



## ADDRESSING TRANSNATIONAL THREATS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA: ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY AND COUNTER TERRORISM

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The United States-Republic of the Philippines strategic partnership was broadened when representatives of the two countries co-hosted the December Counter Terrorism Conference held in Manila from 3-5 December 2003. The Conference, *Addressing Transnational Threats in Southeast Asia: Environmental Security and Counter Terrorism*, was the second of a series of Defense Environmental Security Conferences and reflected the lead role of the Philippines in addressing the region's transnational security threats.

The United States Department of Defense Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Installations & Environmental), The U.S. Army, Pacific (USARPAC), and The U.S. Army War College (USAWC) Center for Strategic Leadership sponsored the conference in coordination with the Republic of the Philippines Department of National Defense. The purpose of this conference was to promote multilateral defense and Counter Terrorism cooperation, to identify the best practices for the prevention, mitigation, consequence management, and response to man-made and natural disasters that threaten governmental legitimacy.

This conference was a follow-up to the June 2003 Defense Environmental and International Cooperation Conference held in Bangkok, Thailand. It reflected the workshop results and advice from regional attendees of that conference. The Manila conference brought together senior military and civilian leaders from Southeast Asia and the United States, international academics, the private sector, technical agencies, and Non-Governmental Organizations to examine critical Environmental Security issues of common interest.

Terrorist organizations in Southeast Asia have demonstrated the ability to exploit environmental disasters or degradation to undermine governmental legitimacy and gain popular support. With these ongoing terrorist attacks, their efforts to obtain Weapons of Mass Destruction, and their stated objective of destroying regional governments, a major contribution to regional stability can be affected by developing concepts for regional military cooperation in preventing Environmental Terrorist activities.

The three objectives of the Conference were to: explore key Environmental Security issues that are central to the stability of the region or that encourage terrorist activities; identify military roles in preventing Environmental Terrorist activities and attacks on critical infrastructure; and develop multilateral plans for preventing and responding to man-made or natural disasters. The sponsors sought the insights of the region's senior civilian and military leadership and worked to develop ways to jointly cooperate on Environmental Security activities in support of the region's Counter Terrorism programs.

### THE ROOTS OF TERRORISM

Counter Terrorism (CT) activities are often weighted toward providing the intelligence for support in affecting the apprehension of terrorists, or in disrupting a terrorist operation to the detriment of other CT activities. Often

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Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategic Assessment and International Policy, Republic of the Philippines, Hon. Alejandro P. Melchor III delivers Opening Remarks

the less emphasized activities include addressing the root causes of terrorism and elements of deterrence such as developing efficient WMD Consequence Management, Disaster Response, and Critical Infrastructure Management programs.

The major cause of regional instability is poverty. That is why, as U.S. Agency for International Development, Deputy Assistant Administrator Gordon West pointed out during his testimony before the U.S. Congress on March 26, 2003, that the U.S. National Security Strategy named developmental assistance as one of the three pillars of U.S. national security, and that for Southeast Asia, poverty and disease “provide fertile breeding grounds for terrorists and conflict.” Nearly 800 million people in the developing world suffer from chronic hunger and the bulk of them are in Asia and Africa. Senior defense leadership in the region recognizes this phenomenon and is addressing it as a key element of the CT program. In his opening remarks to the conference, Philippine Under Secretary of Defense Antonio C. Santos, Jr. described with great clarity the root causes of the terrorist insurgency on Mindanao and said, “poverty is the key to fighting terrorism.”

A first step in preventing terrorism is to alleviate the poverty that robs the government of legitimacy in the eyes of its people and creates the nurturing milieu for terrorist ideology and recruitment. The Philippines have made Environmental Security an integral part of its *National Internal Security Plan*. As a result the Armed Forces of the Philippines are actively involved in working with civil authorities to address the energy, water, and marine resource issues necessary to alleviate poverty in the Muslim regions of the country where less than five percent of the original forests remain. Similarly, Thailand has focused its military on the areas of development and preventing the resource conflict issues that drives dissent in its border areas. The Royal Thai Army has led the economically valuable effort to educate the populace and introduce new species of grasses designed to halt erosion of valuable farmland, stabilize logged off hillsides, and preserve water resources. The attendees found, however, that the capacity for addressing these issues varied greatly between countries and agreed to undertake cooperative activities to share best practices and seek further training from external organizations such as Reef Check, funded by the U.N.



Dr. Gregor Hodgson, Reef Check discusses Coral Reefs Economic Impact on local communities

## DETECTING TERRORISM

Programs of Critical Infrastructure Management and Disaster Consequence Management, Response and Mitigation may substantially reduce the effects of terrorist activities. Energy growth in the region is around 7 percent annually. Much of that is imported oil from the Middle East. Sea-lanes and offshore oil and gas infrastructure in Southeast Asia are particularly vulnerable, as the region leads the world with 66 percent of all piracy attacks. Attendees also discussed the vulnerability of hydroelectric schemes such as China’s Three Gorges Dam and the Philippines’ proposed San Roque Dam, both considered essential for increasing foreign investment and future economic growth. Given the extensive number of physical and cyber infrastructure terrorist targets, the delegates were most interested in strategic management systems for prioritizing potential targets and developing databases. Future workshops and conferences will focus on training country representatives on established Critical Infrastructure Management models.

The conference also focused on Disaster Response and managing the consequences of natural and manmade disasters, particularly attacks with regards to Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). The ability to prevent or limit the potential damage from terrorist attacks reduces their value and, thus, serves as a deterrent. In order to identify successful regional programs and identify cooperative areas for capacity building in this area, the conference conducted panels on disaster prevention, response and mitigation, and identifying optimal policies for using the military element of power to support civil authority. Approaches to each of these differed between countries, which created a strong interest in international cooperation to learn new management methods from disaster response organizations, as well as from neighboring regional states.

## WORKSHOP RESULTS



Colonel Panya Kanchanawanich,  
Royal Thai Army describes Military  
Support to Civil Authorities

Plenary sessions explored the various elements of the terrorist threat and WMD disaster response management. Representatives from the Southeast Asian countries then conducted a workshop that: identified the Environmental Security issues that are important to addressing the terrorist threat in the region; agreed upon potential roles for the military in preventing, planning for, and managing man-made and natural disasters; and developed follow-on activities that will build upon the ongoing regional Counter Terrorist programs and plans.

The delegates identified several issues constituting the greatest threat to regional stability and which therefore should receive strong support from the military element of power in supporting civil authorities. These are: agro-terrorism (Newcastle disease, Asian Citrus Psylla); biological threats (SARS epidemic, Nipah virus); Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) terrorist attacks; attacks on energy infrastructure; maritime resource protection and disaster response; and the destabilizing loss of the natural resource base. The above agreements create the opportunity for future regional cooperation.

The delegates seek to create synergies from shared knowledge and country specific comparative advantages that would serve to minimize the transnational terrorist threat.

## THE WAY AHEAD

The delegates designed a multilateral program for enhancing regional CT capabilities and addressing Environmental Security issues related to terrorism. Taking advantage of the success of the Royal Thai Army in using Environmental Security activities to enhance governmental legitimacies in frontier areas, they proposed conducting a follow-on training workshop in Bangkok, Thailand, in June 2004. The objective of this workshop would be to develop common capabilities for environmental terrorism management. Its focus will be to train attendees in the areas of Critical Infrastructure Management, new technologies for erosion and mass wasting control, bacterial soil enrichment and plant protection technology, and Asia Pacific Area Network coordination and effectiveness.

A second follow-on activity is a proposed Disaster Response and Consequence Management tabletop exercise sponsored by the U.S. National Guard State Partnership Program and conducted in the State of Washington. This exercise builds upon the established relationship between Thailand and Washington State. The focus of this activity will be to bring Thailand and other regional military Subject Matter Experts to a Disaster Response exercise focused on the issues of port security and nuclear disasters.

A third follow-on activity is a training workshop in Maritime Resource Protection and Law Enforcement. The workshop would be conducted by the United Nations sponsored Reef Check Foundation and the U.S. Coast Guard in the Republic of the Philippines in August 2004. Its focus will be to train regional military trainers in maritime law enforcement, boarding procedures, arsenic and dynamite fishing interdiction methods, and support to local civil authority in protecting the economically and environmentally critical coral reefs.

This conference made significant headway due to the efforts of those present and groundwork completed at the previous conference in Bangkok. The momentum of regional cooperation on Environmental Security issues directly related to Counter Terrorist programs grew in scope and volume as a result of the Manila conference. Recognizing that conferences alone do not build capacity or establish viable lines of communication, the attendees at this conference adopted the concept of capacity building and a Train-the-Trainer methodology. They established a database of regional Military Subject Matter Experts that will enable rapid and efficient coordination of future workshop activities and created a web site on the Asia Pacific Area Network with which to communicate and manage further program activities.

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