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**THESIS**

**CONDITIONS FOR MISSION COMPLETION IN LOW  
INTENSITY CONFLICT: OPERATION ENDURING  
FREEDOM-PHILIPPINES**

by

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June 2017

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**CONDITIONS FOR MISSION COMPLETION IN LOW INTENSITY  
CONFLICT: OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM–PHILIPPINES**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
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## **ABSTRACT**

In 2015, the U.S. officially concluded combat operations in the Philippines ending the 14-year mission. The general view among experts is that Operation Enduring Freedom–Philippines (OEF-P) achieved its underlying objectives and the U.S. government concluded combat operations determining OEF-P met U.S. strategic goals. This research highlights the phases leading to the conclusion of Joint Special Operations Task Force—Philippines and the sustainability of the Philippine government to continue operations to counter violent extremist activity. Has the impact of persistent engagement (operations) and building partner capacity (relationships) set the conditions for a peaceful future of the southern islands in the Philippines? Although the official determination of success has led to the completion of OEF-P, this thesis shows it is possible that operations did not remove the root causes of threats from violent extremist organizations.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
AOB	advanced operational base
AQ	al Qaeda
ARSOF	U.S. Army Special Operations Forces
ASG	Abu Sayyaf Group
CMO	civil–military operations
COIN	counter insurgency
DOD	U.S. Department of Defense
DoS	U.S. Department of State
FID	foreign internal defense
GCC	geographic combatant commander
GEM	Growth with Equity in Mindanao
HN	host nation
HVT	high value target
IDAD	internal defense and development
IO	information operations
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
ISR	intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance
JCET	joint combined exchange training
JSOTF-P	Joint Special Operations Task Force—Philippines
LCE	liaison coordination element
LIC	low intensity conflict
MEDCAP	medical civic action program
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MINCOM	Mindanao Command
MISO	military information support operations
MLE	military liaison element
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
NDAA	National Defense Authorization Act

NSA	National Security Agency
ODA	Operational Detachment—Alpha
OEF-P	Operation Enduring Freedom—Philippines
PAT	U.S. Pacific Command Augmentation Team
PNP	Philippine National Police
PSF	Philippine Security Forces
PSYOP	psychological operations
ROK	Republic of Korea
RP	Republic of the Philippines
SE	Southeast (Asia)
SF	special forces
SMEE	subject matter expert exchange
SOCOM	Special Operations Command
SOC PAC	Special Operations Command, Pacific
SOF	special operations forces
UAV	unmanned aerial vehicles
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USG	U.S. government
USPACOM	U.S. Pacific Command
VEO	violent extremist organization
VETCAP	veterinary civic action program

## I. INTRODUCTION

Joint Special Operations Task Force—Philippines (JSOTF-P) conducted operations in the southern Philippines from 2001–2015 under Operation Enduring Freedom—Philippines (OEF-P). The JSOTF-P officially deactivated in February 2015, marking a close to the 14-year mission. Scholarly work among some experts suggests JSOTF-P’s mission as one of the best examples of successful integration of joint special operations forces. The JSOTF-P (located in Mindanao) has transitioned authorities for advising Philippine commandos fighting Islamic separatists in the southern islands to a new support military liaison element program of record called the U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) Augmentation Team (PAT) (located in Manila). As the operational environment changed it brought the transition from combat operations.

Much of the existing body of literature examines early phases of JSOTF-P. Less has been written about the final phases for the drawdown and closure. However, a 2016 study conducted by the RAND Corporation does fully document all of “the activities and effects of special operations capabilities to address terrorist threats in Operation Enduring Freedom—Philippines.”<sup>1</sup> The RAND study provides a relevant overview but does not address how “winning” was accomplished in this low intensity conflict and what the future security concerns look like for the Philippines and Southeast (SE) Asia. The U.S. government concluded combat operations determining OEF-P met U.S. strategic goals. This thesis examines the role of stakeholders from Department of Defense (DOD) and interagency partners to determine the current status of Philippine security efforts post OEF-P.

### A. APPROACH

The researcher reviewed relevant literature to understand successful low intensity conflict strategies and outlined the uniqueness of combat operations in the Philippines. The study analyzed academic literature and statements from interagency partners and

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<sup>1</sup> Linda Robinson, Patrick B. Johnston, and Gillian S. Oak, *U.S. Special Operations Forces in the Philippines, 2001–2014* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016), [http://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR1236.html](http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1236.html), 1.

former OEF-P personnel to examine the Philippines as a case study of apparently successful operations. Although the literature reveals differing methods, the researcher examined the literature by looking at the problem of defining and measuring effectiveness in low intensity conflicts in the case of JSOTF-P.

To analyze the impact on U.S. engagement and building partner capacity efforts in relation to Philippine security concerns following OEF-P completion, the researcher used qualitative methods, derived from organizational and bureaucratic politics theory and low intensity conflict theory as the foundation of this study. The material is used to analyze the impact on U.S. engagement and building partner capacity. First in the thesis, organizational and bureaucratic theory defines the environment and the relationships of both JSOTF-P and Department of State (DoS) with the appropriate authorities. It will also show the nature of the PAT compared to JSOTF-P using organizational theory ideas. This should lead the reader to consider potential cultural differences between key stakeholders from the U.S. government and the Philippines. Then, low intensity theory sets up the model for the Philippines.

This methodology allows the researcher to rely on existing literature to provide a structured focus comparison throughout the evolution of mission phases. The analysis examines the key phases leading up to the closure and transition of OEF-P to ensure integrity and reliability throughout the work. The methodology also aims to address the impact of sustainability efforts following the result of U.S. engagements. Ultimately, this study demonstrates how foreign internal defense missions set up the partner force for independent success. The research reviews multiple sources, including published documents and academic literature, to verify key points and participant interviews.

The general field of organizational theory is often characterized by an attempt to define how organizations should function to achieve maximum output. This optimization is not rooted in a fixed body of knowledge, as seen with the hard sciences like chemistry and physics. Rather it is more of a set of progressive and empirical practices that are



designed to streamline an organization's ability to maximize output in a holistic fashion.<sup>2</sup> Without a foundation in organizational theory, a system or process may never reach its full potential. With a foundation in theory, organizations can still perform poorly.

The U.S. government consists of many types of large organizations such as the Department of State to United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and, most important to this research, the Department of Defense. The U.S. military is controlled from the top down by the commander in chief and other civilian leaders, followed by general officers on down to operational and tactical commanders. Graham Allison discusses government behavior by rational decision makers through the organizational process stating, "Each organization attends to a special set of problems and acts in quasi-independence on these problems."<sup>3</sup> From the multiple organizations to choose from, JSOTF-P is an example of a specific mission set with the goal of fighting terrorism while assisting Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) partner forces. According to Beaudette, through a variety of subject matter expert exchanges (SMEEs), the AFP organization gained the capability to effectively use programs with non-government agency partners to carry out these civic action programs.<sup>4</sup> AFP partners understood the organizational process needed to effectively conduct civic action programs to aid the population and areas targeted against violent extremist organizations (VEOs). With the help from the U.S. government, Beaudette points out, the Philippine government also recognized the organizational process producing the Internal Peace and Security Plan- Bayanihan.<sup>5</sup> Not only is JSOTF-P used as an example of a specific

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<sup>2</sup> Richard M. Burton, *Strategic Organizational Diagnosis and Design: Developing a Theory for Application* (Boston, MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998); Richard Daft, *Organizational Theory and Design* (Mason, OH: Thompson/South Western, 2004); Henry Mintzberg, *The Structuring of Organizations* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc. 1979); Henry Mintzberg. "Dealing with Culture," in *The Strategy Process: Concepts, Contexts, and Cases*, ed. James Brian Quinn, Henry Mintzberg, and Robert M. James (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1988), 351–358.

<sup>3</sup> Graham Allison, "Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis," in *International Relations Theory*, ed. Paul Viotti and Mark Kauppi (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company 1987), 282–331.

<sup>4</sup> Fran Beaudette, "JSOTF-P Uses Whole-of-Nation Approach to Bring Stability to the Philippines," *Special Warfare* 25, no. 3 (2012): 9–12.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

mission set, but the PAT is left to bridge the organizational gap between combat and interagency operations.

Finally, this research analyzes the evolution of kinetic to non-kinetic operations and factors of foreign internal defense to determine if measures of effectiveness regarding low intensity conflict in the Philippines led to the successful operations and mission completion. Then this research examines information tools, termination factors, way ahead in the region, security cooperation, maintaining regional military posture to determine the impact of information warfare in the Philippines. The analysis seeks to find if the initial results are sustainable by partner forces, and how the future security environment may be affected without JSOTF-P resources.

## **1. Research Questions**

This project attempts to answer the following questions: What factors led U.S. authorities to believe OEF-P was a success and should be officially concluded? Are the results sustainable over the long term? What likely impact do current U.S. engagements and building partner capacity efforts in the Philippines have on the country's future security?

The research starts with an analytical foundation using organizational, bureaucratic politics, and low intensity conflict theory as a baseline for the case study of the Philippines. Following this review, the research analyzes the mission, structure, and characteristics as OEF-P begins the transition from combat operations. Finally, this research evaluates multiple factors as measures of effectiveness in low intensity conflict as a way to anticipate the way forward in the region as well as their impacts on the Philippines.

## **2. Bureaucratic Politics and Low Intensity Conflict Theory as an Analytical Foundation**

One important idea in organizational theory comes from Max Weber's notion of bureaucracy. This theory is centered on the fundamental idea that bureaucratic organizations provide oversight, responsibility, and quality control. As Rieger explains, the bureaucratic model is rooted in a hierarchical and divisional formation organized around

the required task.<sup>6</sup> For example, the U.S. Army utilizes the term “task organization” for a unit or organization developed to accomplish a specific task.

Max Weber’s idea of organizational bureaucracy is deeply rooted in government organizations. Even though bureaucracy is deeply engrained in government culture, James Q. Wilson wrote, “Bureaucracy is not the simple, uniform phenomenon it is sometimes made out to be.”<sup>7</sup> Zegart explains that, as illustrated by the U.S. government’s (USG’s) convoluted web of bureaucratic agencies such as the joint chiefs, the National Security Agency (NSA), and the Central Intelligence Agency, an agency’s inter-organizational task approach may define success or failure.<sup>8</sup> According to Amy Zegart, former NSA Secretary Michael Hayden stated with regard to the NSA’s bureaucratic model, “We’ve got it backwards. We start with our internal tradecraft, believing that customers will ultimately benefit”—when, in fact, the agency needed to focus first on the needs of the customers (the White House, the Defense Department, and the rest of the intelligence community), then align its tradecraft to those tasks.<sup>9</sup>

In relation to the USG bureaucratic organization structure, Zegart asserts, “Presidents (principals) have no choice but to rely on bureaucrats (agents) who do not completely share their interests; this necessity, coupled with the president’s inability to monitor agency activity fully, provides fertile ground for bureaucratic noncompliance.”<sup>10</sup> What some today call the deep state. Whether in a functional bureaucracy or a divisional adhocracy, the external environment influences the organizational form. Undoubtedly there are numerous incidents to draw from to discuss the bureaucratic process model. Working with the DoS, USAID, and the Republic of the Philippines captures a snapshot

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<sup>6</sup> Bradley J. Rieger, “Lessons in Productivity and People,” *Training & Development* 49, no. 10 (1995): 56–59.

<sup>7</sup> James Q. Wilson, *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It* (New York: Basic Books, 1989).

<sup>8</sup> Amy B. Zegart, *Flawed by Design: The Evolution of the CIA, JCS, and NSC* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

of the bureaucratic politics dealt with in SE Asia. Graham Allison states in *International Relations Theory*,

The bureaucratic politics model sees no unitary actor but rather many actors as players, who focus not on a single strategic issue but on many diverse intra-national problems as well, in terms of no consistent set of strategic objectives but rather according to various conceptions of national, organizational, and personal goals, making government decisions not by rational choice but by the pulling and hauling that is politics.<sup>11</sup>

President Obama stated that U.S. foreign policy will pivot to SE Asia so as to strengthen ties with U.S. partner nations in the region.<sup>12</sup> This policy directly affects the U.S. mission in the Philippines, showing the commitment of the U.S. in SE Asia and the Philippines.

Understanding the nature of bureaucratic politics for all stakeholders involved becomes increasingly important during low intensity conflicts (LICs). Essential to the process is understanding who is involved, what do they want, what are the organizational cultures, and where the tensions lay. LICs became increasingly prevalent following the 9/11 attacks, and they play a major role in the implications of regional and national security concerns. Each of the geographic combatant commands (GCCs) currently engages numerous threats to national security abroad in their respective areas. Not only do these GCC commanders have to navigate the political climate, but their subordinate commanders and planners must understand the process in addition to the commander's intent. A great deal of work has been dedicated to analyzing the Philippines pre 9/11 with Joint Task Force 510 and the transition to combat operations through JSOTF-P.<sup>13</sup> Following 9/11, President Bush ordered combat operations to address the global war on

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<sup>11</sup> Allison, "Conceptual Models," 309.

<sup>12</sup> Mark E. Manyin, *Pivot to the Pacific? The Obama Administration's "Rebalancing" towards Asia* (CRS Report No. R42448) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2012), <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R42448.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> The following sources provide context to the development of OEF-P: Robinson, Johnston, and Oak, *U.S. Special Operations Forces*; Max Boot and Richard Bennet, "Treading Softly in the Philippines: Why a Low-Intensity Counterinsurgency Strategy Seems to Be Working There," *Weekly Standard* 14, no. 16 (2009): 1–15, <http://www.weeklystandard.com/treading-softly-in-the-philippines/article/17038>; David S. Maxwell, "Operation Enduring Freedom—Philippines: What Would Sun-Tzu Say?" *Military Review* LXXXIV, no. 3 (2004): 20–23; Hy Rothstein, "Less Is More: The Problematic Future of Irregular Warfare in an Era of Collapsing States," *Third World Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (2007): 275–294; Gregory Wilson, "Anatomy of a Successful COIN Operation: OEF-Philippines and the Indirect Approach," *Military Review* LXXXVI, no. 6 (2006): 2–12.

terror in Afghanistan and Iraq. In addition, lesser-known counterterrorism efforts were also stood up in SE Asia and, more specifically, in the Philippines. JSOTF-P conducted operations in the southern Philippines from 2001–2015 under OEF-P and officially deactivated in February 2015, marking a close to the 14-year mission. The operations transitioned authorities from advising Philippine commandos fighting Islamic separatists in the southern islands to support SOCPAC’s military liaison element program of record working through the U.S. embassy and with the interagency. Typically, PAT missions in SE Asia conduct operations with a small footprint, low signature special operations forces (SOF). However, since the Philippines transitioned authorities the PAT was left more robust but still operating similarly to JSOTF-P.

A variety of sources from policy to doctrine address the fundamentals of LIC. As defined by the Field Manual (FM) 100–20, “LIC is a political military confrontation between contending states or groups below conventional war and above the routine, peaceful competition among states.”<sup>14</sup> The employment of combat forces as a tool to achieve success in LIC supports both national interests and homeland security. Low intensity counter operations or counter-guerrilla warfare follows the 13 guidelines or principles influenced by the work of Sir Robert Thompson. Some of the more important guidelines are the support of the population, economy of force, ground level integration, deployment of special units, and time.<sup>15</sup> These concepts are further expanded upon in relation to models used by scholars writing about the LIC.

## **B. LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT IN THE PHILIPPINES**

The southern Philippines is comprised of multiple regions that are poorly governed, leading to conditions ripe for insurgencies. Corruption from the local government adds to the growing security concerns. David Kilcullen’s book *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the midst of a Big One* describes extensive experience from many operating theaters regarding the anatomy of an insurgency.

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<sup>14</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *Military Operations in Low Intensity Conflict* (FM 100-20) (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, 1990), 1-11.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam* (New York: F. A. Praeger, 1966).

Kilcullen describes the “accidental guerrilla” as the mass social movements formed in response to oppression are the people who are not really hardened terrorists but have joined these movements because they lack other alternatives.<sup>16</sup> Dr. Zachary Abuza has dedicated many of his scholarly writings to the analysis of political and security in SE Asia, discussing the complex security environment from both internal and external challenges the Philippines faces.<sup>17</sup> Internal threats come from the violent extremist organizations such as Abu Sayyaf, Moro Islamic Liberation Front, New People’s Army, while external threats were focused on maritime interests in the disputed South China Sea. From the military viewpoint, one of these concerns has been the training and equipment of AFP. Was the AFP properly suited to meet the security challenges?

JSOTF-P provided a necessary venue to increase partner capacity and bring needed external resources to address security concerns, but at what expense and how sustainable were these resources to the AFP? The articles “Less Is More: The Problematic Future of Irregular Warfare in an Era of Collapsing States” and “Tread Softly in the Philippines: Why a Low-Intensity Counterinsurgency Strategy Seems to be Working There” provide good examples of underlying principles from which low intensity conflict can draw.<sup>18</sup> Rothstein compares case examples from low intensity conflicts in El Salvador and the Philippines on the success of using small teams with minimal resources to accomplish military strategy while serving policy objectives to combat operations in Afghanistan.<sup>19</sup> He goes on to argue that compared to Iraq and Afghanistan, resolving the LIC in the Philippines cost significantly less in personnel and resources with more successful results.

During the 1990s, VEOs in the southern Philippines regions of Basilan, Jolo, and Mindanao lacked sufficient training and personnel, leaving them to rely upon ties to

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<sup>16</sup> David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the midst of a Big One* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>17</sup> Zachary Abuza, *The Philippines: Internal and External Security Challenges*, (Special Report 45) (Sydney: Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2012), <https://www.aspi.org.au/publications/special-report-issue-45-the-philippines-internal-and-external-security-challenges>.

<sup>18</sup> Boot and Bennet, “Treading Softly in the Philippines;” Rothstein, “Less Is More.”

<sup>19</sup> Rothstein, “Less Is More,” 275–294.

transnational terrorist groups for support. Boot and Bennet discuss the change in momentum by Philippine armed forces, shifting from a traditional strategy of force to one of intelligence enhanced by civil military operations and information dominance.<sup>20</sup> JSOTF-P's focus on countering insurgencies produced many successful models early in its the history. As the operation progressed, JSOTF-P's efforts focused more on capability building through targeted civic action programs aimed to gain an informational and human domain advantage.<sup>21</sup> Beginning in 2010, JSOTF-P and the Philippine armed forces assessed VEO safe havens for neutralizing. JSOTF-P would transition to a higher level advisory role while reducing forces, closing bases, and beginning to scale down to a more minimal footprint in Manila. Along with the closure brought the downsizing of resources for dedicated air assets, for medical evacuation support, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) leaving the question of whether the AFP were capable of sustaining operations in the southern Philippines without many of the capabilities JSOTF-P provided.<sup>22</sup>

### C. DEBATE: JSOTF-P AS A MODEL

Many scholars debate whether JSOTF-P's mission was one of the best models of Joint Special Operations Forces integration. A number of former JSOTF-P commanders and staff planners (Beaudette, Maxwell, Wilson, and Wendt) have written about the successes of the mission and suggest using the Philippines as a model for counterinsurgency or guerilla warfare.<sup>23</sup> For example, Beaudette uses his experience as a JSOTF-P commander to explore the human domain of warfare as an effective model

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<sup>20</sup> Boot and Bennet, "Treading Softly in the Philippines."

<sup>21</sup> Beaudette, "JSOTF-P Uses Whole-of-Nation Approach."

<sup>22</sup> Robinson, Johnston, and Oak, *U.S. Special Operations Forces*, 82.

<sup>23</sup> The following sources provide context from former JSOTF-P members: Maxwell, "Operation Enduring Freedom;" Wilson, "Anatomy of a Successful COIN;" Fran Beaudette, *Philippine Counterinsurgency Success: Implications for the Human Domain of Warfare* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2013), <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?A D=A DA588594>. McCormick's model of insurgency is best captured in Eric P. Wendt, "Strategic Counterinsurgency Modeling," *Special Warfare* 18, no. 2 (2005): 2–12. The work by McCormick is an important piece to this thesis, many of the models used by Wendt and Wilson, the class lecture notes are essential to be captured as McCormick has not formally published his work but has been extremely influential on the SOF community.

applied to the responsibility to protect and enforce human security.<sup>24</sup> SOF play an essential role in understanding human domain with relation to strategic security concerns. SOF's ability to advise and assist host nation partners not only builds partner capacity but also builds lasting relationships in the human domain. Beaudette examines the dramatic shift of the strategic approach in the Philippines government from countering insurgency to winning peace and security in the southern region. His findings suggest a strategy that clearly focuses on people first rather than the enemy, which indicates we should consider a more comprehensive operating environment. This is a new warfighting domain, the human domain.<sup>25</sup>

#### **D. INDIRECT APPROACH IN THE PHILIPPINES**

According to Wilson, "The indirect approach of working by, with, and through indigenous forces has remained consistent throughout OEF-P."<sup>26</sup> During the initial phase of OEF-P, Maxwell compares operations in the Philippines to those described by Sun Tzu when he generalizes that theater and national level U.S. military leaders did not understand the environment. In addition, Maxwell argues that a key aspect of the U.S. shortfalls in counter- insurgency was not understanding how to properly employ advisory forces. He concludes special operations forces role in advising and assisting partner forces was pivotal in achieving mutual strategic objectives in the Philippines.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, Maxwell discusses significant strategic errors on the part of U.S. advisors in not directly attacking terrorist groups in the southern Philippines, which would lead to a future strategic shift articulated at the Philippine national level.

The concept discussed by Beaudette of focusing human security concerns following the years of unrest was now addressed at the national level by the Philippine government through the Internal Peace and Security Plan "Bayanihan." Both Wendt and Wilson discuss the application of Gordon McCormick's strategic counter insurgency

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<sup>24</sup> Beaudette, *Philippine Counterinsurgency Success*.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>26</sup> Wilson, "Anatomy of a Successful COIN," 40.

<sup>27</sup> Maxwell, "Operation Enduring Freedom."



(COIN) model, the diamond model, as the framework between host-nation government, insurgents, local populace, and international actors or sponsors against Abu Sayyaf on Basilan in 2002.<sup>28</sup> Although McCormick has not yet finalized his writings, many of his theories from Vietnam era case studies have been used successfully to outline guerilla warfare models similar to those in the Philippines.<sup>29</sup> Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the diamond model.

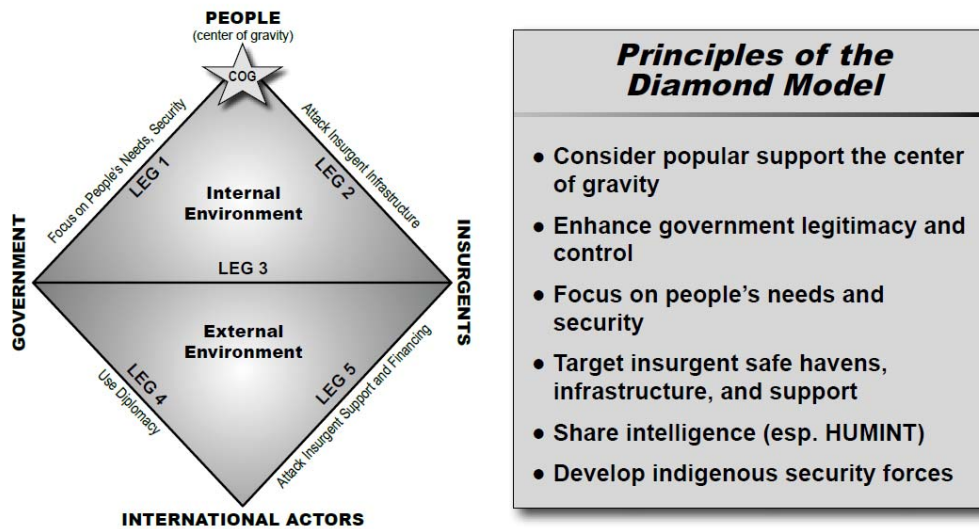


Figure 1. Diamond Model<sup>30</sup>

During his lectures on guerilla warfare, McCormick stresses that the side able to more quickly overcome its disadvantage will come out victorious.<sup>31</sup> Wendt's article "Strategic Counterinsurgency Modeling" applies McCormick's diamond model as a

<sup>28</sup> In 1994, Gordon McCormick created the triangle insurgent/COIN model. He later created the diamond model to capture the interaction with external international actors. See Gordon H. McCormick, *A "Pocket Guide" to Internal War* (Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, forthcoming).

<sup>29</sup> McCormick's model of insurgency is best captured in Wendt, "Strategic Counterinsurgency."

<sup>30</sup> Source: Wilson, "Anatomy of a Successful COIN," 40.

<sup>31</sup> Gordon McCormick, "Seminar on Guerilla Warfare" (class notes, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, February 22, 2016).

framework for the island of Basilan in the Philippines. In the article, Wendt describes the importance of each leg of the model to successfully plan and execute COIN:<sup>32</sup>

The diamond has five legs. In order for a government to successfully counter an insurgency, it must build its legitimacy and control with the population (Leg 1), then lower the insurgent force's legitimacy and control with the population (Leg 2). Building legitimacy and control with the population allows the government to acquire the actionable intelligence needed to be effective in killing or capturing members of the insurgent infrastructure. While attacking legs 1 and 2, the government must determine if the insurgency has external support. If so, the government must build its legitimacy in the eyes of relevant international actors (other governments, nongovernment organizations, private volunteer organizations, etc.), represented by Leg 4 of the diamond. Building external legitimacy will bring increased external support to the government from the international community. The government must also attempt to reduce external support to the insurgents by minimizing or destroying the insurgent group's support and sanctuary from international actors (Leg 5).<sup>33</sup>

The debate regarding JSOTF-P as a model and the indirect approach offer an unconventional warfare model in relation to the analysis of current COIN doctrine. McCormick argues that the United States continues to use conventional forces to fight low intensity conflict type wars wherein a smaller footprint may better achieve the intended results. The diamond model and early scholarly work of JSOTF-P personnel portrays the early successes of the operation. However, was OEF-P really a success, more of a "weak win," or simply a "lull" in insurgent activity over the 14-year mission? The indirect approach provides a framework for the new way of thinking and analysis. The research explores the development of JSOTF-P's mission, as well as a change in the strategic approach throughout OEF-P.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> McCormick's model of insurgency is best captured in Wendt, "Strategic Counterinsurgency Modeling."

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>34</sup> McCormick, "Seminar on Guerilla Warfare."

## **II. OEF-P TRANSITION TO INTERAGENCY APPROACH**

This section outlines the mission, structure, and characteristics of the “whole of government” practices in the Philippines. The unique relationship between the United States and the Philippines provide material for an in-depth discussion. Although there were the multiple organizations to choose from for this research, JSOTF-P provides an example of a specific mission set with the goal of fighting terrorism while assisting AFP partner forces. This was not only the joint military’s effort but broader collaboration between both countries.

### **A. MISSION, STRUCTURE, AND CHARACTERISTICS**

The U.S. and Philippine militaries have continued to maintain a strong relationship despite U.S. military base closures in the Philippines during the early 1990s. As the Philippine government addressed rising counterterrorism threats, the United States reinforced military relationships to assist in training and equipping a capable Philippine security force.<sup>35</sup> OEF-P conducted operations in the southern Philippines from 2001 to 2015 through the work of JSOTF-P. Under the command of United States Pacific Command, SOCPAC formed JSOTF-P to address security concerns with the global war on terror. The overarching mission of JSOTF-P was: “JSOTF-P builds capacity and strengthens the Republic of the Philippines (RP) security forces to defeat selected terrorist organizations in order to protect U.S. and RP citizens and interests from terrorist attack while preserving RP sovereignty.”<sup>36</sup> The overall OEF-P operational design contained four lines of operation: capacity building, targeted civil-military operations (CMO), information gathering and sharing, and information operations.<sup>37</sup> These lines of operation provide the basis for JSOTF-P operations to train, advise, and assist Philippine

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<sup>35</sup> In reference to the JSOTF-P operational design see: Joint Special Operations Task Force—Philippines, “JSOTF-P Overview Brief FEB 2008 ver 202” [PowerPoint], February 2008, [www.socom.mil/iw/GSC%20Briefing/JSOTF-P\\_Overview\\_Brief\\_FEB\\_2008\\_ver%202.ppt](http://www.socom.mil/iw/GSC%20Briefing/JSOTF-P_Overview_Brief_FEB_2008_ver%202.ppt), slide 11.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

security forces by providing direct support and intelligence, civil military operations, and information operations sharing.

During the evolution of the campaign, JSOTF-P transitioned through several phases. In 2001, the first phase stood up Joint Task Force (JTF)-510, which focused its efforts on the island of Basilan to counter Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG). The initial assessment of JTF-510 deployed 1,300 personnel from Army and Navy SOF units.<sup>38</sup> JTF-510 operations in Basilan laid the groundwork for JSOTF-P with follow on missions extending to Jolo and Sulu archipelagos. In 2008, JSOTF-P expanded to central Mindanao operating at the tactical level with its counterparts at the battalion and brigade levels. Figure 2 provides JSOTF-P disposition with the AFP in 2008.<sup>39</sup>

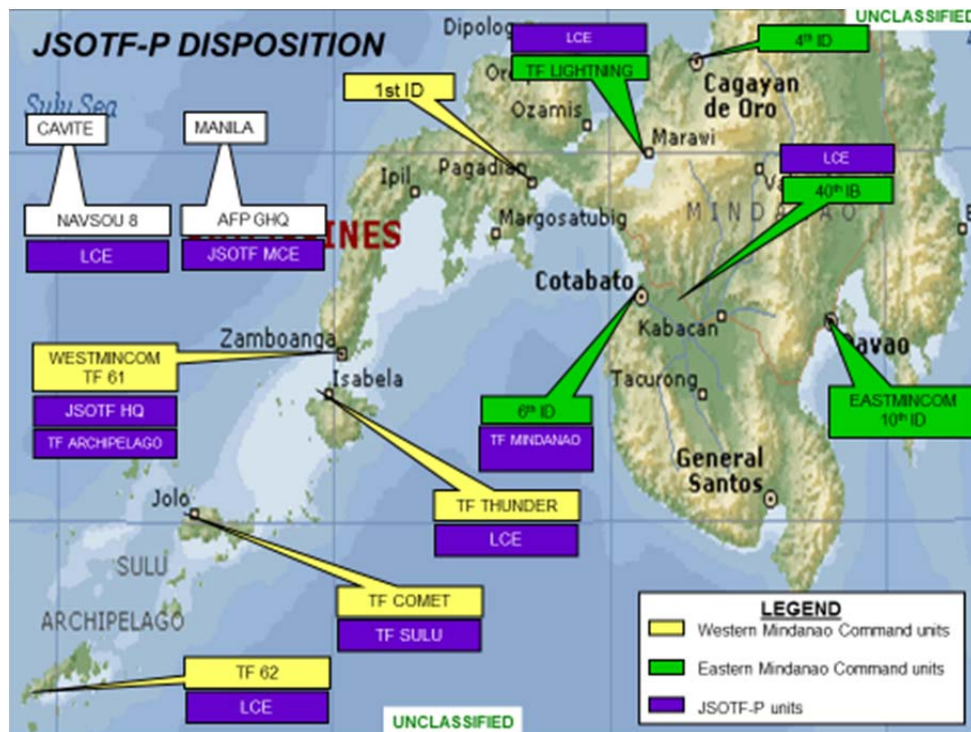


Figure 2. Force Allocation and Command Structure<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Linda Robinson, "The SOF Experience in the Philippines and the Implications for Future Defense Strategy," *Prism* 6, no. 3 (2016): 153.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Source: Joint Special Operations Task Force—Philippines, "JSOTF-P Overview Brief."

During this phase, JSOTF-P maintained 500–600 personnel on a rotational basis. Unique to JSOTF-P were liaison coordination elements (LCE) comprised of SOF Operational Detachment-Alpha with the mission of advise and assist to AFP units within their respective areas of operation. Additionally, JSOTF-P was divided into three task forces. Task Force (TF) Sulu operated on the islands of Jolo and Tawi Tawi and partnered with AFP Marine units. TF Archipelago operated on the islands of Basilan and the Zamboanga peninsula. Both these task forces partnered with Philippine units from Western Mindanao Command. TF Mindanao operated on the island of Mindanao and partnered with Philippine units from Eastern Mindanao Command. The partnership between JSOTF-P and the AFP aligned their forces between the two major commands under Western and Eastern MINCOM as well as the respective task forces in those areas of responsibility.<sup>41</sup>

JSOTF-P's efforts provided a variety of resources for land, air, and maritime operations. The use of JSOTF-P contracted resources delivered an essential capability for both U.S. military forces and armed forces of the Philippines in intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance support, and medical evacuation capabilities. Figure 3 depicts the available resources that JSOTF-P and AFP forces had in theatre during OEF-P.

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<sup>41</sup> Robinson, Johnston, and Oak, *U.S. Special Operations Forces*.

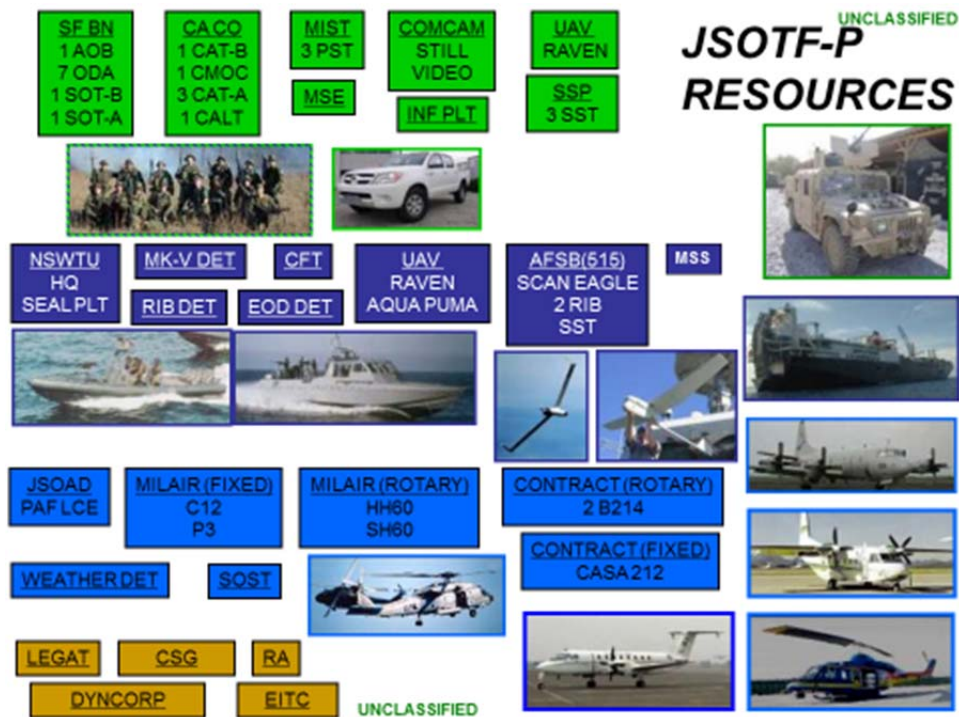


Figure 3. List of Available Resources for JSOTF-P and AFP Forces<sup>42</sup>

As the mission evolved, JSOTF-P began transitioning to higher level advisory roles and took a greater role with interagency coordination from 2010–2012.<sup>43</sup> JSOTF-P forces shifted from advising AFP units from the tactical level commands to the operational commands. U.S. forces consolidated outposts on central Mindanao and now took on the role of advising at the AFP division commands. As JSOTF-P decreased its footprint in the south, it also increased its the liaison role within the U.S. embassy and USAID. The final phase of transition planning began in 2012 and JSOTF-P officially concluded combat operations in 2015. Although the roles of JSOTF-P and combat operations have concluded, the U.S. SOF advisory mission remains. The SOCOM program of record is the military liaison element, which SOCPAC refers to as PAT. One subject matter expert, Dr. Douglas Borer, has observed both JSOTF-P and the PAT are staffed by “operators” who have dealt with years of SOF combat operations.<sup>44</sup> Therefore,

<sup>42</sup> Source: Joint Special Operations Task Force—Philippines. “JSOTF-P Overview Brief.”

<sup>43</sup> Robinson, “The SOF Experience,” 156.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Douglas A. Borer, Monterey CA, May 24, 2017.

they think, act, train, and advise with a more tactical combat focused lens.<sup>45</sup> However, the PAT is expected to fill a broader liaison role that focuses less on tactical operations and more on diplomacy. The shift in the nature of the JSOTF-P and the PAT requires an adaptable leader able to achieve maximum output in complex environments. Since 2015, this element has been responsible for the interagency coordination of military efforts throughout the Philippines.

## **B. DEPARTMENT OF STATE/ UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

The joint strategic plan for the DoS and USAID outline their mission and goals. From the fiscal years 2014–2017, the *Joint Strategic Plan* the mission states, “DoS and USAID will shape and sustain a peaceful, prosperous, just, and democratic world, and foster conditions for stability and progress for the benefit of the American people and people everywhere.”<sup>46</sup> The overarching strategic goals aim to strengthen America’s economic reach, strengthen America’s foreign policy impact, promote a more climate resilient world through sustainable energy, protect core U.S. interests in democracy and human rights, and modernize how the United States carries out diplomacy and development.<sup>47</sup> In the case of the Philippines, the stated U.S. goal is “to support a more stable, prosperous, and well governed Philippines that was no longer a haven for foreign terrorist organizations.”<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, according to DoS 2009 report, the U.S. embassy pledged continued support for “counterterrorism efforts, maritime security, defense institutional reform, and the transitioning of the internal security mission from the AFP to the Philippine National Police.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> U.S. Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development, *U.S. Department of State-USAID FY 2014–2017 Joint Strategic Plan* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development, 2014), <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/223997.pdf>, 1.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>48</sup> U.S. Department of State, *U.S. Mission to the Philippines, Country Assistance Strategy, 2009–2013* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, 2009), 5, 15.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

According to the DoS website, the United States Foreign Service assigns officers globally to U.S. embassies, consulates, and other diplomatic missions to formulate and implement U.S. foreign policies with “the mission to promote peace, support prosperity, and protect American citizens abroad.”<sup>50</sup> The U.S. ambassador is responsible for the coordination of government operations to meet the diplomatic efforts abroad. Henry Nash highlights this role in his work on American foreign policy, stating, “In foreign areas the key person authorized to coordinate government operations is the ambassador. This authority has been delegated to him (or her) by the Secretary of State and made the ambassador responsible for the direction, coordination, and supervision of interdepartmental activities sponsored by the government overseas.”<sup>51</sup> The organization and hierarchy of an embassy can be seen in Figure 4.

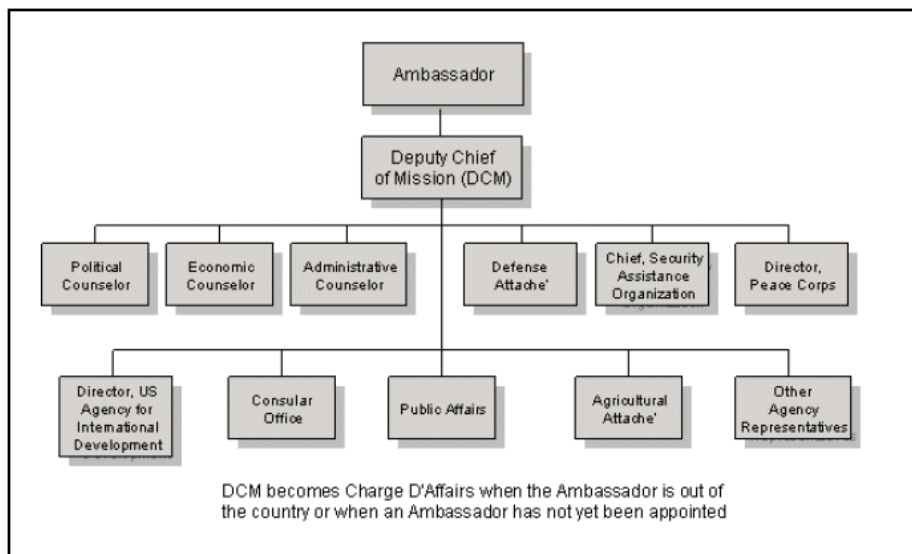


Figure 4. U.S. Embassy Mission in the Philippines<sup>52</sup>

The country team consists of the heads of each embassy section and U.S. government agency assigned to the countries post. Each section contributes to the

<sup>50</sup> “Foreign Service Officers” U.S. Department of State, May 25, 2017, <https://careers.state.gov/work/foreign-service/officer/>.

<sup>51</sup> Henry T. Nash, *American Foreign Policy: Response to a Threat* (Homewood, IL: Dorsey, 1974), 74.

<sup>52</sup> Source: U.S. Department of the Army, *Counterinsurgency Operations* (FM 3-07.22) (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, 2004), 2-11.



mission strategic plan and advises the ambassador within her or his area of expertise on how to best promote U.S. interests in the country. Historically, the career ambassadors in the U.S. Embassy—Manila strongly supported and guided the overall efforts of JSOTF-P. The U.S. military conducts missions that support host nation strategy plans. The ambassador is in charge of reviewing and overseeing both the mission performance plan and country action plans to synchronize a whole of government approach.

In addition to organizational chart in Figure 4, U.S. Embassy—Manila includes a robust defense attaché section. This section consists of Joint U.S. Military Advisory Group, which is the U.S. Security Assistance Office in charge of coordinating all military exercises and operations. The JSOTF-P was significantly autonomous from the Joint U.S. Military Advisory Group. During the final phases of OEF-P, JSOTF-P provided key personnel to the U.S. embassy to act as liaisons to coordinate joint efforts through the Law Enforcement Working Group and the Mindanao Working Group. Due to the security concerns, members of the country team often relied upon the air assets and security of JSOTF-P to oversee programs in the southern Philippines. This joint collaboration was also seen in the USAID office. JSOTF-P provided a civil affairs officer to act as the USAID liaison officer and seamlessly integrate operations in the southern Philippines and Manila.

USAID's largest program is Growth with Equity in Mindanao (GEM). Linda Robinson highlights this program in her article "The SOF Experience in the Philippines," saying, "GEM totaled \$180.9 million between 2002 and 2012 and was aimed in part at providing training and employment for demobilized fighters."<sup>53</sup> This program also led to follow on grants that supported the Mindanao peace and development programs.<sup>54</sup>

The argument can be made that the close relationship and coordination in the joint interagency led to the success of JSOTF-P. The whole of government approach also facilitated the successful transition to an interagency approach as combat operations concluded. This concept is used in the following chapter to analyze the effectiveness of various factors related to regional security concerns in the Philippines.

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<sup>53</sup> Robinson, "The SOF Experience," 156.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

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### **III. MEASURES OF EFFECTIVENESS IN LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT FOR SECURITY FORCES**

This section analyzes the debate between kinetic and non-kinetic operations, foreign internal defense, and termination factors by exploring how U.S. military forces used information strategy and warfare leading up to the closing of JSOTF-P and how the shared technologies, successes, failures, and sharing of information through exchanges built a capable partner in SE Asia. The factors of warfare discussed draw upon the information age with relation to civil military and information operations, and the sharing of information from collaborated experiences in the Philippines. It also provides diversity of differing perspectives on the successful use of non-kinetic operations.

#### **A. KINETIC TO NON-KINETIC OPERATIONS**

In his second term, President Obama issued a series of announcements indicating a shift to Asia, not only economically, but in all areas of statecraft. The rebalance to Asia remains one of the clearest visions by the Obama administration to the United States expanding and taking on a greater role in the region.<sup>55</sup> Deriving from multiple interviews with President Obama, Jeffrey Goldberg says, “For years, the pivot to Asia has been a paramount priority of his. America’s economic future lies in Asia, he believes, and the challenge posed by China’s rise requires constant attention.”<sup>56</sup> From the Pacific Command’s perspective, it is clear that the increase of dedicated U.S. assets to the Pacific area show the commitment of defense forces to expand U.S. presence in Asia with the mission endstate of peace and prosperity throughout the region.<sup>57</sup> This has significant potential impact to the emerging information age and its implications for the future conduct of military affairs in Southeast (SE) Asia. Specifically, with the closing of Joint Special Operations Philippines, the United States’ military operations transition from an

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<sup>55</sup> Manyin, *Pivot to the Pacific?*

<sup>56</sup> Jeffrey Goldberg, “The Obama Doctrine,” *The Atlantic*, April 2016, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/04/the-obama-doctrine/471525/>.

<sup>57</sup> Harry Harris, “U.S. Pacific Command Guidance,” May 27, 2015, <http://www.pacom.mil/Portals/55/Documents/USPACOM%20Mission%20Vision%20Guiding%20Principles.pdf>.

advisory combat role to liaison element within the embassy leaves our Philippine military partners to take the reins.

The al-Suri doctrine, as analyzed in *Architect of Global Jihad* written by Brynjar Lia, provide a case that the mutual relationship between the U.S. and Philippine military needs to adapt to the complexity of the environment.<sup>58</sup> His doctrine provides the argument of both the old way and new way that organizations exist. Because of over a decade of war in the Middle East, many question whether the continued kinetic operations have been successful. The Philippines model, in some respects, follows the old way described by al-Suri; however, it can be argued it has not yet shown the new system or call to global Islamic resistance. In both cases, al-Suri presents his views on organizations and systems of action in the global Islamic resistance units. He presents the old way concept by stating, “the operational theories and the organizational set-up are based on a basic rule and slogan in terms of the way they operate, which is a system of action: not a secret organization for action”<sup>59</sup>

The Abu Sayyaf is the major VEO in the Philippines, and al-Suri’s theories can help explain the actions of the Abu Sayyaf. There is a great deal of similarity in the old way of fighting between both organizations. The VEOs used geographic safe havens and networks, which helped create conditions ripe for insurgency in the Philippines in the early 1980s. Robinson, Johnston, and Oak explain that the initial onsets of OEF-P were heavily focused on kinetic operations. AFP conducted force on force operations to destroy the Abu Sayyaf with limited success.<sup>60</sup> After the insurgency had been fighting for decades, U.S. special operations joined its AFP partners to conduct foreign internal defense against VEO threats.

To make the debate understandable, the term kinetic and non-kinetic operations must be defined. These terms are effects based considerations for planning military driven. The definition from the Air Force doctrine document states,

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<sup>58</sup> Brynjar Lia, *Architect of Global Jihad* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 440.

<sup>60</sup> Robinson, Johnston, and Oak, *U.S. Special Operations Forces*.

Kinetic actions are those taken through physical materials like bombs, bullets, rockets, and other munitions. Non-kinetic actions are logical, electromagnetic, or behavioral, such as a computer network attack on an enemy system or a psychological operation aimed at enemy troops. While non-kinetic actions have a physical component, the effects they impose are mainly indirect—functional, systemic, psychological, or behavioral.<sup>61</sup>

Most conflicts involve both kinetic and non-kinetic operations; OEF-P was no different. However, the focus on non-kinetic operations was addressed earlier in this research. Retired Colonel David Maxwell provides his insight into how Sun Tzu might assess OEF-P. Maxwell argues, “U.S. advisors did take an indirect approach to attaining U.S. strategic objectives... Unlike in Afghanistan and Iraq, U.S. unilateral operations are not feasible within an allied nation.”<sup>62</sup> This argument provides an interesting point debating the tactics used in the Middle East versus those used in the Philippines insurgency. Although, like Maxwell says, operations with an allied nation are conducted differently, the use of systemic and behavioral effects like civic action programs targeting local areas prone to lawless elements provides a solid argument. Therefore, the successes from non-kinetic operations would have a greater effect on the Philippines to achieve the overarching goal of peace and prosperity in the region.

## **B. FOREIGN INTERNAL DEFENSE FACTORS**

Joint Publication (JP) 3–07.1 defines foreign internal defense (FID) as “the participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government or other designated organizations, to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency.”<sup>63</sup> The Joint Chiefs of Staff’s FID doctrine identifies three essential objectives that are critical to success: “building viable institutions; promoting the growth of freedom, democratic institutions, and fair and international trade; and supporting the security, stability, and well-being of

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<sup>61</sup> U.S. Air Force, *Operations and Organization* (Air Force Doctrine Document 2) (Washington, DC: U.S. Air Force, 2007), <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/usaf/afdd/2/afdd2-2007.pdf>.

<sup>62</sup> Maxwell, “Operation Enduring Freedom,” 20–23.

<sup>63</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Foreign Internal Defense (FID)* (Joint Publication 3-07.1) (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2004), I-1.

our allies and other nations friendly to our interests.”<sup>64</sup> In the case of the Philippines, the DoS Bureau of Political—Military Affairs, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, and USAID implement national FID policies and ensure national level collaboration with the Department of Defense (DOD) FID efforts.<sup>65</sup> Applicable to this case, the Joint Chiefs of Staff’s FID guidance is disseminated through the Pacific Command to SOCPAC via the national military strategy and the joint strategic capabilities plan.<sup>66</sup> The development of these plans supports the interagency process, which allows the country team, and the civilian and military units to carry our FID missions. Figure 5 highlights the detailed coordination between the interagency partners.

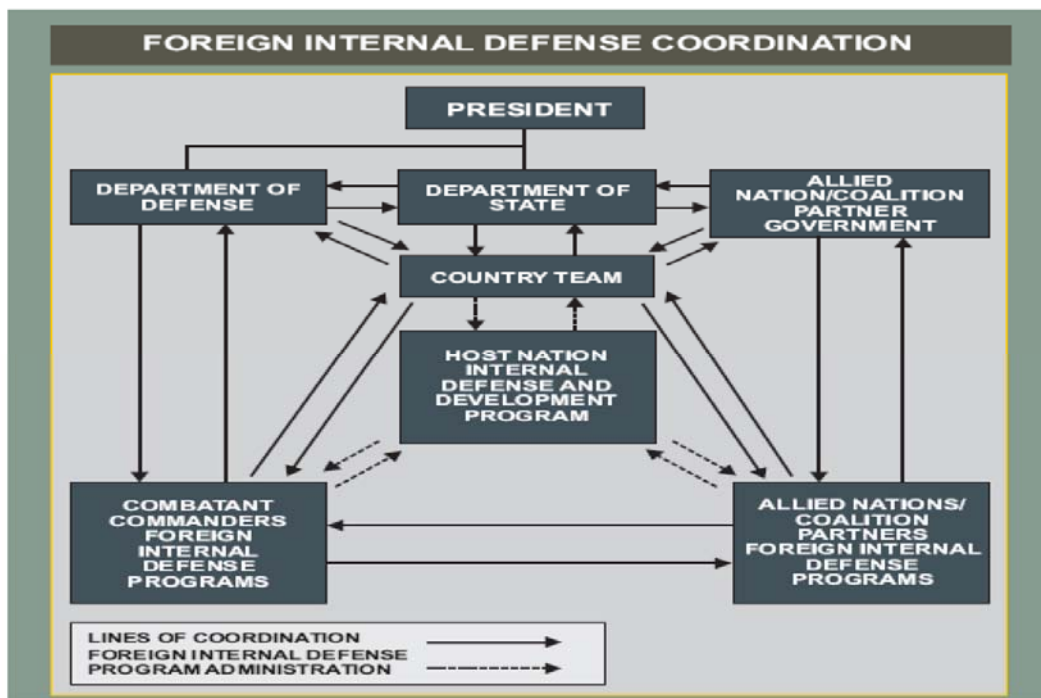


Figure 5. Foreign Internal Defense Coordination<sup>67</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., II-4.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., II-6.

<sup>67</sup> Source: Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Tactics*, Figure II-1.

FID is one of the nine SOF core mission tasks and follows the principles found in FM 3–05.202:

All U.S. agencies involved in FID must coordinate with one another to ensure that they are working toward a common objective and deriving optimum benefit from the limited resources applied to the effort. The U.S. military seeks to enhance the Host Nation (HN) military and paramilitary forces' overall capability to perform their Internal Defense and Development (IDAD) mission. An evaluation of the request and the demonstrated resolve of the HN government will determine the specific form and substance of U.S. assistance, as directed by the President. Specially trained, selected, and jointly staffed U.S. military survey teams, including intelligence personnel, may be made available. U.S. military units used in FID roles should be tailored to meet the conditions within the HN. U.S. military support to FID should focus on assisting HNs in anticipating, precluding, and countering threats or potential threats.<sup>68</sup>

OEF-P demonstrates the successful implementation of SOF participation in FID missions. JSOTF-P units were responsible for the security assistance of AFP units. This included the training and equipping of partner units as well as the humanitarian and civic assistance to counter violent extremist organization safe havens. The presence of United States SOF caused the area denial effect on the terrorist group while the humanitarian and civic action activities increased the image of the local AFP units and governance throughout the area of responsibility.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> John Mulbury, "ARSOF, General Purpose Forces and FID: Who Does What, When and Where?" *Special Warfare* 21, no. 1 (2008): 16–21.

<sup>69</sup> C. H. Briscoe, "Reflections and Observations on ARSOF Operations During Balikatan 02-1," *Special Warfare* 17, no. 1 (2004): 3.

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## IV. INFORMATION WARFARE

Information warfare is the concept of using and managing information and communication technologies to pursue an advantage over an opponent. An article written from the website Strategy Page in September 2011 describes the situation in the southern Philippines as:

JSOTF-P is working to get not only the right message, but the right medium. The Internet does not work here, people are too poor. Television does not either, too many villages are remote from electrical power. Radio works here, but only if you use local talent. Cell phone texting also works here for now. But this is a ‘dynamic’ environment and those who do not constantly look for the right medium and message will find their efforts unheeded. Information support has its limits, particularly among the rank and file of the insurgent and terrorist groups.<sup>70</sup>

The predominantly Muslim provinces in the southern Philippines believed that they were separate from the rest of the county and sought autonomy from the central government. By using non-kinetic operations to stabilize the government, civil- military operations and information operations effectively combated VEO’s threats significantly reducing the number of attacks. Further discussions later in this section will address the latest resurgence of violence. The journal article “Non-Kinetic Operations for Stabilizing Government” provides research into examining how the U.S. Army can better war game the use of non-kinetic tactics and counterinsurgency doctrine.<sup>71</sup> The article uses common civil military operations terms used to conduct area assessments, such as diplomacy, information, military, and economics to politics, military, economic, social systems, infrastructure, and information to understand threat environments. Successful integration of civil affairs, information operations, and psychological operations help provide the information tools needed to for whole of government approach.

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<sup>70</sup> Hans Johnson, “Information Warfare: Post-Modern Psyops in the Philippines,” Strategy Page, September 20, 2011, <https://www.strategypage.com/htmw/htiw/articles/20110920.aspx>.

<sup>71</sup> Collin D’Antonio, Stephanie Gower, Andrea Young, and Edward Teague, “Non-Kinetic Operations for Stabilizing Government,” *IEEE Conferences* (2014): 90–95.

Recently, the RAND Corporation released its findings over the 14-years of JSOTF-P's existence. The main findings from the report show satisfaction with Philippine security forces, the decrease in enemy initiated attacks, and Abu Sayyaf militants. This was directly related to U.S. SOF activities during that period, building a capable partner at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels. A 2016 RAND study reveals, "the continuing U.S. support to the AFP enabled ongoing improvements in its capabilities, however, CMO and IO [information operations] produced beneficial effects in terms of population support and threat conditions."<sup>72</sup> Examining al-Suri's theory in a new way, it would appear the joint mission by the AFP and JSOTF-P was able to counter "the call" through effective CMO and information operations. William Eckert supports this claim saying,

In many instances, CMO projects are undertaken with strong buy-in by the local population. The JSOTF's goal is to ensure that the projects are not only needed but are also sustainable by the local population. Once complete, every project is turned over to the local barangay for maintenance. This buy-in and responsibility for the project by the local populace ensures that the project will continue beyond the stay of JSOTF-P.<sup>73</sup>

Through "buy-in" from the local populace and local military forces, a relationship is formed that can begin to address information gaps. However, as VEO groups were beginning to branch out underground, elements of support and resources still flowed from the original threat groups. Ground commanders from both U.S. and Philippines forces would argue that the units in their respective areas have control of these threat groups. In addition, their information operations have disbanded any remnants of continued growing threats. The increased trust with and influence from the local populace provided essential information advantages.

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<sup>72</sup> Robinson, Johnston, and Oak, *U.S. Special Operations Forces*, 78.

<sup>73</sup> William Eckert, "Defeating the Idea: Unconventional Warfare in the Southern Philippines," *Special Warfare* 19, no. 6 (2006): 16–22.

## A. INFORMATION TOOLS

Among the significant tools available to JSOTF-P were ISR platforms. New technologies like ISR had great effect in enhancing joint operations throughout the area of responsibility. Although JSOTF-P had multiple aerial platforms, from unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to aircrafts and helicopters for ISR, much of the information was classified too sensitive to share with our AFP counterparts. David Reynolds explains,

In the military environment information is a powerful tool for informing, disrupting, corrupting, and influencing an enemy's decision-making process with "knowledge" derived from functions and systems often based within a headquarters that collates, processes, and delivers a plan to support a commander's intent.<sup>74</sup>

This creates the critical questions as to whether the AFP can conduct ISR without U.S./JSOTF-P help, and also what will be the future impact? According to one subject matter expert,

U.S. tactical ISR capabilities were crucial to the JSOTF-P's success in support the AFP's kinetic operations. As the mission shifted to the PAT in Manila, the reduction of the JSOTF-P's footprint could negatively impact the AFP's capacity to maintain an intelligence advantage.<sup>75</sup>

The closure of key bases throughout northern and eastern Mindanao left JSOTF-P lacking ground information and intelligence for the area that had been gathered through our AFP partners. As stated by former JSOTF-P Commander COL Beaudette, "Enabling AFP and PNP operations and intelligence fusion requirements includes a wide variety of activities from SMEEs through support such as instruction on the military decision-making process, use of computer-mapping software or doctrinal construct of a joint task force."<sup>76</sup> According to Beaudette, the AFP understood the sensitivities; however, the information products the AFP needed to conduct successful operations were still lacking sufficiency.<sup>77</sup> Even though JSOTF-P military information teams conducted subject matter

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<sup>74</sup> David Reynolds, "The 'Soft' Touch: Delivering Non-Kinetic Effects to Influence the Battlespace," *Jane's Defence Weekly* 52, no. 30 (2015).

<sup>75</sup> Interview with Douglas A. Borer, Monterey CA, May 24, 2017

<sup>76</sup> Beaudette, "JSOTF-P Uses Whole-of-Nation Approach," 11.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

expert exchanges on information operations, the AFP still had an information disadvantage when conducting operations to arrest high value targets. However, the AFP was able to mitigate some of this information through successful civic action programs. As JSOTF-P provided UAV coverage to provide ISR feed that could be relayed to the ground commander, the Philippines had to act on actionable intelligence to capture high value targets. However, their operations often failed due to a lack of communication between the executing unit and the AFP operations center because of the inadequate communication equipment incapable of relaying transmissions back and forth. The AFP relied primarily on the use of cell phones to relay commands and ISR feedback from the feed to the ground units.<sup>78</sup>

## **B. TERMINATION FACTORS**

Clausewitz states war is a “continuation of policy by other means,” as his definition to war termination.<sup>79</sup> He argues, this is problematic because even though military operations conclude, the root causes of the enemy may still exist.<sup>80</sup> Both U.S. national strategies and joint doctrine provide policy guidance addressing war termination. National strategic guidance is found in the *National Security Strategy* and is aimed at resolving regional conflict while promoting democracy as a means of conflict prevention. Specific to the military, Joint Publication (JP) 3–0 describes “war termination as an element of joint operational design,” and JP 5–0 discusses “war termination in more detail as part of joint operation planning.”<sup>81</sup> Both JP 3–0 and JP 5–0 provide a doctrinal reference for when to terminate military operations. This is especially useful when operations reach the point where it becomes a political decision.

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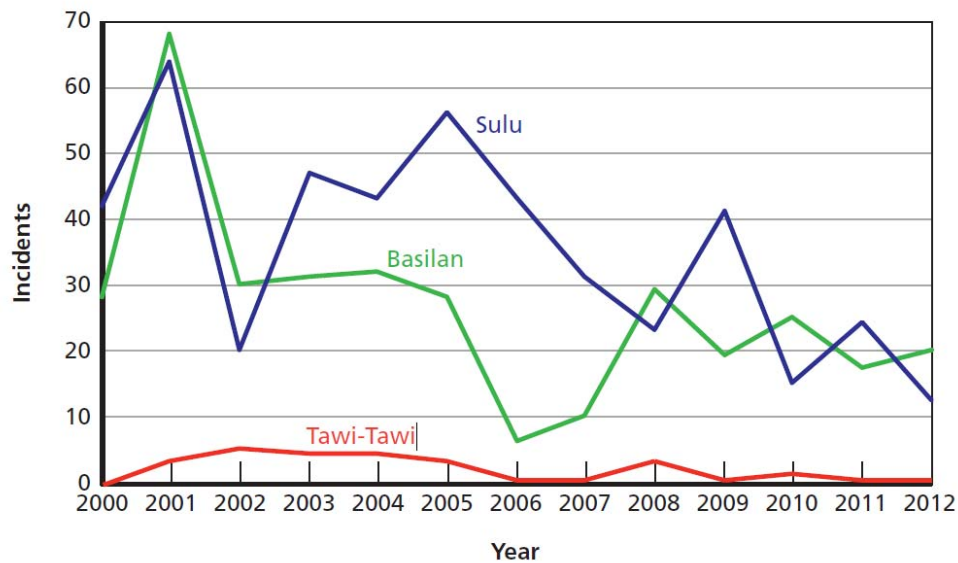
<sup>78</sup> Robinson, Johnston, and Oak, *U.S. Special Operations Forces*, 22; Briscoe, “Reflections and Observations.”

<sup>79</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 69.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>81</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operations* (Joint Publication 3-0) (Washington DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2008), IV-5; Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operation Planning* (Joint Publication 5-0) (Washington DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2008), IV-5.

War termination in the case of the OEF-P is no different. As discussed in the previous section addressing interagency collaboration, the fusion of national security and military policy to resolve conflict in the southern Philippines was aimed at countering safe havens from violent extremist organizations. According to Brookes, “of the selected terrorist organizations, the Al-Qaeda linked ASG has been a critical focus, and JSOTF-P has been successful in reducing its size from about 2000 fighters in 2001 to less than 300 today.”<sup>82</sup> Figure 6 depicts the correlation of enemy initiated attacks in each province over the time period JSOTF-P conducted operations derived from the empirical studies of conflict data.



SOURCE: ESOC data.

Figure 6. Enemy Initiated Attacks, by Province and Year<sup>83</sup>

This also demonstrates that things got better during this period, but recent events show that the problem has not been permanently dealt with. Boots and Bennet argue, “With only 600 U.S. troops in country and a budget of \$52 million a year (the equivalent

<sup>82</sup> Peter Brookes, “The ‘Forgotten Front’ Should Be Remembered.” *China Post*, July 13, 2007, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw>.

<sup>83</sup> Source: Robinson, Johnston, and Oak, *U.S. Special Operations Forces*, 116.

of about five hours of operations in Iraq),”<sup>84</sup> at its end OEF-P was an exemplary economy of force operation in the global war on terror. The continued U.S. commitment to OEF-P to achieve the goal of peace and security in Mindanao and the Sulu archipelagos reached the point requiring further consolidation as operations began to transition to completion. The correlation of number of incidents by year shows the dramatic decrease in enemy attacks. This data most likely influenced the U.S. government’s assessment of meeting strategic objectives and conditions for success. However, during this transition period the AFP would be tested by an attempt to seize Zamboanga. In the article “The SOF Experience in the Philippines,” Robinson states,

In September 2013, in what some U.S. SOF regarded as a real-world graduation exercise to test the years of training and mentoring, the Philippine military and government confronted a major challenge in Mindanao in the form of a complex urban assault on its capital, Zamboanga, by a splinter fraction known as the Rogue Moro National Liberation Front.<sup>85</sup>

Ultimately, AFP security operations were successful in this standoff. JSOTF-P was not directly involved; however, its personnel did monitor the situation and provided ISR assets.<sup>86</sup> Following the conclusion of JSTOF-P, the AFP would be tested once again while pursuing a high value target, which resulted in the Mamasapano massacre. In January 2015, 43 members of the elite Philippine National Police Special Action Force were killed when they were ambushed by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.<sup>87</sup> This incident questioned the AFP capabilities to conduct operations without JSOTF-P following the 14 years of training and resources provided through OEF-P. The research shows that the non-kinetic focus during early phases of OEF-P produced useful models. The argument can be made that given the decrease in VEO activity conditions have been met in OEF-P. However, given the continued security threat faced in the Philippines the PAT remains to continue to training, resources, and interagency coordination.

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<sup>84</sup> Boot and Bennet, “Treading Softly in the Philippines,” 28.

<sup>85</sup> Robinson, “The SOF Experience,” 157.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Arlene Samson-Espiritu and Tim Hume, “43 Philippine Police Killed by Muslim Rebels while Hunting Bomb Makers,” *CNN*, January 27, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/01/26/world/philippines-maguindanao-milf-battle/>.

### **C. WAY AHEAD IN THE REGION—“PIVOT TO ASIA”**

PACOM is responsible for half of the earth’s surface and the most populated region of all the GCCs. In addition, the president has charged PACOM with the rebalancing of the Indo-Asia-Pacific region. The PACOM mission “protects and defends the United States, its territories, allies, and interest by promoting security cooperation, encouraging peaceful development, responding to contingencies, deterring aggression, and fighting to win.”<sup>88</sup> This section addresses the regions’ security cooperation and military presence from the PACOM commander’s 2016 posture statement by evaluating measures for validity, reliability, and practicality as they apply to the overarching mission. As PACOM faces numerous challenges throughout the region, their main mission, plans, and priorities addressed here are promoting security cooperation and maintaining regional military posture. These areas are supported through the analysis of PACOM’s mission, desired end state, and performance measures, as well as assessing how well PACOM is addressing growing security concerns throughout the region.

### **D. SECURITY COOPERATION**

The PACOM Commander, Admiral Harris, in May 2015 addressed multiple topics of concern in his statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee.<sup>89</sup> In August 2015, the secretary of defense described reinforcing alliances and partnerships as a key element of the military component to Asia-Pacific’s rebalance.<sup>90</sup> The decision to choose security cooperation as one of the most significant areas is due to growing concerns in the security environment that continue to emerge. Although the region has been peaceful for many years, the rise of China and provocative North Korea presents strategic concerns to the theatre for both security and deterring aggression. The growing relationship of bilateral and multilateral engagements/treaties with allies and partners will strengthen readiness and capabilities of the U.S. and Pacific partner military forces. One

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<sup>88</sup> Harris, “U.S. Pacific Command Guidance.”

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> *Statement of Admiral Harry B. Harris Jr., U.S. Navy Commander, U.S. Pacific Command before the Senate Armed Services Committee on U.S. Pacific Command Posture* (2016), [https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Harris\\_02-23-16.pdf](https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Harris_02-23-16.pdf).

tool PACOM uses to measure effectiveness is the joint exercise program. Annually, PACOM components conduct hundreds of joint exercises throughout multiple partner nations. Through these engagements PACOM validates both their components and partners as a way to build capable forces and strengthen relationships.

As a result of strengthening alliances through shared security cooperation, PACOM creates a more stable region. PACOM continues to enforce stable rules based international order and is responsible sharing of security burdens through security cooperation. In 2016, President Obama stated,

I think we have to be firm where China's actions are undermining international interests, and if you look at how we've operated in the South China Sea, we have been able to mobilize most of Asia to isolate China in ways that have surprised China, frankly, and have very much served our interest in strengthening our alliances.<sup>91</sup>

According to President Obama, PACOM demonstrates the ability to be a dominant force that U.S. allies can depend upon to help prevent conflict. Addressing the peaceful rise of China is a top priority to PACOM. Harris states, "this can be accomplished through the enduring interests of open access to the shared domains of sea, air, space, and cyberspaces amplified by the fact that the Asia- Pacific is the economic center of trade for the future."<sup>92</sup> The continued prosperity ensures that PACOM is focused on promoting regional security cooperation.

The joint exercises help strengthen alliances, thus advancing PACOM's goal of an end state to achieve a stable, secure, and prosperous region. However, North Korea remains an outlying threat due its unpredictable political dynasty. North Korea's unwillingness to adhere to international law and its continued testing of nuclear weapons continues to keep U.S. Forces Korea in a state of high readiness. Annual joint exercises in South Korea test the readiness of U.S. and Republic of Korea (ROK) military forces by exercising PACOM operational and contingency plans. This bilateral agreement has led

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<sup>91</sup> Goldberg, "The Obama Doctrine."

<sup>92</sup> *Statement of Admiral Harry B. Harris Jr., U.S. Navy Commander, U.S. Pacific Command before the Senate Armed Services Committee on U.S. Pacific Command Posture* (2016), [https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Harris\\_02-23-16.pdf](https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Harris_02-23-16.pdf).



toward multilateral and shared cooperation (this is further discussed later as it relates to forward presence).

The Philippines also conducts an annual joint exercise, Balikatan. The Philippine president has stated his intent to end this exercise and U.S. military forces operating in the southern Philippines. This has created tension between U.S. and Philippine relationship. The discussion of President Duterte is addressed more in the conclusion. Nonetheless, even though these continued security cooperations remain vital to PACOM and its partners, the commitment of the military and the U.S. government to the rebalance in Asia demonstrates their interest to deter growing threats in the region.

#### **E. MAINTAINING REGIONAL MILITARY POSTURE**

In addition to shared security cooperation, maintaining regional military posture in the region also ranks high to PACOM's goal of a stable and secure region. The decision to maintain a continual forward presence, enabled by regional military posture, compliments security cooperation through maintaining peace and stability throughout the Pacific. Tensions in the South China Sea have become increasingly provoked by the Chinese claim for the territorial waters. The claims over land and territorial waters is constantly contested in the South China Sea as China increases construction and militarization of artificial islands in these waters. As the U.S. Navy continues to maintain its presence through freedom of navigation missions, Admiral (ADM) Harris continues to meet resistance from diplomats in his strategic approach to deter aggression while maintaining continual forward presence. As stated in the mission statement, "USPACOM enhances stability in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region by promoting security cooperation, encouraging peaceful development, responding to contingencies, deterring aggression, and, when necessary, fighting to win."<sup>93</sup> This cannot be done without the previously discussed security cooperation from our allies and partners. ADM Harris says, to accomplish this a synchronized strategic whole of government effort is needed, but this is too large of a task for only the military.<sup>94</sup> To deter aggression political, diplomatic, and

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<sup>93</sup> *Statement of Admiral Harry B. Harris Jr.*

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

economic initiatives must mutually support PACOM efforts. As per the 2015 *National Security Strategy*,

The use of American diplomacy and leadership, backed by a strong military presence, remains essential to deterring future acts of inter-state aggression and provocation by reaffirming our security commitments to allies and partners, investing in their capabilities to withstand coercion, imposing costs on those who threaten their neighbors or violate fundamental international norms, and embedding our actions within wider regional strategies.<sup>95</sup>

In addition to the synchronized efforts and continual forward presences, another method PACOM uses to validate its mission is providing conventional and strategic military capabilities for extended deterrence. According to Jennings,

Though American naval and aerial forces would remain central to any attempts to project national power, the U.S. Army, as the premier land power institution in the Free World, would also remain crucial to multi-national efforts with increased rotational presence by combined arms forces across islands and the main-land continent.<sup>96</sup>

To reach PACOM's desired end state of security and stability in the region, PACOM relies on strategic communication with the U.S. government and non-government agencies to accomplish this task.

## **F. IMPACT FOR THE PHILIPPINES**

With many uncertainties ahead for the Philippine security forces, the capabilities built through joint partnership and lessons learned from JSOTF-P will help shape future goals. Geoffrey Lambert provides key insight into possible future evolution, saying,

While U.S. direct action operations alone can make short-term gains against global terrorism, a U.S. kinetic approach is unsustainable in itself. Partners are essential in the struggle against violent extremism, and partners may require the United States to adopt an indirect approach to a common challenge.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> White House, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: White House, 2015).

<sup>96</sup> Nathan Jennings, "Deterring Chinese Aggression," *Small Wars Journal*, January 3, 2016, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/deterring-chinese-aggression>.

<sup>97</sup> Geoffrey Lambert, Larry Lewis, and Sarah Sewall, "Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines: Civilian Harm and the Indirect Approach," *Prism* 3, no. 4 (2012): 117–135.

As argued previously, successful integration of information operations will play a key role for Philippines' goals. Lambert also reiterates this point by stating, "In the case of the Philippines, U.S. civil affairs and engineering initiatives provided an alternate population-centric approach to counterterrorism, addressing root causes."<sup>98</sup>

As to the question of whether public warfare or diplomacy relates to the calling to the Islamic State, the Philippines security forces along with JSOTF-P effectively decreased violent extremist activity causing Abu Sayyaf and its affiliates to "go to ground." This now decentralized command structure was thought to be under control in the southern Philippines. However, as of April 25, 2016, Abu Sayyaf beheaded a Canadian businessman. As reported by *CNN*,

This part of the southern Philippines is home to Abu Sayyaf, an Islamist militant group that's been linked to al Qaeda and ISIS. The separatist group has at times preyed on foreigners in recent years, taking them hostage to further its aims.<sup>99</sup>

This brings into question the resurgent activity and support to Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) that Abu Sayyaf is now taking. Has the messaging from ISIS changed the way VEOs act in the future of the Philippines? If so, how are the armed forces of the Philippines attacking VEO networks and does the AFP have to deal with new threats to public warfare in the southern Philippines due to the void of U.S. military persistent presence? The newly elected Philippine president has grown up surrounded by conflict as the former mayor of Davao, Mindanao. This area in the southern Philippines, along with Basilan and Jolo, is known as to be a key geographic safe haven for Islamic activity. The argument can be made that the Philippine VEO threat may come to follow the "Al Suri Doctrine" hearing "the calling," but many remain skeptical based off the public statements of President Duterte regarding the Philippine's future relationships with the United States, China, and Russia.

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<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>99</sup> James Griffiths, Jessica King, and Catherine Shoichet, "Militants Kill Canadian Hostage John Ridsdel in the Philippines," *CNN*, April 25, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/04/25/asia/philippines-canadian-hostage-john-ridsdel-killed/>.

JSOTF-P had the task of downsizing and transitioning the mission to the PAT. The concept of doing more with less was now the PAT Philippines responsibility post-JSOTF-P, as it is left now in part to deal with these problems. The significant reduction in force, along with the DoS travel restrictions, has been a constraint on the PAT. As discussed previously, the Philippines PAT has a much larger mission than typical PAT's. For example, the PAT in Sri Lanka operates a team of six comprised of the team leader, operations/intelligence officer, and partial civil affairs and military information support teams. The disposition of the Philippines PAT has not officially been released due to its classification but most likely is comprised of full SOF teams from special forces companies, civil affairs teams, military information support teams, and contracted support.<sup>100</sup> Specifically, without the resources of JSOTF-P, the freedom of movement into the southern Philippines and force protection measures have been major issues of concern. The PAT coordinates all SOF activities within the country while maintaining the presence of a forward liaison element in Mindanao. The PAT must now rely heavily on the indirect approach through the conduct of joint exercises and training opportunities in order to maintain presence in the southern Philippines and enhance security cooperation with AFP partners. The argument that 14 years of lessons learned through both kinetic and non-kinetic operations proved that successful integration of information operations towards conflict areas is a valid method to combat VEO's in conflict prone areas.

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<sup>100</sup> Author's personal experience while assigned to a PACOM aligned Civil Affairs Battalion from June 2011–December 2016.

## V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The PACOM region faces many challenges to vital U.S. interests. PACOM must ensure security cooperation is shared with partner nations ready for future contingencies and continue to maintain a forward presence throughout the region prepared to take necessary action to deter aggression from self-interested parties aimed at destabilizing the region. Although this is not an easy task, PACOM has demonstrated its ability to support the demands of the growing security environment at hand.

While JSTOF-P has officially closed down the mission in the Philippines, the transition leaves the PAT still operating with strategic objectives and charged with many remaining operational challenges left from JSOTF-P. The PAT is also left to deal with bureaucratic politics similar to JSOTF-P. As previously discussed, the bureaucratic politics between JSOTF-P and PACOM/SOCPAC significantly influenced the organization. Initially, the PAT began operated similar to JSOTF-P, but the argument can be made that since combat operations were complete, the PAT did not have to deal with the same politics. This argument may not be valid as the PAT team leader, located in Manila, must now navigate between the various interests inside the U.S. embassy, the Philippine government, as well as inside each military.

Realistically, the organization needs to be more efficient than the JSOTF-P as every individual must fill multiple roles in various staff functions. Therein lies the challenge of operating out of Manila versus JSOTF-P's headquarters in Zamboanga City, Mindanao. The PAT primarily operates out of Camp Aguinaldo, which is not co-located with the U.S. embassy in Manila. Although the team leader spends the majority of time at the U.S. embassy, the rest of the PAT is conducting operations from multiple locations. The coordination relationship with the defense attaché and Joint U.S. Military Assistance Group has become more mature now following OEF-P in part due to the smaller footprint but the new arrangement also produces better collaboration. This can be attributed to the personal relationships and interactions within the greater Manila area. In contrast, very early OEF-P operations focused on kinetic affects and did not have the interface with interagency partners. As the environment changed and focused on the human domain, the

information sharing improved. This may explain the lull in collaborated efforts following the Basilan model discussed by Wendt and Wilson.<sup>101</sup> As the PAT looks forward one of the challenges that can address is to enhance or upgrade the AFP's less technical intelligence gathering options possibly through SMEE. Another valuable resource that the PAT can leverage is the JCET program. This provides operational support to supplement military missions.

As the indirect approach explored the relationship between the various actors, the Philippine security forces have continued to face growing challenges throughout the country despite the transition. Reflecting back on McCormick's diamond model (in Figure 1), as presented by Wendt and Wilson, and the LIC theory, the early phases of OEF-P followed the indirect approach of focusing on security needs (leg 1) and targeting insurgent safe havens, infrastructure, and support (leg 2) in Basilan.<sup>102</sup> JSOTF-P may have been legitimizing the Philippine government through diplomacy as demonstrated in leg 4 of the diamond model. However, the Basilan success did so in a manner that encouraged the AFP to get better at bridging the gap between the government and the people, making them less supportive of the insurgents (as seen in leg 3). McCormick points out at the operational level, there are three possible victory scenarios: a "weak win," a "strong win," or a "complete win."<sup>103</sup> In the case of the Philippines, the kinetic operations seen in Basilan allowed the Philippine government to reduce the VEOs' means to organize a resistance, which would be considered a weak win which has now seen a resurgence of VEO activity. According to McCormick, for it to be a strong win one must eliminate the adversary's opportunity to resist and for a complete win the adversary's motivation to resist must be defeated.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Wilson, "Anatomy of a Successful COIN;" Wendt, "Strategic Counterinsurgency Modeling."

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Michael Freeman and Hy Rothstein, *Gangs and Guerrillas* (Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School Technical Report, 2011), 15.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

One subject matter expert asserts that as time went on, the phases of OEF-P the U.S. military engagements focused more on enhancing the AFPs high value targeting.<sup>105</sup> This shift can be explained through the organizational theory described by Burton, Daft, and Mintzberg in their discussions on organizational culture.<sup>106</sup> Many of the JSOTF-P commanders and staff planners have spent years in combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The heavy influence of kinetic operations throughout their careers may explain the primary focus of military to military advising to enhance the AFPs capacity to kill/ capture the enemy. This possibly explains the evolution of the indirect approach from the early phases, on the focus of legs 1 and 2 of the diamond model, to an intelligence shared or human centric approach, the focus of leg 3. As the diamond model would predict, this could undermine the early success and enable ASG to regain a foothold in the Sulu archipelago.<sup>107</sup>

Another challenge following OEF-P has been the public statements by the Philippine president attacking U.S. interests. Bureaucratic politics provides a structured framework that was applied to low intensity conflict in the case of the Philippines. At the same time as the Philippine president continues to make statements not aligned with this framework, the country continues to face a political system riddled with corruption and plagued by nepotism that is suffocating the successes of the AFP and U.S. forces. The handout system of corruption has been detrimental to the continued success of the mission and a difficult hurdle to overcome from an organizational standpoint. AFP needs to rebalance efforts not only to meet the needs of vulnerable populations but also to enable agents of change. It is necessary to enable development organizations and empowering agents of change (politicians, emerging junior leaders, and credible local businessmen) to facilitate the transition from a martial environment to one of good governance and enduring stability.

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<sup>105</sup> Interview with Douglas A. Borer, Monterey CA, May 24, 2017.

<sup>106</sup> Burton, *Strategic Organizational Diagnosis*, Daft, *Organizational Theory*; Mintzberg, *The Structuring of Organizations*.

<sup>107</sup> Interview with Douglas A. Borer, Monterey CA, May 24, 2017.

Philippine President Duterte assumed office in 2016 and took a hard stance on drug enforcement policy. He has been criticized by the international community for his rhetoric of a war on drugs with the use of security forces to eliminate the drug problem, and also his public announcements to end bilateral exercises between the United States and the Philippines. President Duterte also looks to realign relations with Russia and China. Most notable is his discussion over contested territorial water in the South China Sea. He has also verbally attacked President Obama and his administration in his claims to remove SOF from the southern Philippines. However, since President Trump has taken office, President Duterte's rhetoric has changed. As of March 2016, the United States and the Philippines have signed an agreement for five permanent bases throughout the Philippines operated by U.S. military rotational forces. President Trump has recently invited President Duterte to the White House for an official visit to stress the importance of the relationship between the two countries. Nevertheless, Duterte's actions have continued to strain relations between the United States and the Philippines, and more significantly, they have created an increased security risk from violent extremist organizations.

On April 11, 2017, four Philippine security force members and five suspected Abu Sayyaf militants were killed at a resort in Bohol. Although this area is close in proximity to Mindanao, this is the first instance that Abu Sayyaf has been seen outside of what is considered the southern Philippines. This suggests that either Philippine militant groups are expanding outside of their traditional strongholds in the south as part of a greater calling or that the years of training, advising and assisting Philippine security forces have successfully combated the VEO threat. Despite the president's rhetoric about bilateral agreements with the United States, the AFP continues to stress the importance of its relationship with U.S. military forces and continued request for support. Ultimately, the PAT mission continues preparation to support an anticipated growth outside of Manila and fulfilling a similar role to JSOTF-P by increased presence through advising and assisting AFP partners in Basilan and Jolo.

The use of historical examples to capture successful U.S. SOF campaigns and their approach is an effective tool for analysis. The Philippines case study demonstrates



clear and consistent policy goals supported by a fluid campaign plan. The application of principles of operational design, feedback mechanisms, and the use of special operation capabilities within a host nation demonstrates the increased potential for success. Incorporating a whole of government approach to ensure that efforts are nested within each other and synchronized throughout the interagency are essential to meeting national objectives. Also by establishing a synchronized engagement plan in support of the country's development strategy enhances government legitimacy and control. SOF personnel need to know how to work with the civil domain and reconnect disenfranchised populations. The SOF soldiers have to remember that wherever they go across the globe, they are always guests of the host country, and our actions are always in conjunction with a higher strategic plan. Success requires collaboration between non-governmental organizations, local government units, and partner security forces.

The debate over successful use of non-kinetic operations over kinetic operations as a means to achieve peace and prosperity for the region demonstrate the shift in foreign policy to SE Asia as an important relationship for future engagements aimed at a prosperous and stable region. Although it is still too early for the long-term effects to be seen, a few current examples address the capability of Philippines security forces following OEF-P mission completion. The theories discussed in relation to the Philippines highlight a shift in the nature of the bilateral relationship over the progression of OEF-P as well as the sharing of information from collaborated experiences in the Philippines. The investment in building capacity in the military and government creates the lasting relationships needed within a given region. The continued development of military liaison programs like the PAT provide a means of persistent engagements globally. The idea of small footprint, low signature SOF teams operating in key areas should be explored in further research. The exchanges built addressing future challenges in SE Asia with our Philippine partners must capture the lessons learned from 14-years of shared technologies and information into the future.

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