne), the First Scout Ranger Regiment, the Light Reaction Battalion, and the Civil Affairs Group. The Special Forces Regiment was founded in 1962 and has approximately 1,200 personnel trained to conduct unconventional warfare, reconnaissance, and direct action raids. The First Scout Ranger Regiment was first organized in the late 1940s and today consists of approximately 1,800 personnel whom some consider to be the most experienced unconventional fighters in the AFP. The Light Reaction Battalion (LRB) consists of approximately 400 personnel taken from the Special Forces and Scout Ranger Regiments and is organized into three companies that are trained to conduct counterterrorist operations under the operational control of the JSOG. The Civil Affairs Group (CAG) evolved from the Public Relations Office (PRO) of the 1950s and consists of approximately 130 personnel trained in civil-military operations. Once a part of the Philippines Special Operations Command (SOCOM), today the CAG falls directly under the control and supervision of the Headquarters of the Philippines' Army.<sup>54</sup>

Naval Special Operations forces consist of the Naval Special Warfare Group (NSWG) and the Force Reconnaissance Battalion (FRBn). The NSWG consists of approximately 400 personnel, organized into 8 company-sized Naval Special Warfare Units (NSWU) that are trained to conduct special operations in the sea, air, or land (SEAL) in support of naval and/or maritime operations. One NSWU remains attached to the JSOG in order to conduct maritime counterterrorist operations, as required. The FRBn traces its lineage to the Scout Raider Platoon of the 1950s, and today consists of approximately 500 marines organized into three reconnaissance companies deployed to support and assist Marine Corps Brigades.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Antonio R. Lastimado and Arturo G. Rojas, "The Armed Forces of the Philippines and Special Operations" (Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2004), 23-24.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 25.

The Air Force special operations capability is provided by the 710th Special Operations Wing (SPOW) and consists of approximately 2,000 personnel capable of conducting combat operations against enemy forces, coordinating air strikes, explosive ordnance disposal (EOD), and civil disturbance control. One squadron is attached to the JSOG in order to support counterterrorist operations.<sup>56</sup>

Finally, the Joint Special Operations Group is a joint military organization that constitutes the AFP's dedicated counterterrorist force. Consisting of the Light Reaction Battalion, a SEAL company from the NSWG, a squadron from the 710th SPOW, a special tactical helicopter element, a special tactical airlift element, three K-9 teams, three EOD teams, and three K-9 dog teams, JSOG is trained to conduct reconnaissance and direct action missions against terrorist targets, as well as to conduct Military Operations in Urban Terrain (MOUT).<sup>57</sup>

Thus, the AFP is a well-established, well-equipped, motivated, and regionally capable military modeled closely after the armed forces of the U.S. More importantly, resident within the AFP is an established and capable SOF whose organization and missions closely mirror those of U.S. SOF, to include a joint organization trained and equipped to conduct counterterrorist operations. Again, these factors certainly facilitate the JSOTF-P's efforts, as they are able to work with and refine an established military organization with existing capability, and not required to build or re-build a national military architecture that did not previously exist or had been eliminated.

## **Threat Groups**

To complete a description of the Philippines' operational environment, one must have a general understanding of the various domestic and regional militant groups and organizations that

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 25-30.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 26-30.

threaten the GRP, regional stability, and potentially the U.S. These threat groups can broadly be categorized as secessionists, communists, and terrorists.<sup>58</sup> While the scope of this monograph focuses specifically on the terrorist threat, it is impossible to address the terrorism aspect alone without discussing the additional and long standing threats posed by both the secessionists and communists, and acknowledging the interconnected relationships amongst all three groups.<sup>59</sup>

The Philippines' Muslim population is concentrated in the southern islands of Mindanao and Sulu and constitutes almost 20 percent of the local populace.<sup>60</sup> Filipino Muslims have long considered this region their ancestral homeland, tracing a presence as far back as the thirteenth century, well before Spain's attempts to colonize the Philippines began in 1565. Referred to as "Moros" by the Spanish, these Muslims successfully resisted Spain's efforts to colonize the southern Philippines for over 300 years, but eventually succumbed to American colonization in 1914.<sup>61</sup> The point is the Moros of the southern Philippines have claimed the region as their own independent territory for over 700 years, a political reality that is difficult for the GRP to overcome or cast aside, and it is from this history that the secessionist groups make their claims for regional secession and independence.

In 2009 there are two primary Muslim secessionist groups in the southern Philippines. The first group, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), was brought in to the political process by signing a cease-fire agreement with the GRP in 1996. As part of the agreement, the

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<sup>58</sup>JSOTF-P Staff, "Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines," JSOTF-P Command Briefing (Powerpoint Presentation), 2006.

<sup>59</sup>Colonel William Coultrup, interview by author, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, October 14, 2008. Colonel Coultrup assumed command of the JSOTF-P in October 2007 and is scheduled to remain in command until the summer of 2009. Addressing the complexity and interconnectedness of the various threat groups in the Philippines, Colonel Coultrup made the analogy of capturing a Filipino terrorist wearing a T-shirt with the words, "ASG," on the front of the shirt, "MILF," on the back of the shirt, a tag on the inside of the shirt that says, "Made by JI," while wearing a "National People's Army" (communist) hat on his head.

<sup>60</sup>United States Institute for Peace, *The Mindanao Peace Talks: Another Opportunity to Resolve the Moro Conflict in the Philippines*, Special Report (Washington, DC: Institute for Peace, 2005): 3.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

government agreed to establish Muslim autonomy in provinces and cities in which the populace voted to be a part of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). This effectively ended the MNLF's 25 year armed conflict with the GRP for independence.<sup>62</sup>

The second group is the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, or MILF. The MILF first appeared in the southern Philippines in 1977 as a splinter group from the larger, already established MNLF. However, the MILF did not become a truly independent movement until 1984, citing differences in goals and making charges of corruption against the leadership of the MNLF.<sup>63</sup> While the MNLF decided to achieve its goal of self-determination by way of autonomy reached through the political process, the MILF regards this concept of limited self-rule as completely unacceptable.<sup>64</sup> Intent on creating a sovereign Islamic state governed by Sharia law in Mindanao, the MILF is the largest insurgent group operating in the area and has between 15,000 to 20,000 dedicated operatives with an additional part-time and passive support base of several thousand more.<sup>65</sup> Their strategy to establish an independent Islamic state in Mindanao focuses on a four-point program of action consisting of military offensives (attacks against the AFP), diplomatic offensives (reaching out to Islamic countries for support), mass actions (efforts to convert Christians and tribal religious followers to Islam), and negotiations with the government (in an effort to gain political advantage).<sup>66</sup> The MILF receives financial support from local benefactors and various international Islamic organizations, as well as conducting kidnap-for-ransom operations and other forms of extortion. Yet in an effort to prevent undermining an ongoing series of on-again, off-again cease-fire agreements between the two

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>63</sup>Leonardo I. Pena, "Finding the Missing Link to a Successful Philippine Counterinsurgency Strategy" (Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2007): 14.

<sup>64</sup>United States Institute for Peace, 2.

<sup>65</sup>Kim Kragin, Peter Chalk, Sarah A. Daly, and Brian A. Jackson, *Sharing the Dragon's Teeth: Terrorist Groups and the Exchange of New Technologies* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2007), 28.

<sup>66</sup>Pena, 17-18.

sides, the GRP has requested that the MILF not be placed on the U.S. State Department's list of foreign terrorist organizations.<sup>67</sup>

The communist movements in the Philippines seek to remove the GRP through force and to replace it with a communist government structured along a socialist model. In classic fashion, a primary component of their strategy is to mobilize primarily peasants and disenfranchised members of the working class against the government by leveraging complaints of political, social, and economic injustice combined with the specter of American imperialism.<sup>68</sup>

The communists are split into two main factions: Reaffirmists who favor the Mao-based strategy of rural revolution, and Rejectionists, who favor a strategy of urban revolution similar to the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. The Reaffirmists represent the greater threat due to their larger numbers and their ability to exert influence on a very large and susceptible rural population. As of 2005, communist party membership was estimated at almost 10,000, with an ability to mobilize an additional 120,000 member fighting force consisting of militia members and mass activists in both rural and urban areas. Additionally, the communists claim to have a rural support base in excess of 600,000 people, although these numbers cannot be easily qualified. Nevertheless, their sheer numbers combined with a rural population susceptible to communist ideology make the communists the single greatest threat to Philippines National Security.<sup>69</sup>

Finally, and of specific interest to this monograph, there are two major terrorist organizations operating within the Philippines: the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). The ASG was founded in 1989 by former members of the MNLF who had fought in Afghanistan as Mujahedeen against the Soviet Union. Motivated by their experience in Afghanistan and the exposure to Islamic fundamentalism, the founding members returned to the

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<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 15. The U.S. State Department's list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations is available from: <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/fs/37191.htm>.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 7.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., 7-10.

Philippines intent on establishing an independent Islamic State of Mindanao and eliminating all Christian influence in the southern Philippines.<sup>70</sup> With an estimated strength of 1,270 militants in 2000, the ASG's strength estimates in 2009 are at 300 to 500 members, a result of successful AFP operations in the traditional ASG strongholds of Basilan and Jolo islands that began in 2002.<sup>71</sup> Having suffered significant losses in leadership and personnel, the ASG currently appear to have no real strategy for achieving their goals other than conducting limited terrorist operations such as kidnapping and bombings. Nevertheless, the ASG is still considered the greatest threat to security in central Mindanao and appears to be regrouping with the support of other regional Muslim secessionist groups such as the MILF and terrorist groups such as JI.<sup>72</sup>

JI is a regional terrorist organization affiliated with AQ and seeks to establish a pan-regional Caliphate across Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, southern Thailand, and the southern Philippines. Their strategy for accomplishing this is strictly through terrorism, and they are responsible for conducting several significant bombings against Western targets in Bali, Jakarta, and the Philippines since 2002. Initially, many experts believed JI to be a very hierarchically structured organization, comprised of a central command in Indonesia, a subordinate group of dedicated regional militants, and an additional base taken from other established Islamic militant groups throughout the region. However, as a result of a 2003 offensive against JI by regional police in Malaysia and Singapore, experts now believe that JI has had to assume a much flatter organizational structure and that the majority of their attacks are being carried out by Islamic radicals with a similar agenda that operate on a relatively independent basis. While the ideological epicenter of the organization remains in Indonesia, many terrorism experts believe

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<sup>70</sup>Kragin et al., 31.

<sup>71</sup>However, the ASG has shown resurgence in activity in Basilan in 2009. This is addressed later in Section IV.

<sup>72</sup>Pena, 18-21.



that the southern Philippines has become the primary area in which JI is working to achieve its regional objectives.<sup>73</sup>

## Summary

The political, geographic, cultural, social, and military histories and characteristics of the Philippines constitute a complex operational environment which is unique from other countries and regions in which the U.S. military is conducting operations in support of the Long War. From a military perspective, these factors combine to present the JSOTF-P with several distinct challenges and advantages. The primary challenge lies in the ability to understand and appreciate the uniqueness of the socio-cultural environment, and to relate this understanding to the objectives, methods, and interconnected nature of the Muslim secessionist, communist, and terrorist threats, all while operating within the firm parameters established by senior U.S. political and military leaders.<sup>74</sup> At the tactical level, challenges for sustaining long-term operations are posed by the rugged and dense terrain combined with a lack of improved roads and transportation infrastructure, particularly within the focus regions of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago.

Yet despite these challenges, the Philippines operational environment does provide some significant advantages for the JSOTF-P. Despite various cultural differences, the Philippines and U.S. share a long political, military, and economic history and a vital common ground of democratic government, Christian religion, the English language, and similarly structured, highly compatible militaries. This common ground supports close political and diplomatic cooperation between the two countries, enhances the interoperability of their militaries, and generally supports a positive perception of American presence amongst the majority of Filipino people. Indeed, the

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<sup>73</sup>Kragin et al., 25-28.

<sup>74</sup>Coultrup.

special relationship between the U.S. and GRP certainly helps to foster favorable conditions for the JSOTF-P's efforts.

### SECTION III: THE JSOTF-P APPROACH

Do not try to do too much with your own hands. . . . It is their war, and you are to help them, not win it for them.<sup>75</sup>

— T. E. Lawrence

This section describes the circumstances under which the JSOTF-P was established and articulates the JSOTF-P's specific approach and methodology to conducting IW in the Philippines. It begins by briefly discussing the origins and establishment of the JSOTF-P and the development of the indirect approach to IW in the Philippines. Next, it provides a detailed description and analysis of the JSOTF-P's current mission, intent (desired end state), and operational design expressed in logical lines of operation (LOO).<sup>76</sup> Finally, this section will describe in general terms the JSOTF-P's task-organization, disposition, and assets and resources employed in support of accomplishing the mission and achieving the desired end state.

#### Origins

The U.S. Army's First Special Forces Group (Airborne) (1st SFG(A)) was present and active in the Philippines prior to the events of 9/11.<sup>77</sup> In fact, from March to July 2001, elements of 1st Battalion, 1st SFG(A) had been conducting an advisory assistance mission with the AFP and were helping them in developing plans to target terrorist organizations, specifically the ASG.<sup>78</sup> These assistance efforts continued in earnest following the May 21, 2001 ASG

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<sup>75</sup>T. E. Lawrence, "Twenty-Seven Articles," *Arab Bulletin* (August 20, 1917).

<sup>76</sup>U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication (JP 3-0), *Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: GPO, 2006, Incorporating Change 1, 13 February 2008). JP 3-0 defines *lines of operation* as: "logical lines that connect actions on nodes and/or decisive points related in time and purpose with an objective(s)."

<sup>77</sup>Colonel David Maxwell, "Commander's Summary of the Joint Special Operations Task Force Philippines (JSOTF-P)" (2006).

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*

kidnapping of more than a dozen wealthy Filipinos and three American citizens, including a missionary couple, from a resort on the Island of Palawan. The ASG transported the hostages to their jungle stronghold on the island of Basilan and held them for ransom. In the aftermath of 9/11, these events led SOCPAC, USPACOM, the State Department, and ultimately the Bush administration to seize an opportunity to expand the GWOT and to more aggressively target the ASG by establishing Operation ENDURING FREEDOM-PHILIPPINES (OEF-P), which officially commenced in early 2002.<sup>79</sup>

The initial command and control headquarters for OEF-P was Joint Task Force (JTF) 510,<sup>80</sup> the forerunner of the JSOTF-P. Under the leadership of SOCPAC Commander Brigadier General Donald Wurster and 1st SFG(A) Commander Colonel David Fridovich, JTF 510 developed a strategy that employed U.S. SOF in support of the AFP to combat and defeat the ASG on the island of Basilan. According to Lieutenant General Fridovich, “The first thing we did was to read the Constitution of the Philippines in order to understand what we could and could not do.”<sup>81</sup> Aware that the constitution did not specifically prohibit U.S. soldiers from conducting combat operations within the Philippines, SOCPAC nevertheless understood the potential for increased tension within the polity generated by the local press and images of American soldiers fighting on Filipino soil.<sup>82</sup> Thus, at its very core the JTF 510 strategy was based on an appreciation of Philippines sovereignty and recognition of the potential internal political repercussions of American military forces conducting overt and/or unilateral military

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<sup>79</sup>Wilson, 4.

<sup>80</sup>Globalsecurity.org, *Special Operations Command Pacific (SOCPAC) Joint Task Force 510*, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/agency/dod/socpac.htm> (accessed December 20, 2008). JTF 510 is USPACOM’s rapid deployment joint task force in which SOCPAC serves as the nucleus. JTF 510 is specially tailored for deployment in support of contingencies and crises that require a rapid SOF response within the USPACOM area of responsibility.

<sup>81</sup>Remarks made by Lieutenant General David Fridovich to students attending the School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, January 14, 2009. Used with permission of Lieutenant General Fridovich on January 14, 2009.

<sup>82</sup>Maxwell, “Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines,” 22.

operations within the Philippines. Therefore, in 2002 1st SFG(A) and SOCPAC developed an indirect approach of working by, with, and through the AFP to combat the ASG on the island of Basilan.<sup>83</sup>

The indirect approach in the Philippines relies on the inherent ability of SOF to maintain a small physical signature while simultaneously building and developing the host nation's military capacity to locate, isolate, and defeat terrorist networks, providing civil affairs (CA) forces and assets to assist in humanitarian aid and civic action programs, and offering information operations (IO) assets and enablers in order to positively influence the local population and delegitimize terrorist and insurgent groups. This approach emphasizes close coordination and cooperation with the host nation political leadership, its law enforcement agencies, and especially the U.S. Country Team and interagency. The essence of this approach continues today under the JSOTF-P, which emerged in July of 2002 following JTF 510's initially highly successful efforts against the ASG on the island of Basilan.<sup>84</sup>

## **Mission, Intent, and Operational Design**

As of January 2009, the mission statement of the JSOTF-P reads, "JSOTF-P, in coordination with the U.S. Country Team,<sup>85</sup> conducts Foreign Internal Defense (FID) with the Republic of the Philippines Security Forces in order to defeat JI and ASG High Value Individuals and neutralize enemy safe havens."<sup>86</sup> The significant aspects of this mission statement are threefold. First, it acknowledges the absolute importance of coordinating all efforts and working

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<sup>83</sup>Fridovich and Krawchuk, 24.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

<sup>85</sup>JP 1-02 defines *Country Team* as: "The senior, in-country, US coordinating and supervising body, headed by the chief of the US diplomatic mission, and composed of the senior member of each represented US department or agency, as desired by the chief of the US diplomatic mission." The Country Team is charged with implementing U.S. foreign policy objectives within the country to which they are assigned.

<sup>86</sup>The JSOTF-P mission statement was provided by Lieutenant Colonel Chad Clark, currently serving as JSOTF-P J-5 (Chief of Plans).

in conjunction with the Country Team. Ambassador Robert B. Oakley and research assistant Michael Casey Jr. describe the Country Team as, “the critical intersection where plans, policies, programs, and personalities all come together. The Country Team builds the American image abroad and implements strategy.”<sup>87</sup> Former JSOTF-P Commander Colonel David Maxwell echoes these remarks by bluntly stating, “When dealing with sovereign countries, the tip of the spear is the Country Team.”<sup>88</sup> The mission statement of the JSOTF-P is unique in that it explicitly acknowledges that in order for U.S. military operations in the Philippines to be executed, they must be coordinated and nested with the efforts and objectives of the Country Team, the organization that is responsible for implementing and executing U.S. foreign policy objectives within a given sovereign country.

The second significant aspect of the mission statement is that in accordance with Joint SOF doctrine it accurately defines the overall JSOTF-P mission as the SOF Core Task of FID.<sup>89</sup> As defined in JP 3-05, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations* (December 17, 2003), FID is, “the participation by civilian and military agencies of a government (*in this instance, the U.S. Government*) in any action taken by another government (*in this instance, the GRP*) to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency.” Accurately defining the overall mission in terms of a doctrinal SOF Core Task, instead of using terms and phrases representing non-doctrinal SOF Core Tasks such as *counterinsurgency* or *capacity building*, helps ensure

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<sup>87</sup>Robert B. Oakley and Michael Casey Jr, “The Country Team: Restructuring America’s First Line of Engagement,” *Joint Forces Quarterly*, no. 47 (4th Quarter 2007): 146.

<sup>88</sup>Colonel David S. Maxwell, interview by author, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, September 18, 2008. Colonel Maxwell commanded the JSOTF-P from 2006 to 2007.

<sup>89</sup>U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication (JP) 3-05, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations* (Washington, DC: GPO, 2003). JP 3-05 outlines nine Special Operations Core Tasks. They are: Direct Action (DA), Special Reconnaissance (SR), Foreign Internal Defense (FID), Unconventional Warfare (UW), Counterterrorism (CT), Counterproliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (CP/WMD), Civil Affairs Operations (CA), Psychological Operations (PSYOP), and Information Operations (IO).

clarity and proper understanding of the mission across members of the JSOTF-P, the interagency, and the AFP/GRP.<sup>90</sup>

The third and final significant element of the mission statement is that it states the JSOTF-P's purpose is to defeat JI and ASG High Value Individuals and neutralize enemy safe havens.<sup>91</sup> Due to the domestic political situation within the Philippines and the fact that the MNLF, MILF, and communist movements are viewed as internal political problems and not terrorist threats, by directive the JSOTF-P is strictly limited to supporting and enabling AFP operations against declared terrorist organizations such as JI and ASG.<sup>92</sup> The oft-times interconnected nature of these terrorist, secessionist, and communist groups undoubtedly complicates matters when it comes to targeting enemy individuals, networks, and cells,<sup>93</sup> and the JSOTF-P must continually coordinate and vet potential targets through the Country Team in order to ensure the credibility and legitimacy of their collective efforts is maintained in the eyes of the GRP and the Filipino people.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup>Lieutenant Colonel Chad Clark, JSOTF-P J-5 (Chief of Plans), Electronic correspondence with author, January 8, 2009.

<sup>91</sup>JP 1-02 does not provide a definition for the term *defeat*. However, Army Field Manual (FM) 3-90, *Tactics* (Washington, DC: GPO, 2001), defines *defeat* as: "a tactical mission task that occurs when an enemy force has temporarily or permanently lost the physical means or the will to fight. The defeated force's commander is unwilling or unable to pursue his adopted course of action, thereby yielding to the friendly commander's will and can no longer interfere to a significant degree with the actions of friendly forces." JP 1-02 defines *neutralize* as: "To render ineffective or unusable." JP 1-02 does not contain a definition for *High Value Individual* (HVI). However, the concept of an HVI is very similar to a *High Value Target* (HVT), which JP 1-02 defines as: "A target the enemy commander requires for the successful completion of the mission. The loss of high-value targets would be expected to seriously degrade important enemy functions throughout the friendly commander's area of interest." In other words, HVIs are terrorist leaders whose position or function is so important or critical to the organization that their defeat significantly degrades the organizations operations or renders them unable to accomplish their desired objectives.

<sup>92</sup>Clark.

<sup>93</sup>Major Owen Ray, interview by author, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, January 8, 2009. Based on his observations while serving as a Joint Support Detachment (JSD) Commander in the JSOTF-P from February to July 2004, Major Ray was of the opinion that the Judge Advocate General (JAG) was the busiest officer on the JSOTF-P staff, having to constantly thoroughly review operations to ensure the targets were legal and consistent with applicable DoD directives.

<sup>94</sup>Coultrup.

As articulated by JSOTF-P Commander Colonel William Coultrup, the desired end state for JSOTF-P operations in the Philippines is that, “JI leadership and safe havens have been neutralized and the conditions for their presence no longer exist.”<sup>95</sup> This desired end state requires a strategy that simultaneously targets and addresses the need to eliminate the symptoms of terrorism (in the form of terrorists and their safe havens) as well as the disease (the root causes that drive people to terrorism). To accomplish this, the JSOTF-P has designed a military campaign that works along four simple logical lines of operation. They are Capacity Building, Targeted Civil-Military Operations (CMO), Information Gathering and Sharing, and Information Operations/Influence Operations.<sup>96</sup> Explained graphically, the JSOTF-P’s operational design is depicted in figure 2:<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup>Ibid.

<sup>96</sup>Unless footnoted otherwise, the majority of information on the JSOTF-P campaign design and logical lines of operation in this portion of the monograph was provided from interviews conducted by the author with Colonels Maxwell and Coultrup on September 18, 2008 and October 14, 2008 respectively, at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Additional information was derived from a JSOTF-P command briefing (powerpoint presentation) provided by Colonel Maxwell and used with his permission on September 18, 2008.

<sup>97</sup>Figure 2 is based upon a power point slide developed by the JSOTF-P staff while under the command of Colonel Maxwell in 2006. The slide has been modified by the author to accurately reflect the operational design currently employed under the command of Colonel Coultrup. Copyright reprint permission for this figure was granted on March 11, 2009, by the Command and General Staff College copyrights coordinator.

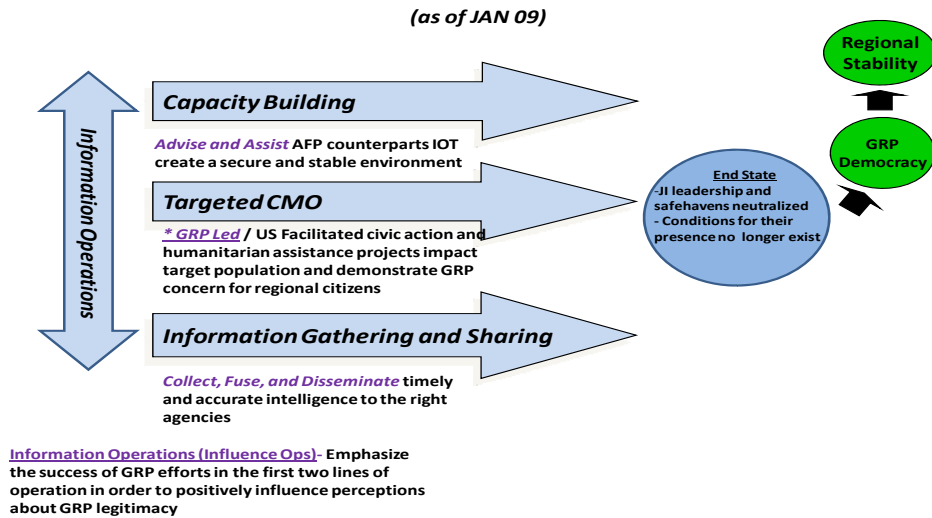


Figure 2. JSOTF-P Operational Design

Source: JSOTF-P Staff, "Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines," JSOTF-P Command Briefing (Powerpoint Presentation), 2006.

The Capacity Building line refers to building Philippines military capacity to conduct COIN and counterterrorism (CT) operations by employing U.S. SOF to train, advise and assist select military units and organizations within the AFP. At the tactical level, this is accomplished primarily by U.S. Army Special Forces soldiers and U.S. Navy SEALs training select AFP companies, platoons, and/or squads in small unit infantry tactics, marksmanship, maritime interdiction operations, radio communications, use of night-vision goggles, calling for and directing close air support (CAS), combat-lifesaver instruction, and small-unit leadership training and development. The corresponding AFP battalion and brigade commanders and their staffs receive training in intelligence collection, analysis, processing, and dissemination techniques, how to plan and integrate CAS to support ground maneuver forces, and how to develop plans and operations that are logistically sustainable. These efforts are essentially mirrored and tailored accordingly at selected higher level AFP headquarters, including General Headquarters (GHQ), the highest level headquarters in the AFP. Ultimately, this training builds the AFP's capacity to



conduct COIN and CT operations and enhances their ability to provide security to the Filipino citizens, thereby increasing the legitimacy and credibility of the AFP and as an additional result, the GRP.<sup>98</sup>

The Targeted CMO line refers to conducting various infrastructure development and reconstruction projects in which JSOTF-P personnel train the AFP to build and improve such things as roads, bridges, shelters, and other forms of hardened infrastructure. Additionally, JSOTF-P medical personnel conduct frequent medical, dental, and veterinary seminars in which they teach members of the AFP how to better treat and care for various (human and animal/livestock) medical conditions, ailments, and injuries. This “train the trainer” concept has an exponential effect, as the AFP then takes this training into remote villages where they pass on to the villagers the new skills they have learned. This methodology puts a “Filipino face” on every operation, ensures the AFP is in the operational lead and most importantly, demonstrates the government’s care and concern for the people, thus reinforcing government legitimacy.<sup>99</sup> Finally, it is important to highlight the use of the word “Targeted” in describing this line of operation. These projects and seminars are not conducted at random locations on an ad-hoc basis, or in well developed areas with sufficient physical infrastructure and medical care facilities. Targeted CMO are conducted in specific areas, as identified by the JSOTF-P and AFP and approved by the GRP, as being at risk for cooperating or sympathizing with terrorist or insurgent organizations due to high levels of poverty and unemployment, low levels of education and literacy, and other potential socio-economic and demographic indicators.<sup>100</sup>

The Information Gathering and Sharing line denotes the JSOTF-P’s efforts to assist the AFP in the timely collection, fusion, and dissemination of accurate information and intelligence

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<sup>98</sup>Eckert, 19.

<sup>99</sup>Coultrup.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid.; Maxwell, Interview.

across and among the appropriate military units and other supporting agencies. To support this line of operation the JSOTF-P employs what they call Liaison Coordination Elements (LCEs). LCEs are small, specially organized and tailored teams of U.S. SOF personnel that co-locate with and assist a designated AFP headquarters with information and intelligence collection, processing, analysis, and fusion. LCEs are typically located at selected AFP brigade level headquarters up to and including General Headquarters (GHQ). When necessary, the LCEs can “reach back” to the JSOTF-P for additional intelligence collection assets and capabilities, such as unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) or additional casualty evacuation support, to assist AFP operations.<sup>101</sup> Likewise, if and when specific mission resource requirements exceed the capability of the JSOTF-P, the JSOTF-P can coordinate with SOCPAC and USPACOM for additional intelligence and operational support, as required.<sup>102</sup>

Finally, the Information Operations (IO) line is used to inform the Filipino people of the successes the government has had with the Capacity Building and Targeted CMO lines of operation, thereby positively influencing and increasing public perception and support for both the GRP and the AFP. The JSOTF-P expands the formal definition of the IO acronym to include “influencing others,” and works to positively influence the Filipino population through transparent public affairs and multi-media efforts that tell the people: (1) what the JSOTF-P and AFP are going to do, (2) why it needs to be done, (3) how it is going to be done, and most importantly, (4) how it will benefit the people of the Philippines.<sup>103</sup> This technique of informing the local people before operations take place as opposed to after they occur provides the JSOTF-P and the AFP with the information initiative, ensuring that the Filipino people are aware of the intended purpose of AFP activity, which to a large extent pre-empts the terrorist’s ability to

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<sup>101</sup>Wilson, 9-10.

<sup>102</sup>Ray.

<sup>103</sup>Eckert, 21.

misrepresent the actions of the AFP. As former JSOTF-P Command Sergeant Major William Eckert states, “Everything we do in the security, capacity building and CMO arenas can go awry if we fail to communicate our plans and objectives to the local populace.”<sup>104</sup>

Applied collectively and simultaneously, JSOTF-P operations along these four logical lines of operation are designed to achieve the desired end state of neutralizing JI and ASG leadership and safe haven and eliminating the conditions that allow them to exist. Ultimately these efforts are intended to strengthen the Philippines’ democracy, thereby supporting and facilitating the U.S. regional-strategic objective of maintaining regional stability.<sup>105</sup>

## **Organization and Resources<sup>106</sup>**

The JSOTF-P consists of members from all armed services as well as various U.S. government agencies. The Army contribution typically consists of personnel to augment the JSOTF-P staff, a reinforced Special Forces company, a Civil Affairs company, and a Military Information Support Team (MIST).<sup>107</sup> The Navy provides personnel to augment the JSOTF-P staff and a Naval Special Warfare Task Unit (NSWTU) consisting of a SEAL platoon (+/-), a supporting boat detachment, and an Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) detachment. The Air Force provides personnel to augment the JSOTF-P staff, liaison teams to coordinate with the Philippines Air Force (PAF), a weather detachment, and several fixed and rotary wing aircraft to support operations. Finally, general purpose forces (GPF), often in the form of U.S. Marines or

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<sup>104</sup>Ibid.

<sup>105</sup>Coultrup.

<sup>106</sup>As of January 2009, the JSOTF-P has been operating for over seven years under four different commanders. The specific level and amount of resources applied to the effort as well as the task organization have remained generally, but not exactly, consistent. Thus, the following discussion will not provide exact numbers and current locations, but rather provide the reader a general understanding of how the JSOTF-P operates and the assets and resources it has at its disposal.

<sup>107</sup>A Military Information Support Team (MIST) is a small team of soldiers that assists in the creation, design, and production of various media messages and products such as newspaper advertisements, posters, leaflets, and radio/television advertisements that support JSOTF-P, AFP, and GRP IO objectives.

Army infantry from the 25th Infantry Division or Guam National Guard, provide security for JSOTF-P base camps and facilities, and are also available to reinforce and support other operations when and where needed. Altogether, the combined number of U.S. service members assigned to the JSOTF-P is approximately 500.<sup>108</sup>

Staffed with less than seventy personnel, the JSOTF-P headquarters is located in the western archipelago town of Zamboanga on the island of Mindanao. The core operational elements of the JSOTF-P are the reinforced Army Special Forces Company, the NSWTFU consisting of Navy SEALs, and the Army CA Company. Augmented by conventional forces and other supporting personnel (MISTs) when and where necessary, these core elements are task organized as cross-functional teams into three subordinate headquarters of approximately 100 to 150 personnel each and are known as Task Force (TF) SULU, TF MINDANAO, and TF ARCHIPELAGO.<sup>109</sup> Although the specific disposition of these elements and the affiliation with a certain AFP counterpart may change based on tactical and operational requirements, a typical disposition of JSOTF-P and AFP forces is depicted in figure 3 on the following page.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup>Coultrup.

<sup>109</sup>Coultrup. JP 1-02 defines *task force* as a temporary grouping of units, under one commander, formed for the purpose of carrying out a specific operation or mission.

<sup>110</sup>Figure 3 provided courtesy of Colonel David S. Maxwell and depicts the JSOTF-P disposition in 2006. Copyright reprint permission for this figure was granted on March 11, 2009 by the Command and General Staff College copyrights coordinator.

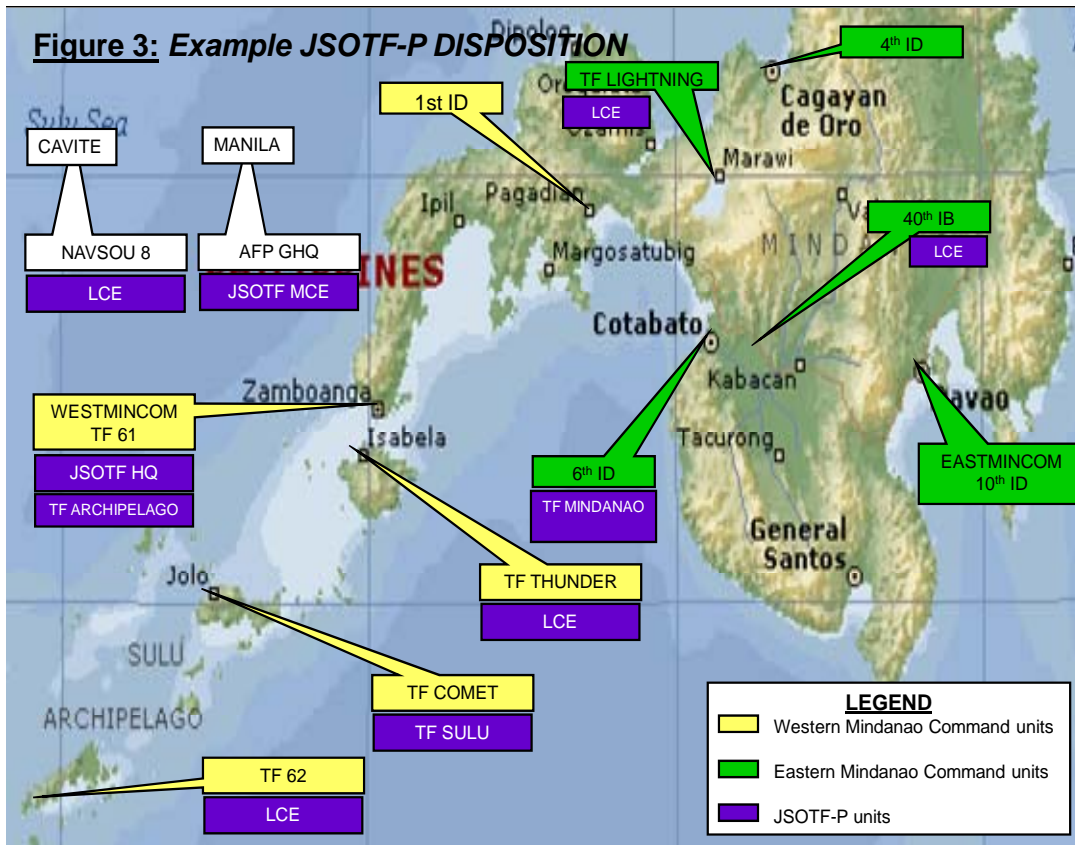


Figure 3. Example JSOTF-P Disposition

Source: JSOTF-P Staff, "Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines," JSOTF-P Command Briefing (Powerpoint Presentation), 2006.

The JSOTF-P's supporting resources and enablers, specifically in terms of aviation and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) platforms, are best described as austere.<sup>111</sup> Military fixed-wing air support is provided by only a handful of available aircraft, some of which are provided by contract. None of these airplanes are designed for offensive military purposes—they are essentially used for transporting personnel, logistics, and when necessary, medical/casualty evacuation.<sup>112</sup> Likewise, military rotary-wing air support comes mainly in the form of two helicopters, both Blackhawk variants, with a few more again provided by contract.

<sup>111</sup>Maxwell, Interview; Coultrup.

<sup>112</sup>JSOTF-P Staff, "Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines," JSOTF-P Command Briefing (Powerpoint Presentation), January 2009.

These helicopters are also primarily used in a logistics role, and bring the grand-total of aircraft employed by the JSOTF-P to less than ten.<sup>113</sup> Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) assets are similarly limited and are provided by a handful of tactical level drones equipped only with cameras and possessing a limited operational range. Further, the ability of these UAVs to collect and transmit imagery is severely constrained by the thick and densely vegetated Filipino terrain, essentially limiting their effectiveness to observing open roads and waterways.<sup>114</sup>

## Summary

The JSOTF-P was established in the aftermath of JTF 510's successful operations against the ASG on the island of Basilan in 2002. These efforts continue under OEF-P as a vehicle for the U.S. to assist the AFP and GRP in neutralizing ASG and JI leadership and denying them sanctuary and safe haven in the Philippines. The 1st SFG(A) and SOCPAC developed an indirect approach to conducting IW in the Philippines thanks to a sound understanding of the operational environment which recognized the following conditions: the presence of an existing and well-established U.S. Country Team; the existing capacity of the AFP to conduct CT and COIN operations; the potential for adverse political impacts within the Philippines if the U.S. conducted unilateral military operations inside their sovereign borders; the corresponding additional potential for internal political backlash resulting from a large-scale and/or highly visible American military presence; and finally, SOF's ability to train, advise, and assist foreign militaries while maintaining a very low signature and requiring very limited logistics support.

To that end, the JSOTF-P mission statement emphasizes working with the Country Team and by, with, and through legitimate Filipino security forces to neutralize JI and ASG and to eliminate the conditions that allow them to exist. To accomplish this, the JSOTF-P operational

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<sup>113</sup>Ibid.

<sup>114</sup>Coultrup.

design is based on four simple logical lines of operation: Capacity Building, Targeted CMO, Information Gathering and Sharing, and Information/Influence Operations. Every effort and operation is applied along one or more of these four lines, focused on gaining the support of the population while simultaneously neutralizing terrorist leaders, networks, and sanctuaries. All of these operations are ultimately planned, led, and conducted by the AFP. The members of the JSOTF-P remain in the background and provide direction, training, advice, and informational support as required.

## **SECTION IV: ANALYZING THE JSOTF-P APPROACH**

We can point to successes in Colombia and the Philippines and other places around the world as positive examples of long-term, low-profile, low-footprint, high-quality engagements. Our collective challenge is to help the practitioners of counterinsurgency get it as right as possible.<sup>115</sup>

— Admiral Eric T. Olson, USN, Commander, USSOCOM

The purpose of this section is to evaluate the JSOTF-P approach to conducting IW in the Philippines to determine if it provides a model for future U.S. military operations in support of the Long War. Since the current JSOTF-P mission statement defines its operational task as the SOF Core Task of FID, the logical and perhaps default criteria with which to analyze and evaluate the JSOTF-P approach are the principles of Internal Defense and Development (IDAD). IDAD is, “the full range of measures taken by a nation to promote its growth and to protect itself from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency. The strategy focuses on building viable political, economic, military, and social institutions that respond to the needs of society.”<sup>116</sup> The principles of IDAD are: Unity of Effort, Maximum Use of Intelligence, Maximum Use of PSYOP and CA, Minimum Use of Violence, and A Responsive Government. These principles are designed to

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<sup>115</sup>Staff Sergeant Michael J. Carden, “Special Operations Focus Efforts Outside of War Zones,” *American Forces Press Service* (February 10, 2009), [https://webmail.us.army.mil/iframe\\_lr.html](https://webmail.us.army.mil/iframe_lr.html) (accessed February 18, 2009).

<sup>116</sup>U.S. Department of Defense, JP 3-07.1, Appendix B, B-1. FID is a military component that can be employed to support a host-nation’s IDAD strategy, at the request of the host-nation.

support the four interdependent functions of IDAD which are Balanced Development, Security, Neutralization, and Mobilization.<sup>117</sup> Using the principles of IDAD as evaluation criteria, the JSOTF-P, within the context of its role as the military element of a broader whole-government strategy, receives high marks in all categories, as their logical lines of operation, campaign design and tactical actions are tailored specifically to support these principles.

Yet as logical as these criteria may be for generically evaluating the effectiveness of the JSOTF-P within the context of the Philippines' broader IDAD strategy, they are largely insufficient for evaluating the employment of the JSOTF-P within the specific context of the Long War and U.S. strategic security requirements of the 21st Century. Sufficient evaluation criteria should include the principles required for sustaining a protracted, global IW campaign against an ideologically based enemy, and be consistent with the principles, concepts, and priorities outlined and described in U.S. national strategy documents, senior-leader policy statements, and emerging IW doctrine.<sup>118</sup> Therefore, in addition to examining national strategy documents and the principles of IDAD, the Principles of War (and Other Principles)<sup>119</sup> and SOF Imperatives<sup>120</sup> were reviewed and considered in order to select and develop criteria that are both suitable and relevant to the nature of the Long War, IW, and the 21st Century strategic security environment. As a result, the author selected the following five (largely interrelated) criteria for evaluating the JSOTF-P's approach to IW. They are: Applies Capabilities Indirectly (SOF

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<sup>117</sup>Ibid., B-1-B-5.

<sup>118</sup>JP 1 states, "The context of IW is marked by a violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population," I-1.

<sup>119</sup>Appendix A to JP 3-0 lists and defines the Principles of War. They are: Objective, Offensive, Mass, Economy of Force, Maneuver, Unity of Command, Security, Surprise, and Simplicity. Other Principles (of War) are listed as: Restraint, Perseverance, and Legitimacy.

<sup>120</sup>Department of the Army, FM 3-05, *Army Special Operations Forces* (Washington, DC: GPO, 2006). Chapter 1 lists and defines the SOF Imperatives. They are: Understand the Operational Environment, Recognize Political Implications, Facilitate Interagency Activities, Engage the Threat Discriminately, Consider Long-Term Effects, Ensure Legitimacy and Credibility of Special Operations, Anticipate and Control Psychological Effects, Apply Capabilities Indirectly, Develop Multiple Options, Ensure Long-Term Sustainment, Provide Sufficient Intelligence, and Balance Security and Synchronization.



Imperative), Legitimacy (Other Principle of War), Unity of Effort (Principle of IDAD), Ensures Long-Term Sustainment (SOF Imperative), and Economy of Force (Principle of War).<sup>121</sup>

### **Applies Capabilities Indirectly**

The first criterion for evaluating the JSOTF-P approach to IW is Applies Capabilities Indirectly.<sup>122</sup> This is defined as the extent or degree to which U.S. military operations are conducted by, through, and/or with legitimate host-nation forces, instead of directly by U.S. forces. The criterion was selected because U.S. national strategy documents such as the *NDS* and the *QDR*, senior civilian and military leaders such as Secretary of Defense Gates and Admiral Olson, and the *IW JOC* all articulate that the military should, whenever possible, employ indirect approaches to conducting IW.<sup>123</sup> The need to emphasize indirect approaches is perhaps best articulated by noted journalist and author Robert Kaplan when he writes:

As free societies gain ground around the world, the U.S. military is going to be increasingly restricted in terms of how it operates. An age of democracy means an age of frustratingly narrow rules of engagement. That is because fledgling democratic governments, besieged by young and aggressive local media, will find it politically difficult--if not impossible--to allow American troops on their soil to engage in direct action.<sup>124</sup>

The JSOTF-P's indirect approach to IW in the Philippines makes this criterion relatively easy to evaluate- in fact, it meets the criterion by definition. As discussed in Section III, all JSOTF-P operations are conducted exclusively by, through, and with designated AFP units. To date there have been no unilateral U.S. military operations conducted by units or service members assigned

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<sup>121</sup>The definitions for these criteria have been taken from the appropriate source listed in parenthesis and modified by the author as required in order for them to be more relevant to the context of IW and the Long War. As defined in current doctrine, the Principles of War are largely written within the context of traditional warfare.

<sup>122</sup>FM 3-05, Chapter 1, 1-14.

<sup>123</sup>See Section I of this monograph.

<sup>124</sup>Robert D. Kaplan, "Imperial Grunts," *Atlantic Monthly Online* (October 2005), [www.theatlantic.com/doc/200510/kaplan-us-special-forces/2](http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200510/kaplan-us-special-forces/2) (accessed February 10, 2009).

to the JSOTF-P.<sup>125</sup> Former JSOTF-P Commander Colonel David Maxwell highlights this fact in his 2006 Commander's Summary when he writes:

The most important aspect of this mission is that U.S. forces are not doing the fighting. They are providing assistance to Philippine security forces to allow them to fight and win against terrorist organizations. Thus, U.S. forces are able to contribute to the accomplishment of mutually beneficial U.S. and Philippine strategic objectives in the battle against terrorism "through, by, and with" Philippine forces.<sup>126</sup>

## Legitimacy

The second criterion to evaluate is Legitimacy, defined as U.S. military actions are undertaken in a legal and moral manner that maintains the support of the host nation populace, the credibility of the host nation government and its security forces, and the support of the American populace.<sup>127</sup> This criterion was selected because U.S. IW efforts will most likely fail if they are perceived as illegitimate among the host nation and/or U.S. domestic population, or act to discredit, delegitimize, or undermine the host-nation's security forces and/or government.<sup>128</sup>

The JSOTF-P approach can be evaluated as extremely legitimate, which in-turns supports the legitimacy of the AFP and GRP. The indirect approach of the JSOTF-P was based and developed on a sound understanding of the Philippines operational environment and has been employed in a legal and moral manner that is consistent with and appreciates both Filipino and American political, military, and social values and culture.<sup>129</sup> Therefore, JSOTF-P remains legitimate with the GRP; as of early 2009, JSOTF-P has been continuously operating in the

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<sup>125</sup>JSOTF-P Staff, "Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines," JSOTF-P Command Briefing (Powerpoint Presentation), January 2009.

<sup>126</sup>Maxwell, "JSOTF-P."

<sup>127</sup>JP 3-0, Appendix A, A-4 - A-5.

<sup>128</sup>FM 3-05, Chapter 1, 1-14.

<sup>129</sup>Julie Alipala, "Congress Team After 1 Visit: US Forces' Stay in RP Legal: No American Interference in Mindanao," *Inquirer.net*. (October 2, 2008), <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/breakingnews/nation/view/20081002-164235/US-forces-stay-in-RP-legal>(accessed January 19, 2009). In October 2008, members of the Philippines bicameral Legislative Oversight Committee on the Visiting Forces Agreement (LOVFA) declared that the presence of American forces in the Philippines is currently legal and in accordance with the agreements established between the Philippines and United States in the Mutual Defense Treaty of 1951.

Philippines for almost seven years, at the request of and with the explicit consent of the GRP.

The JSOTF-P is legitimate with the Filipino people; the vast majority of Filipinos are supportive of the presence of American soldiers and appreciate the assistance they provide.<sup>130</sup>

The JSOTF-P seems to be legitimate with the American people, although this may be by default due to the lack of large scale coverage by Western media; the vast majority of the American populace is unaware of the JSOTF-P and their operations in the Philippines. Finally, the JSOTF-P is legitimate with the AFP; the assistance and influence that the JSOTF-P provides the AFP has not only increased AFP capacity to effectively conduct COIN and CT, but also improved legitimacy of the AFP with the Filipino people. Perhaps the level of influence the JSOTF-P has had on increasing AFP legitimacy is best captured in the remarks of AFP Major General Juancho Sabban, Commander of Task Force Comet<sup>131</sup> and a soldier who has been fighting various insurgent groups in the Philippines for over thirty years:

For three decades we were using a strategy of force. It turned out to be a vicious cycle. We would have body count syndrome. Commanders would become popular because they were warrior-like. But I saw the more we destroyed, the more the number of enemy increased. There were so many instances of collateral damage and innocent lives being sacrificed. Just by passing through fields with so many battalions we were already stomping on crops and that makes people resent the military. In the course of a firefight school buildings would get burned, houses would be razed to the ground, civilians caught in the crossfire. Everything was blamed on the military.<sup>132</sup>

Through the advice and assistance of the JSOTF-P, the AFP has changed its strategy from large-scale, “clear and sweep” operations to focusing on CMO and employing more surgical, intelligence-driven operations to identify, locate, and defeat terrorists. This shift in strategy,

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<sup>130</sup>Ray.

<sup>131</sup>Task Force Comet consists of two marine brigades and is the AFP’s main effort for combating ASG and JI on Sulu Island.

<sup>132</sup>Max Boot and Richard Bennet, “Treading Softly in the Philippines: Why a Low-intensity Counterinsurgency Strategy Seems to be Working There,” *The Weekly Standard* 14, no. 16 (January 1, 2009), <http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/015/956zznwj.asp> (accessed December 29, 2008).

based largely on the influence of the JSOTF-P, has gone a long way in enhancing the credibility and legitimacy of the AFP in the eyes of the local Filipino populace.<sup>133</sup>

## **Unity of Effort**

The third criterion to evaluate is Unity of Effort, which is defined as the coordination and cooperation among all forces and agencies towards a commonly recognized objective.<sup>134</sup> This criterion was selected because successful IW efforts by the U.S. will ultimately require cooperative whole of governance participation. This necessitates the U.S. military cooperating and coordinating closely not only with the host-nation's security forces, but also with all U.S. interagency partners involved as well.

The JSOTF-P supports Unity of Effort first by acknowledging that they are not in charge- they are the guests of, and are supporting, the AFP and GRP.<sup>135</sup> In fact, the JSOTF-P does not attempt to define, organize, or take direct responsibility for any Philippine territory- commonly referred to in military circles as organizing or arranging the "battle space."<sup>136</sup> Instead, the military terrain in which the AFP and JSOTF-P operate is organized, defined, controlled by, and ultimately the responsibility of the AFP. Again, the AFP is in the lead, the JSOTF-P is acting in support.<sup>137</sup>

The JSOTF-P further supports Unity of Effort by ensuring close cooperation and coordination with the Country Team. Recognizing that military operations ultimately must be subordinate to, and in support of, political objectives, the JSOTF-P maintains continuous liaison

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<sup>133</sup>Ibid.

<sup>134</sup>JP 3-07.1, Appendix A, B-3.

<sup>135</sup>JSOTF-P Staff, "Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines," January 2009.

<sup>136</sup>Maxwell, Interview. Organizing the battle space is a common American military practice in which commanders establish the geographic boundaries within which they will operate and be responsible for, referred to as the Area of Operations (AO). The AO is then typically subdivided into smaller AOs or sectors in which subordinate commanders will operate and are responsible for.

<sup>137</sup>Ibid.

with the Country Team, and the command group participates in weekly Country Team meetings which include a weekly update briefing to the Ambassador.<sup>138</sup> Direct coordination and cooperation with the interagency members that comprise the Country Team is critical. These interagency partners include various organizations from within the Department of State, Department of Justice, and Department of Treasury, as well as elements of the U.S. Intelligence Community.<sup>139</sup> Again, the JSOTF-P maintains close and direct liaison with all of these organizations to ensure their efforts are nested and mutually supportive of the broader, collective American effort. In particular, the JSOTF-P works closely with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to coordinate and de-conflict proposed humanitarian assistance and civic action/reconstruction projects in order to ensure efforts are not being duplicated in the same areas and limited resources are not being wasted.<sup>140</sup> Thus, by acknowledging and being comfortable with conducting all activities and operations in support of the AFP, and further, by ensuring all JSOTF-P operations are both nested and synchronized with the broader efforts of the Country Team, Unity of Effort is achieved. This goes a long way in maintaining the credibility and legitimacy of American diplomatic and military presence in the Philippines in the eyes of the Filipino people and the GRP.<sup>141</sup>

## **Ensures Long-Term Sustainment**

The fourth criterion to evaluate is Ensures Long-Term Sustainment, which is defined as providing host-nation security forces with training and capabilities that can be maintained without

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<sup>138</sup>Maxwell, "Commander's Summary of the Joint Special Operations Task Force Philippines (JSOTF-P)," 2006.

<sup>139</sup>Maxwell, Interview; Coultrup.

<sup>140</sup>Ibid.

<sup>141</sup>Ibid. Both Colonels Maxwell and Coultrup stated the JSOTF-P maintained a positive and healthy relationship with the various interagency organizations in the Philippines. Of course, personalities do come in to play and there can be certain frictions at times. Yet according to Colonels Maxwell and Coultrup, the U.S military and interagency partners in the Philippines understand their respective roles and functions and work closely together to ensure cooperation and unity of effort.

continuous U.S. assistance.<sup>142</sup> This criterion was selected because the object of building host-nation military capacity is to eventually enable them to suitably meet their specific internal and external security needs without external assistance. Providing training and capabilities that will require an enduring U.S. military presence to supervise or maintain is otherwise counterproductive.<sup>143</sup>

While simple in concept, this principle is one that some commanders can be reluctant to apply, as the availability and capability of American military technology to provide quick and immediate tactical solutions is often hard to turn down by both sides. Yet the JSOTF-P understands the importance of ensuring long-term sustainment, and therefore makes the deliberate effort to ensure that all training, enabling assets, and other military resources provided for use to the AFP can be effectively employed, maintained, and sustained by the AFP without requiring continuous U.S. military oversight and/or support.<sup>144</sup> Thus the training, assets, and resources provided to the AFP are often low-tech by current American military standards, but that is really just what is needed by the AFP. The materiel provided is simple, sufficient, and reliable; important characteristics of any military hardware that is often employed in a wet, dense, and mountainous environment.<sup>145</sup> Most importantly, all training, resources, and assets provided on behalf of the JSOTF-P are offered based on an assessment of the AFP's ability to independently operate and sustain them over the long-term.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>142</sup>FM 3-05, Chapter 1, 1-14 - 1-15.

<sup>143</sup>Ibid.

<sup>144</sup>Coultrup.

<sup>145</sup>Ibid. As Colonel Coultrup stated bluntly, "ISR doesn't work so well in the jungle."

<sup>146</sup>Maxwell, Interview; Coultrup.

## Economy of Force

The fifth criterion to evaluate is Economy of Force, which is defined as allocating minimum essential forces and resources and employing them in the most effective way possible.<sup>147</sup> This criterion was selected for two reasons. First, a central component of AQ's strategy for defeating the U.S. is the concept of conducting a protracted (multi-generational), irregular-war of exhaustion in which the American military overextends itself and overtime is weakened to such an extent that it can no longer support and/or defend U.S. interests abroad.<sup>148</sup> Second, in addition to fighting the Long War, the U.S. military must simultaneously maintain a capability to conduct traditional warfare. With a rising China, a resurgent Russia, and the stark reality (as history has shown) that ultimately the future is impossible to predict, the U.S. military at large cannot afford to become solely an IW-centric force. It must be a balanced force capable of conducting IW while simultaneously maintaining an ability to conduct decisive traditional warfare.<sup>149</sup> Therefore, in order to prevent reaching strategic military culmination in the Long War against terror, and in order to maintain a force still capable of successfully defending U.S. interests through traditional warfare if required, the U.S. military, when and where possible, should employ an economy of force. This will help the U.S. preserve precious and limited human, material, and fiscal resources required to win the Long War and will additionally facilitate the GPF's ability to train and maintain a qualitative edge over peer competitors in the ability to conduct traditional, "high intensity" military operations.

The limited number of military personnel, supporting assets such as fixed and rotary-wing aviation platforms and ISR assets, as well financial resources allocated to the JSOTF-P

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<sup>147</sup>JP 3-0, Appendix A, A-4.

<sup>148</sup>Abu Bakr Naji (translated by William McCants), "The Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage Through Which the Umma Will Pass" (John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, Harvard University): 65-66 and 69-70.

<sup>149</sup>Robert M. Gates, "The National Defense Strategy: Striking the Right Balance," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, no. 52 (1st Quarter 2009): 4.

makes its mission a true economy of force.<sup>150</sup> Again, there are only approximately 500 total personnel assigned to the JSOTF-P. Most subordinate units and personnel assigned serve four to six month tours. Only the JSOTF-P Commander and Command Sergeant Major serve tours of one year.<sup>151</sup> The limited number of personnel allocated to the mission reduces the requirement to continually task the same units to deploy,<sup>152</sup> and when combined with relatively short duration deployments,<sup>153</sup> helps to ensure that the JSOTF-P mission is sustainable over the long-term and mitigates the risk of “burning out” the force (and their families) due to consistently deploying the same units and personnel for long duration.

The small numbers of supporting military assets such as aircraft, UAVs, and other intelligence and operational enablers provided to the JSOTF-P is a challenge the commander must continually manage and deal with.<sup>154</sup> With less than ten available fixed and rotary-wing aircraft and a similar amount of tactical UAVs, the JSOTF-P additionally operates without the luxury of the Predator UAV, AC-130 gunship, and satellite-guided Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAMs), all of which have been put to good use in Afghanistan and Iraq and have proven very effective in locating and destroying terrorists and their safe havens.<sup>155</sup> Nevertheless, the limited amount of resources afforded the JSOTF-P also provides certain benefits. First, the small number of aviation and tactical UAV platforms helps to make their availability sustainable over the long-

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<sup>150</sup>Coultrup.

<sup>151</sup>Clark.

<sup>152</sup>For example, the JSOTF-P requirement for Special Forces soldiers consists of one SF Company consisting of approximately 100 Special Forces soldiers. 1st SFG(A) currently has eight SF Companies assigned that can potentially be tasked to support the JSOTF-P mission (and this will increase to eleven companies available by FY 11 with the 2006 *QDR* directed growth of adding one SF Battalion to each SF Group). Theoretically speaking, if 1st SFG(A) was the only SF Group tasked to support the JSOTF-P mission (which they are not, National Guard SF Companies have supported the mission in the past), 1st SFG(A) could send one SF Company every six months, and it would take three-and-a-half years before any one company would have to return to the Philippines in support of the JSOTF-P.

<sup>153</sup>This is in comparison to Iraq and Afghanistan in which military personnel, specifically U.S. Army Soldiers, typically serve 12-18 month tours of duty.

<sup>154</sup>Coultrup.

<sup>155</sup>Boot and Bennet, 2009.



term because the quantities are not sufficient enough to seriously compete with the demands or requirements in other military theaters of operations. Second, the limited amount of resources helps ensure they are prioritized and balanced against the requirements and capabilities of the AFP to employ and sustain them independently over the long-term, which coincidentally supports the principle of Ensures Long-Term Sustainment. And third, the lack of high-tech and often classified resources afforded the JSOTF-P has forced them to seek creative, low-tech solutions that suitably fill the void in capability, and often with good results.<sup>156</sup>

Last, but not least in analyzing Economy of Force, and especially in light of the on-going 2009 economic crisis within the U.S., the budget allocated towards the JSOTF-P's efforts in the Philippines must be addressed.<sup>157</sup> The U.S. spends \$52 million per year in the Philippines.<sup>158</sup> By comparison, in the U.S. government's overall budget for 2007 the state of Alaska received over \$209 million from the defense appropriations bill alone.<sup>159</sup> Additionally, current estimates suggest the war in Iraq costs over \$100 billion a year, with efforts in Afghanistan costing \$30 billion annually.<sup>160</sup> By these comparisons alone, the relative low cost of JSOTF-P operations, due in part to the limited number of U.S. military personnel, equipment, and resources employed

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<sup>156</sup>Coultrup. The author will not expound on the specific modifications to equipment and/or techniques developed and employed by the JSOTF-P in order to protect sources and methods and Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (TTPs). The take-away here is that one should not become over-reliant on technology for solutions to tactical or operational problems. In fact, lack of technology can be a good thing in that it forces one to think critically and creatively in order to develop a suitable, acceptable, and most importantly, sustainable solution. Defaulting to technology for answers is often the "easy way out."

<sup>157</sup>Thom Shanker, "After Stimulus Package, Pentagon Officials Are Preparing to Pare Back," *New York Times*, February 17, 2009. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/18/us/politics/18defense.html> (accessed February 18, 2009). On February 17, 2009, President Barack Obama signed into law an \$800 billion economic stimulus bill. Resourcing this bill may pressure the President to identify programs for budget cuts, and the Pentagon is bracing. Secretary of Defense Gates has stated in Congressional testimony, "One thing we have known for many months is the spigot of defense funding opened by 9/11 is closing."

<sup>158</sup>Boot and Bennet, 2009.

<sup>159</sup>Citizens Against Government Waste, *2007 Pig Book Summary*, [http://www.cagw.org/site/PageServer?pagename=reports\\_pigbook2007](http://www.cagw.org/site/PageServer?pagename=reports_pigbook2007) (accessed January 21, 2009).

<sup>160</sup>Boot and Bennet, 2009.

and required to be sustained, make the indirect approach applied in the Philippines both very affordable and fiscally sustainable to the U.S. military budget over the long-term.

When one combines the low financial cost of operations in the Philippines with the austere amount of military personnel and resources provided, it becomes apparent that the JSOTF-P epitomizes the Economy of Force definition of allocating minimum essential forces and resources and employing them in the most effective way possible. Under its current organization, the Economy of Force nature of the JSOTF-P enables the potential for long-term U.S. presence in the Philippines (as required) without overtaxing the military's human, material, and fiscal resources. This is critical if the U.S. is to succeed in fighting and winning the Long War while simultaneously maintaining a qualitative edge over peer competitors in traditional war fighting capabilities.

## **Effectiveness**

There remains one more criterion by which the JSOTF-P must be evaluated; effectiveness. In other words, how well is the JSOTF-P's indirect approach actually accomplishing the mission of neutralizing terrorist leadership and safe havens in the Philippines by building AFP military capacity, conducting targeted CMO, sharing information, and influencing the population? To be sure, there have been periodic setbacks to the mission. The immensely successful efforts of the AFP and JSOTF-P against the ASG on Basilan from 2002 to 2004 were unfortunately marginalized in the following years by a premature withdrawal of AFP and JSOTF-P forces from the area. Sensing the ASG had been effectively defeated in Basilan, the AFP withdrew the vast majority of its forces--13 of 15 battalions--from the island, before the gains in security could be effectively consolidated and sustained. This created a vacuum that allowed the ASG to return.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>161</sup>Ibid.

In early December 2008, a battle erupted between the AFP and ASG in Basilan resulting in the deaths of five AFP soldiers and wounding another twenty-four. Some reports claimed up to 3,000 people fled their villages as a result of the violence.<sup>162</sup> In January 2009, members of the ASG kidnapped three International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) employees working in the Sulu province; as of March 2009 they are being held for a ransom of \$5 million and their exact whereabouts are unknown.<sup>163</sup> These events further demonstrate the difficulty in eradicating terrorist presence in an area for good. The AFP and JSOTF-P must have the patience to remain in an area that has been cleared of terrorists long enough to see that the gains in security are consolidated and able to be managed and sustained by local security forces over the long term. Withdrawing from a location or region before these conditions are set creates a vacuum that allows the terrorists to return.<sup>164</sup>

Despite these setbacks, it is hard to refute the overall effectiveness of the JSOTF-P's indirect approach. The military capacity of the AFP to fight terrorists and terrorism has improved significantly. Aviators now possess a basic capability to fly using night-vision goggles (NVGs). Tactical level commanders are more proficient at developing intelligence to target terrorist networks and cells, and the soldiers are more proficient in the military fundamentals of shooting, moving, and communicating.<sup>165</sup> Thanks to combat focused medical training provided by the JSOTF-P, the number of wounded AFP soldiers surviving their injuries has increased significantly, a factor that greatly enhances a soldier's morale and willingness to fight. And at the more senior levels, AFP commanders are now better able to conduct integrated air, maritime, and

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<sup>162</sup>Adams, 10-12.

<sup>163</sup>Deutsche Press Agentur, "Abu Sayaff demands \$5-M for ICRC hostages in the Philippines," *Mindanao Examiner* (January 18, 2009): 1.

<sup>164</sup>Maxwell, Interview; Coultrup.

<sup>165</sup>Maxwell, "Commander's Summary of the Joint Special Operations Task Force Philippines (JSOTF-P)," 2006.

land operations.<sup>166</sup> Finally, the emphasis on Targeted CMO has seen a corresponding improvement in the participation and representation by many of the local government officials in the southern Philippines.<sup>167</sup>

Yet history is never written in the present. Therefore, it is too early to truly judge or evaluate the effectiveness of the JSOTF-P's indirect approach to IW in the Philippines--this can only be done accurately with the passage of time. Colonel Coultrup estimates the success of JSOTF-P operations as of October 2008 to be approximately at the "70 percent to 75 percent level."<sup>168</sup> Perhaps the true measure of the effectiveness of the JSOTF-P's indirect approach as it stands in 2009 lies in the fact that since 2002, JI and ASG have been essentially neutralized in the Philippines. The ASG has not conducted a significant attack against the Filipino populace since 2005, and their total numbers have been reduced from more than 1,200 in 2002 to less than 500.<sup>169</sup> In the absence of strategy, ASG has now largely turned to the criminal activities of kidnapping and narco-trafficking. Likewise, in 2009 JI personnel estimates in the Philippines are less than 100, and International Crisis Group (ICG) senior advisor Sidney Jones believes there are less than 50 foreign fighters (mostly Indonesians and Malaysians) present in Mindanao.<sup>170</sup> JI's regional connections with AQ have been largely degraded, and at the moment their vision of establishing a pan-regional caliphate across southeast-Asia seems nothing more than wishful thinking. Overall, as of 2009 the JSOTF-P's indirect approach to IW in the Philippines has been effective.

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<sup>166</sup>JSOTF-P Staff, "Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines," January 2009.

<sup>167</sup>Ibid.

<sup>168</sup>Boot and Bennet, 2009.

<sup>169</sup>Ibid.

<sup>170</sup>Estrella Torres,"50 Jihadists Stranded in Mindanao," *The Business Mirror* (January 20, 2009):

## SECTION V: CONCLUSION

This is *a* model, not *the* model.<sup>171</sup>

— Major General Salvatore Cambria, USA, Commander, SOCPAC

Major General Cambria's words in reference to the JSOTF-P remind us that there is no pre-formatted, cookie-cutter template or silver bullet formula for winning the Long War. His point is well taken and cannot be overstated. As the great Prussian military theorist Carl von Clausewitz writes, "it is simply not possible to construct a model for the art of war that can serve as a scaffolding on which the commander can rely for support at any time."<sup>172</sup> It is critical to remember that the JSOTF-P's method of employing the indirect approach to IW in the Philippines, and the tactics, techniques, and procedures further employed therein, are developed and tailored in accordance with the specific requirements of the mission and executed appropriately within the unique context of the Philippines operational environment.<sup>173</sup> It is therefore both unwise and unfair to make direct comparisons or to attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of U.S. military operations in the Philippines with on-going operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Each theater of operations represents a unique and distinct environment with unique political and military considerations and objectives. Indeed, this is true whenever and wherever U.S. military forces have been deployed throughout history.

Thus, the indirect approach is not a one-size-fits-all solution to winning the Long War. To be sure, there will be events and circumstances in the future that should and will require a direct U.S. military approach to IW. Such circumstances may include taking direct military action within the borders of a rogue, hostile, or lawless country to deny a terrorist group access to Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), or actions to prevent or pre-empt an imminent terrorist attack against the U.S. homeland or against interests deemed vital to national security.

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<sup>171</sup>Boot and Bennet, 2009.

<sup>172</sup>Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 161.

<sup>173</sup>Maxwell, Interview.

Considering all of the above, does the JSOTF-P's approach to conducting IW in the Philippines offer a suitable model for future U.S. military operations in support of the Long War? The answer is yes, under certain conditions. The indirect approach, as employed by the JSOTF-P, offers a model for the U.S. military to combat regional/global terrorism inside a partner nation's sovereign territory in which: the U.S. has an established Country Team; the partner nation has established and functional armed forces with an existing capacity to conduct COIN and CT operations; the partner nation's relevant population,<sup>174</sup> and therefore the political establishment, is sensitive to a large-scale, overt presence of American military personnel operating within the country or region; or the partner nation has a constitutional or otherwise legal prohibition against foreign military forces directly conducting combat operations within their sovereign territory.

## **Recommendations**

In accordance with the conditions outlined above, the following three recommendations are offered for employing an indirect approach to IW in support of the Long War:

First, DoD should employ an indirect approach to IW in Pakistan and India in order to facilitate the defeat of regional terrorist threats and to help reduce political and military tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan and Pakistan and India. In conjunction with on-going military operations in Afghanistan, and integrated/synchronized with the efforts of the Pakistani and Indian Country Teams, USCENTCOM and USPACOM should employ SOF in Pakistan and India (respectively) in order to further build each nation's military capacity to defeat terrorist groups and reduce lawlessness within their borders. These military efforts should be developed, coordinated, and integrated as part of a broader political, economic, and informational strategy for

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<sup>174</sup>In the case of the Philippines, the relevant population is the Muslim Filipinos living in Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago. Without their support, the ASG and JI ultimately have little chance of achieving their aims.

defeating terrorist networks not just in Afghanistan, but throughout Central Asia and the Indian sub-continent. Additionally, military efforts in these countries should be developed and coordinated as part of a broader American effort to reduce existing political and military tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and Pakistan and India.

Second, in accordance with Article 27 (Deterrence of Security Threats) of the *Agreement Between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq on the Withdrawal of United States Forces from Iraq and the Organization of Their Activities During Their Temporary Presence in Iraq*, upon request by the Government of Iraq, DoD should adopt an indirect approach to IW in Iraq by employing SOF, augmented by elements of the GPF as required, to continue to strengthen the Iraqi Security Forces' capacity to combat internal and external terrorist threats and insurgent groups.<sup>175</sup> A complete and total U.S. military withdrawal from Iraq in 2011 is unwise in that it potentially sets conditions for the re-emergence of terrorist and insurgent movements who will seek to exploit the newly created security vacuum and challenge the nascent

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<sup>175</sup>United States of America and the Republic of Iraq, "Agreement Between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq On the Withdrawal of United States Forces from Iraq and the Organization of Their Activities during Their Temporary Presence in Iraq," [http://74.125.47.132/search?q=cache:WTc4PhhLqeIJ:www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/iraq/SE\\_SOFA.pdf+us+iraq+sofa+agreement&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=3&gl=us](http://74.125.47.132/search?q=cache:WTc4PhhLqeIJ:www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/iraq/SE_SOFA.pdf+us+iraq+sofa+agreement&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=3&gl=us) (accessed January 27, 2009). Section 1 to Article 24 (Withdrawal of the United States Forces from Iraq) states, "All U.S. forces shall withdraw from Iraqi territory no later than December 31, 2011." However, Article 27 (Deterrence of Security Threats) provides an exception and retains the potential for continued, albeit limited, U.S. military presence by stating: "In order to strengthen security and stability in Iraq and to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and stability, the Parties shall work actively to strengthen the political and military capabilities of the Republic of Iraq to deter threats against its sovereignty, political independence, territorial integrity, and its constitutional federal democratic system. To that end, the Parties agree as follows: In the event of any external or internal threat or aggression against Iraq that would violate its sovereignty, political independence, or territorial integrity, waters, airspace, its democratic system or its elected institutions, and upon request by the Government of Iraq, the Parties shall immediately initiate strategic deliberations and, as may be mutually agreed, the United States shall take appropriate measures, including diplomatic, economic, or military measures, or any other measure, to deter such a threat. *The Parties agree to continue close cooperation in strengthening and maintaining military and security institutions and democratic political institutions in Iraq, including, as may be mutually agreed, cooperation in training, equipping, and arming the Iraqi Security Forces, in order to combat domestic and international terrorism and outlaw groups, upon request by the Government of Iraq. Iraqi land, sea, and air shall not be used as a launching or transit point for attacks against other countries.*"

Iraqi government and security forces for power.<sup>176</sup> Utilizing SOF in an indirect approach will provide select Iraqi Security Forces with the continued military training, advice, and assistance they require, while respecting Iraqi sovereignty and maintaining a very small and limited American military signature and logistics footprint.

Finally, when and where terrorist organizations threaten to emerge within the African continent, and when requested by a partner African nation, DoD should employ the indirect approach as the primary means for conducting IW within the United States Africa Command (USAFRICOM) Area of Responsibility (AOR). African nations have been very open about their concerns over the establishment of USAFRICOM as strictly a vehicle for the U.S. to continue prosecuting the GWOT.<sup>177</sup> African sensitivities to the issue are such that, as of 2009, USAFRICOM has been unable to find a suitable home on the continent and its headquarters is currently located in Stuttgart, Germany.<sup>178</sup> Since one of the key strengths of the indirect approach to IW is that it minimizes the signature and presence of U.S. forces and respects the sovereignty of the partner nation, the indirect approach may be a palatable alternative for some African countries. Additionally, the indirect approach is consistent with the stated USAFRICOM objective of “Building Partner Capacity.”<sup>179</sup>

This monograph concludes with the words of Lieutenant General Fridovich, who captures the essence of the JSOTF-P’s efforts as, “a demonstrable example of a successful interagency,

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<sup>176</sup>Anne Gearan, “Pentagon: Iraq Pullout Plan Being Prepared,” *Army Times* (January 18, 2009), [http://www.armytimes.com/news/2009/01/ap\\_iraq\\_pullout\\_plan\\_011509w/](http://www.armytimes.com/news/2009/01/ap_iraq_pullout_plan_011509w/) (accessed January 27, 2009). In a July 2008 statement made in response to the possibility of withdrawing all U.S. combat troops from Iraq within two years, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen said, “I think the consequences could be very dangerous. It is hard to say exactly what would happen. I’d worry about any kind of rapid movement out and creating instability where we have stability.”

<sup>177</sup>Dr. Amy Zalman, “AFRICOM: Controversial Command Suspected of Bringing US War on Terror to Africa,” *About.com*, July 15, 2007, <http://terrorism.about.com/od/globalwaronterror/a/AFRICOM.htm> (accessed January 27, 2009).

<sup>178</sup>U.S. Africa Command, Web Page, “About U.S. AFRICOM,” <http://www.africom.mil/AboutAFRICOM.asp> (accessed January 29, 2009).

<sup>179</sup>*Ibid.*



multinational indirect approach to combating terrorism.”<sup>180</sup> Applied within the context of the Long War, the indirect approach to IW as employed by the JSOTF-P offers senior U.S. policy makers and military commanders “a” model (not “the” model) worthy of consideration for conducting long-term military operations against terrorist networks in cooperation with a partner nation in a complex and sensitive socio-political environment.

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<sup>180</sup>Major General David P. Fridovich, interview by Jeff McKaughan, *Pacific Warrior: Building Capacity and Partnerships Throughout the Region*. Originally published in *Special Operations Technology*, 5, no. 2 (March 15, 2007), <http://intellibriefs.blogspot.com/2007/04/interview-us-commanding-general-special.html> (accessed February 18, 2009).

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