

# The Armed Forces of the Philippines and its Civil-Military Operations :

Examining the History and its Renewed Emphasis under President Arroyo

Delilah Ruth Russell\*

フィリピン軍における民軍協力  
—歴史的背景とアロヨ政権における最重視化—

ディライラ ルース・ラッセル\*

## Abstract

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has long been engaged in non-traditional military tasks such as civic action, public affairs, and psychological operations for the purpose of counterinsurgency. These activities are now collectively known as Civil-Military Operations (CMO). CMO in its nascent but path-setting form has been conducted since the 1950s in conjunction with combat activities for the strategic and tactical purpose of contributing to the overall effort of eradicating internal threats. The succeeding decades saw CMO as a common feature of the military operations landscape. In the 1990s, CMO began to lose its original utility with what appeared to be a decline in insurgencies combined with the Philippines' plans to modernize its forces from an internal security posture to an outward-looking conventional military force.

Nevertheless, the internal security problems took a turn for the worse in 2000 and the AFP returned its priorities to internal defense. CMO efforts were reinvigorated when they were called upon to play a larger role in the nation's holistic approach to the insurgency problem. Under President Gloria Arroyo-Macapagal, CMO became institutionalized for the first time.

There is much to be researched on concerning the revival of CMO practices and recent scholarly work devoted entirely on this subject remains scarce. The article will draw from CMO experiences in the AFP history to better analyze the information provided by present-day CMO practitioners, partners, and their beneficiaries. The article will then proceed to argue that while CMO is measuring some success and thrives on future potential in improving the AFP's counterinsurgency capabilities, the conditions that it operates in are problematic, leading the CMO to assume a stop-gap role in addressing inherent weaknesses within the AFP and the government's overall defense strategy.

---

\* Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies, Waseda University, Doctoral Degree Program;  
早稲田大学大学院アジア太平洋研究科博士後期課程

## I. Introduction

Civil-Military Operations (CMO) is an integral part of day-to-day operations of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). Since the 1950s, the AFP has assiduously applied elements of what is known as CMO today, the most visible being their civic action programs to boost regime legitimacy,<sup>1</sup> support nation-building,<sup>2</sup> and to counter subversion and insurgencies.<sup>3</sup> In brief, it is neither a new concept nor a new approach where a military is mobilized to conduct tasks that fall outside of conventional war-making activities.

The end of the Cold War, the withdrawal of the American bases from the Philippines, and what appeared to be a decline in insurgencies, marked an opportunity for the AFP to begin shifting its attention from internal security to an outward defense posture.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, CMO, along with other counterinsurgency activities took a further seat back in the defense agenda. However, a resurgence of the armed communist threat and the unresolved Muslim separatist agenda in Mindanao forced the AFP to once again devote their resources to counterinsurgency programs.<sup>5</sup> Equally, a focus on the “soft approach” or the socio-economic dimension began to be pursued to address the roots of the conflict. The AFP’s response to the nation’s efforts to counter the threat holistically was the rejuvenation of CMO and the institutionalization of its practice.<sup>6</sup>

Since major developments in the reorganization of CMO began in 2006, there are few analyses on recent CMO practices. The purpose of this article is to seek a better understanding of current CMO and its positioning in overall Philippines defense strategy by first, clarifying its role under the present AFP. It will explain here the main thrust of current CMO operations in regards to the public, the community, and the enemy. Second, the article will traverse the history of CMO and present the highlighted CMO programs of each period, followed by a brief analysis on the implications

---

1 Richard J. Kessler, *Rebellion and Repression in the Philippines*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1989, pp. 119, 122-124. Hereafter cited as Kessler.

2 Felipe B. Miranda and Ruben F. Ciron, “Development and the Military in the Philippines: Military Perceptions in a Time of Continuing Crisis.” In J. Soedjati Djwandono and Yong Mun Cheong, (Eds.), *Soldiers and Stability in Southeast Asia*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asia Studies, 1988, pp. 164, 170-171.

3 Napoleon D. Valeriano and Charles T.R. Bohannan, *Counter-Guerrilla Operations: The Philippine Experience*, Westport, Connecticut & London: Praeger Security International, 1962, 2006, pp. 173-175. Hereafter cited as Valeriano and Bohannan.

4 AFP Modernization Program, *2001 Annual Report*. Available online at: <http://www.afp.mil.ph/afpmpmo/PDF/annual%20report%2001.pdf>. Accessed June 16, 2008.

5 Renato Cruz De Castro, “The Dilemma between Democratic Control versus Military Reforms: The Case of the AFP Modernisation Program, 1991-2004,” *Journal of Security Sector Management*, Asian Special Issue (March 2005), p.11. Hereafter cited as Cruz De Castro.

6 Alcuin Papa, “New unit triggers military revamp,” *Inquirer.net* August 25, 2007. Available online at: [http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/breakingnews/nation/view\\_article.php?article\\_id=84685](http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/breakingnews/nation/view_article.php?article_id=84685). Accessed September 6, 2007.

CMO had for the AFP in each passing period. Third, a general overview will be made on the institutionalization and organizational changes made to CMO under the current administration of Arroyo. In the fourth section, the article will outline current CMO programs that are specifically tailored to counter various internal threats. The final section will seek to explain why the conditions in which CMO operates in limit their effectiveness in the overall strategy of counter-insurgency (COIN). The article will continue to argue that CMO operations become problematic when it assumes a stop-gap role in addressing inherent weaknesses within the AFP and the government's overall defense strategy.

## II. Defining Philippine Civil-Military Operations

Civil-Military Operations (CMO) is part of the AFP's strategy to win against the insurgency. AFP defines Civil-Military Operations (CMO) as activities that are mostly non-combatant in nature and undertaken by the military, independent or in coordination with civilian entities with the primary objective of supporting a military mission.<sup>7</sup>

The guiding principles of current CMO is fostering a collaborative relationship with stake-holders such as other government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in order to address the insurgency problem and to help create an environment that is conducive for economic development.<sup>8</sup>

In July 2006, the AFP-CMO was reinstated as an independent office with three pillars: Public Affairs (PA), Civil Affairs (CA), and Psychological Operations (Psyops). Each CMO pillar has a range of activities and a particular audience it targets.

Public Affairs (PA) targets the public at large to garner their support for the "rear" or the soldiers themselves. Activities such as releasing timely and accurate information to the public through the media, public symposiums, and dialogue are aimed at creating trust with the public which in turn helps the soldiers accomplish their mission.

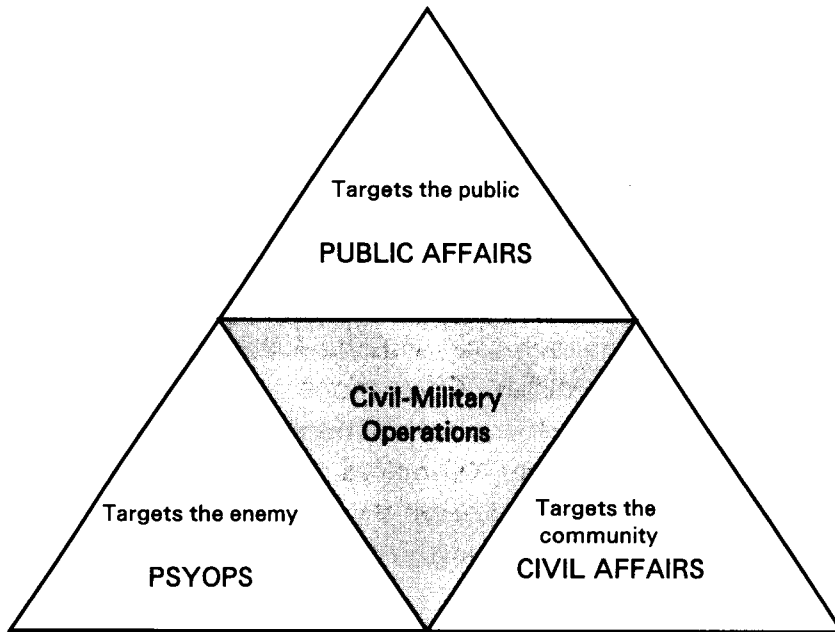
Civil Affairs (CA) on the other hand, targets the community. Its main objective is for the military to secure the environment so that other government agencies can function and provide their services to the community. An important component of this pillar is military civic action. Civic action is the utilization of military manpower and resources to conduct socio-economic projects such as public works, medical and

---

7 Philippine Army, *Civil-Military Operations Manual* (PAM-7-00), Makati: The Philippine Army, 2002. Hereafter cited as PAM-700.

8 Maj. Gen. Jaime Buenaflor, Officer of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Civil Military Operations, (J7), interview with author, J7 office, Camp Aguinaldo, Manila, Philippines, March 27, 2007. Hereafter cited as Maj. Gen. Buenaflor, March 27, 2007.

FIGURE 1 : the CMO triangle depicting three pillars with their intended audiences



Source: Adapted from PAM-700

dental services, education, and sanitation with the aims of assisting the government in the delivery of goods and services to the public.

Psychological operations (PSYOPS) are activities that are aimed at influencing the attitudes and emotions of the enemy for the purpose of weakening their will. PSYOPS has two categories: words-psyops (non-combat) which is the dissemination of information through the use of the media to influence the enemy. Deeds-psyops (inclusive of combat) is in the second category. This involves deception operations, patrols, raids, and the setting up of check-points.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> PAM-700, p. 22-26; LTC Ferozaldo Paul T. Regencia, PA, interview with author, AFP National Development Support Command, Camp Aguinaldo, Manila, Philippines, October 8, 2007. Hereafter cited as LTC Regencia, October 8, 2007.

FIGURE 2 : CMO activities conducted by CMO units in the Western Mindanao Command

PSYOPS	PUBLIC AFFAIRS	CIVIL AFFAIRS
Peace Rally Efforts	Games Competition	Medical Civic Action
Distributions of Leaflets	Fun Games	Dental Civic Action
Posters and Stickers	Blood Drives	Engineering Civic Action
Symposiums/Meetings/Lectures	Cleanliness Drive	Circumcision
Face to Face Communication	Community Assistance	Ophthalmology
Radio Broadcast	Disaster Response	Minor Surgery
Projects Site Survey	Inter-agency Coordination	Veterinary
Special Operations Team (SOT)	National Historic Events Participation	Gift Giving
Special Advocacy and Livelihood Assistance for the Advancement of Among Muslims (SALAAM)	Environmental Protection	Civic Action
Processing of Surrenders	Humanitarian Assistance	
Balik-Baril Program <sup>10</sup>	Relief Assistance	
Anti-Rally	Radio TV programs	
Removing Enemy Propaganda Materials	Interviews	
	Press Conferences	
	Photo Video Coverage	

Source: From briefing material entitled, "Lines of Operations," provided to the author by Mjr. Eugenio S. Batara, Jr., Public Information Officer, Western Mindanao Command, 3 October 2007

### III. Examining the Roots and the Development of CMO Practices in its History

Civil Military Operations (CMO) is a term that has been in existence for the last few decades but it was not until recently that the AFP has created doctrines and field manuals devoted to expounding on the definition of CMO and clarifying its role in military operations. However one must bear in mind the principles of CMO such as civic action, psyops, and PA have been practiced in one form or another in history. An entry point to understanding CMO particular to the Philippine security environment is by tracing its development in military practice from the post-independence years and examining briefly the implications it had on the AFP for each succeeding

<sup>10</sup> Balik-Baril translates as "Bring a Rifle, Improve your Livelihood." This is an amnesty program which began in the early 1990s to encourage rebels to surrender and reintegrate into society.

period.

#### A. The beginnings: Psychological Warfare under President Magsaysay

CMO is in fact the product of a Filipino-American collaboration where components of the current CMO were first practiced (public affairs, civic action, and psychological warfare). In the immediate aftermath of World War II and independence, the Philippine government faced a communist-inspired peasant revolt known as the Huk Rebellion (1946–1954).<sup>11</sup> The Huks called for land reform, justice to the poor, and the abolishment of corruption and criticized the ineptitude of the government. Their campaigns were a source of attraction for the poor peasant and at its height, the organization had between 15,000 to 50,000 fighters.<sup>12</sup>

The representative work which sheds light on actual practices of early CMO in the Philippines is *Counter-Guerrilla Operations: The Philippines Experience*.<sup>13</sup> Based on the first-hand experiences of a Filipino and an American officer, the work chronicles Ramon Magsaysay, the AFP, and American military advisors' efforts in putting down the rebellion. The eventual success of the military in quelling the Huks was that they mobilized the right resources for specific targets. Ramon Magsaysay, first as Secretary of National Defense (1950–1953) and as president (1953–1957), and his American advisors were quick to realize that blunt military force could not remove the socio-economic causes of the conflict.<sup>14</sup> As part of their new initiatives to improve military operations, the Civil Affairs Office (CAO) was established in 1951. This essentially was a psychological warfare office where activities such as propaganda, public relations, psyops, and civic action were carried out towards their directed audience in order to have the most impact on their emotions, attitudes and behavior.<sup>15</sup>

In targeting the enemy, the objective was to destroy their morale and take the thunder away from their cause. This included the distribution of leaflets calling for the surrender and amnesty programs for the Huk fighters. The amnesty program also promised a land package. This was executed by the Corps of Engineers in a program called "Economic Development Corps (EDCOR).<sup>16</sup> This project mobilized troop labor to clear lands and conduct development work to help resettle Huk surrenderees away

---

11 The Huks were the military arm of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). During World War II, they fought against the Japanese. Hence the origins of their full name *Hukbong Bayan Laban sa mga Hapon* (People's Army Against the Japanese) is derived from this period.

12 Valeriano and Bohannan, pp. 39–44.

13 Ibid.

14 Donald W. Hamilton, *The Art of Insurgency: American Military Policy and the Failure of Strategy in Southeast Asia*, Westport, CT: Praeger, 1988, p. 48. Hereafter cited as Hamilton.

15 Valeriano and Bohannan, pp. 170–177.

16 Col. Vidarico S. Baclagon, *Manual for Citizen Army Training*, (Rev. Ed.), Caloocan City: T.F. Castro Publishing House, 1988, pp. 460–461. Hereafter cited as Col. Baclagon; Valeriano and Bohannan, p. 177.

from central Luzon.<sup>17</sup> On the combat-side, rather than rely on body counts, psychological operations were used to maximize the effects of battlefield kills.<sup>18</sup>

In regards to the people, their support was critical. The people were the “sea” in which the insurgents or the “fish” operated in and gaining their trust would allow the military to secure intelligence about the enemy and at the same time cut the insurgent off from his support base. In order to achieve the confidence of the people, CAO impressed upon the populace that the government and the military were trustworthy by making sure that both their efforts in areas like civic action were well publicized.<sup>19</sup>

Scholars such as Carolina G. Hernandez see this period as a turning point for the AFP. The Huk Rebellion spurred the military to expand its roles that went beyond pure external defense. In short, their COIN efforts produced civic action programs which paved way for the military’s acceptance of a “developmentalist orientation” which “perhaps provided the blue print” for which Marcos would use (See following section).<sup>20</sup>

From a COIN perspective, in Magsaysay’s campaign against the Huks, the CAO was in fact one example where the AFP utilized their available resources to produce the maximum military effect on a target audience. Therefore, for future COIN practitioners, Magasaysay’s way became a textbook example of success. Many of the CMO concepts utilized today are directly inherited from this period.

## B. President Marcos’ Home Defense Program

The next significant period for the further development of CMO practices came during the period of President Ferdinand Marcos (1965–1986). Like the Magsaysay administration, the military was also mobilized for COIN. In the 1960s, radical student movements in Manila capitulated into existence a new generation of communists lead by Jose Maria Sison that forged its military arm in 1969. The organization came to be collectively known as the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army (CPP-NPA).

On the other armed front, the Muslim separatist movement grew out of the culmination of grievances by the Philippine Muslim minority towards the central govern-

---

17 In actuality, only about 250 of the 900 settlers were Huks. The rest comprised of military personnel. See Renato Constantino, *The Philippines: The Continuing Past*, Manila: Foundation for Nationalist Studies, 1978, pp. 240–241.

18 For instance, Magsaysay’s American advisor, General Edward Lansdale utilized local superstition to his benefit by making Huks believe that vampires were responsible for some of their losses in men. These were scare tactics that resulted in damaging the enemy’s will. See Hamilton, pp. 50–51.

19 Cesar P. Pobre, *History of the Armed Forces of the Filipino People*, Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 2000, pp. 409–410. Hereafter cited as Pobre; Valeriano and Bohannon, pp. 126, 191–192.

20 Dencio S. Acop, “Assessing the Expanded Role of the Armed Forces of the Philippines in Nation-Building,” *Asia-Pacific Social Science Review*, Vol. 6 No. (2006), p. 136.

ment for neglect, land-grabbing, and socio-economic prejudice, not to mention a growing sense of a Muslim identity separate from the Christian majority.<sup>21</sup> Led by a Muslim intellectual, Nur Misuari, the Moro Nationalist Liberation Front (MNLF) was formed in 1968.

The two armed movements morphed into a full military campaign in the early 1970s where the brunt of the fighting taking place in Mindanao. At one point, the military sent over three quarters of their forces to Mindanao.<sup>22</sup> COIN operations on both fronts exhibited similar problems. Both incurred numerous civilian casualties especially in areas where the insurgents had operational units. These communities became the target of massive military strikes. For the population, this meant forced evacuations, the destruction of property, illegal arrests, the confiscation of food by the undersupplied military. Strategic hamleting was enforced to cut off insurgent links from the populace but not only did this fail to separate the people from the insurgents but alienated them as well.<sup>23</sup>

The civic action component practiced during the incumbency of President Ferdinand Marcos, was a carry over from the 1950s but Marcos helped institutionalize and expand the military's role in nation-building and socio-economic programs by martial law. These initiatives were based on a provision in the 1958-59 General Appropriations Act that allowed the military to be directed "without prejudice" to socio-economic programs. The AFP-Strategic Home Defense Program launched in 1970 was a CMO program which encapsulated military's developmental and non-military approach to insurgency.<sup>24</sup> What it did was launch the AFP's role in engineering, transportation, communications, training and planning for development work, and training para-military organizations, for the main purpose of garnering public support for the military.<sup>25</sup>

A major component of the Home Defense Program was the Mass Base Operations (MBO), whose objectives were to strengthen communities by improving socio-economic conditions. Activities included medical and dental civic action and providing basic education by soldier-teachers particularly to the youth.<sup>26</sup> The strengthening of the communities meant the better the economic condition, the less likely that they

---

21 Patricio P. Diaz, *Understanding Mindanao Conflict*, Davao City: MindaNews Publication, 2003, pp. 2-6,14. Hereafter cited as Diaz.

22 Lela Gardner Noble, "The Moro National Liberation Front in the Philippines," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 29 No.3, (Autumn 1976), p. 426.

23 Kessler, p.144; Jose P. Magno, Jr and A. James Gregor, "Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in the Philippines," *Asian Survey*, vol. 26 no.5 (May 1986), pp. 508-509.

24 Jose M. Crisol, *Men and Arms*, Makati: Agro Printing & Publishing House, 1981, p. 61, 69. Hereafter cited as Crisol.

25 AFP Annual Report '82, "A Year of Solid Achievement"; Crisol, p. 62, 70.

26 Pobre, p. 563-545.



would support the insurgent.

CMO practiced in this period, in comparison to Magsaysay's period tended to lean more towards in economic development. Marco increased the visibility of the military through civic action which lead to the enduring role-expansion of the military in non-defense sectors such as road engineering and agriculture.

Though Marco relayed in his speeches that the AFP could help defeat subversion and insurgency by participating in national development,<sup>27</sup> in actual practice, despite extensive civic action, CMO efforts failed. Kessler analyzes that it failed to "win the hearts and minds" of the people because civic action was used selectively, meaning many of the beneficiaries were Marcos' rural constituencies. Furthermore, civic action was overshadowed by the excesses of the military. The military and its para-military arm, the Civilian Home Defense Force (CHDF) which consisted of poorly trained and undisciplined militia, delegated to protect villages, perpetrated massive human rights violations. In the end, the most problematic issue was that Marcos did not devote much of his energy into creating an effective counter-insurgency force. The Home Defense program was one way to serve Marcos' needs to stay in power. The AFP, instead of protecting the people, became Marcos' "tool for repression."<sup>28</sup>

### C. Aquino and Ramos with Rebuilding and Estrada with "All-out-war"

The direct antecedents of CMO today go back to the period between 1985-1988. In the Marcos years, CMO played for the most part a supportive role to his scheme of nation-building but after Aquino assumed office, CMO evolved to take on more diverse functions.

Both the Corazon Aquino (1986-1992) and Fidel V. Ramos (1992-1998) presidencies had to face the task of a national reconciliation process to undo the political damages done by the Marcos period. A marked feature here was the attempts made by the both presidents to address excesses and low morale of the military from the Marcos regime through confidence building and reconciliatory programs. In the AFP, work was begun to foster professionalism and ethics within the ranks. CMO's share in this initiative was a "value orientation indoctrination program." Although this included a human rights education, it was primarily used to bridge the rift within the AFP created by Marcos' factionalism and reign in coup-seekers in the military.

CMO also continued to devote their resources to the internal audience or the soldiers themselves. In 1992, Ramos called for a Moral Recovery Program to build-up virtues for the nation. The AFP responded with their own program which became a

---

<sup>27</sup> Jose M. Crisol (Ed), *Marcos on the Armed Forces*, Manila: Capital Publishing House, 1971, pp. 18-27

<sup>28</sup> Kessler, pp.105, 111; 119-122.

pillar of their CMO: Military Values Education (MILVED). MILVED's objective was to improve the standing of the soldier within the eyes of the public by improving soldier morale, ethical standards, and commitment to the nation.<sup>29</sup>

In regards to the armed insurgencies, despite the end of the Marcos regime, the CPP-NPA was still a considerable threat. In 1986, NPA fighters numbered 22,500 which jumped to 26,000 the following year.<sup>30</sup> Echoing Marcos' rhetoric, Aquino also called for a "comprehensive counterinsurgency program"<sup>31</sup> and though Aquino attempted measures such as reintegrating the NPA into society through amnesty programs, it registered little success. The government resumed full-scale military operations and one of their highlighted programs was the Special Operations Teams (SOTs). In 1985, the Army began experimenting with the SOT concept that became fully operational in 1987. This was an operation which had "built-in capabilities" of combat, intelligence, and CMO. SOTS eventually contributed to the success of clearing areas of communist threat in the 1990s.<sup>32</sup>

COIN operations continued to espouse both the provision of security and development. Under Ramos, the AFP launched Unlad Bayan in 1994 which was a CMO operation that actively pursued infrastructural development, basic services to the community, and the preservation of the environment. CMO during this period began cooperating more with non-military sectors to implement socio-economic projects. In addition, more dialogues were held with NGOs to improve the relationship between the military and society.<sup>33</sup>

Ramos' initiatives in forging peace with the Muslim separatists and the communists spelled a period of calm in internal security. One of the most successful programs continued to be used by CMO today is the "Balik Baril" which is an amnesty program that encourages rebels to surrender with the promise of livelihood. Success was registered when 236 Muslim rebels gave up their arms and were reintegrated into society.<sup>34</sup>

The end of the Cold War also had implications for CMO. The Americans giving

---

29 Carolina G. Hernandez, Ph.D. and Maria Cecilia T. Ubarra, "Restoring and Strengthening Civilian Control: Best Practices in Civil-Military Relations in the Philippines," in *Partnership for Democratic Governance and Security* (December 31, 1999) Available online at:

<http://www.pdgs.org.ar/pon-fhi.htm#4>. Accessed May 10, 2009. Hereafter cited as Hernandez and Ubarra.

30 "Countries of the World" Available online at: [http://www.photius.com/countries/philippines/national\\_security/philippines\\_national\\_security\\_the\\_counterinsurgenc877.htm](http://www.photius.com/countries/philippines/national_security/philippines_national_security_the_counterinsurgenc877.htm). Accessed May 10 2009.

31 Kessler, p. 148.

32 PAM-700, p. 10; "Countries of the World." See section "Philippines The Counterinsurgency."

33 Hernandez and Ubarra.

34 Carolina Hernandez, "The AFP's institutional responses to armed conflict: a continuing quest for the right approach," *Policy Notes*, No. 2006-02 (March 2006). Available online at: [http://hdn.org.ph/wp-content/uploads/2005\\_PHDR/3%20PIDS%20policy%20notes%20-%20AFP\\_institutional\\_response.pdf](http://hdn.org.ph/wp-content/uploads/2005_PHDR/3%20PIDS%20policy%20notes%20-%20AFP_institutional_response.pdf). Accessed May 17, 2009. Hereafter cited as Hernandez, 2006.

up their military base presence in the Philippines propelled the AFP to think about a new self-reliance posture that would be viable in the event of an external attack. The Modernization Act of 1994<sup>35</sup> outlined what the AFP's new *raison d'être* would be in the years to come. Consequently, the attention began shifting from COIN operations to an external defense posture.

However, when Joseph Estrada assumed presidency (1998–2001), he reversed the reconciliatory position that marked the Ramos administration. Thus, CMO had very little to offer. Though Ramos had signed a cessation of hostilities with the MILF in 1997 and resumed peace talks with the CPP-NPA, President Estrada, under military recommendation, resumed war with the MILF in Central Mindanao in 2000. His move was based on the assumption that a military solution was needed to bring prosperity and economic development to the resource-rich Mindanao.<sup>36</sup> However, despite the capitulation of key MILF camps and the flight of the MILF chairperson, Hashim Salamat to Malaysia, the mobilization of the military for an “all-out-war” failed to translate into permanent peace and only strengthened both the communist and Muslim insurgencies.<sup>37</sup>

#### IV. The Renewed Emphasis on CMO

In response to the growing menace of the internal security problem from the Estrada years, President Macapagal-Arroyo since assuming office in 2001 has voiced the importance of taking both a developmental and military approach to the insurgencies.<sup>38</sup> The military's response to this agenda was the institutionalization of the military's “soft” role in counter-insurgency by reemphasizing traditional CMO practices.

In 2000, already high-level CMO army practitioners had convened to exchange notes on their experiences which lead to the creation of a field manual (Civil-Military Operations Manual, Philippine Army 2002). This was the first time a doctrine-manual was written to provide army commanders and operators in the field “a clear outline of what to do in conducting CMO based on the standards set with the changing times and the current trends of warfare.”<sup>39</sup>

On July 1, 2006, the staffs for Civil Military Operations (CMO) at General

---

35 See Republic Act No. 7898 or more commonly known as the “AFP Modernization Act.” Available online at: [http://www.gppb.gov.ph/laws\\_rules/laws/RA\\_7898.pdf](http://www.gppb.gov.ph/laws_rules/laws/RA_7898.pdf).

36 Diaz, pp. 206–209.

37 Hernandez, 2006.

38 She outlined in executive order No. 21, that the government's response “to insurgency requires a holistic approach consisting of political, economic, psycho-social and security components to address the root causes and armed threats of insurgency” based on collaborative relationship with various government agencies. See *Executive Order No. 21 - Creating a Coordinative and Integrative System on Internal Security* in <http://www.chanrobles.com/executiveorders/2001/executiveorderno21-2001.html>.

39 PAM-700, pp.1; 15.

Headquarters, major service (Army, Air Force, and Navy) headquarters and unified commands headquarters level regained its independent status after being deactivated in 2004 (CMO was transferred to the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations in 2005).<sup>40</sup> CMO also reduced the number of its pillars from 7<sup>41</sup> to 3 (See Figure 1), signifying the shift in focus to managing the civilian-military interface.<sup>42</sup> This was followed in 2007 by the creation of the first CMO doctrine, known as the AFP Doctrine for Civil Military Operations (AFPM 2-7) for the three major services.<sup>43</sup>

In August 2006, the CMO Battalion was also established. The battalion was created to assist the Army's capability at a division and brigade level to counter communist threats in the Metro Manila area. Their activities include developing livelihood skills, youth programs, and extending medical and dental missions in economically depressed areas in the capital.<sup>44</sup>

The same year also saw the establishment of the AFP-CMO school for all three major services (Army, Navy, and Air Force). Prior to this, CMO schooling which had been in existence since 1985, was basically army-focused since most CMO activities took place on the ground. The CMO School currently provides courses in CA, PA, and Psyops. CMO also has become an occupational specialty for soldiers working in CMO units where soldiers can earn merits and promotions based on their CMO track-record.<sup>45</sup>

CMO traditionally was an army operation conducted by army engineers but now CMO has expanded to include the Navy and the Air Force.<sup>46</sup> After the Army, the Navy conducts most of the CMO. In addition to the 3 pillars: CA, PA, and Psyops, the Navy has a separate pillar called the Environmental Management Staff. This pillar is responsible for activities related to the preservation of the maritime environment such as coastal cleanup, mangrove planting, and laying down artificial reef. Like other CMO activities, the Navy also stresses conducting activities in coordination with local government units, government agencies, and NGOs.<sup>47</sup>

---

40 AFP Modernization Program, *Annual Accomplishment Report 2006*, p. 8

41 The 7 pillars included 1.) military values education, 2.)military livelihood enhancement, 3.)civic action, 4.) community relations, 5.) public information, 6.) psyops and 7.)research and special studies. Military values education and military livelihood enhancement were CMO components directed to improve the morale of the soldiers which in turn would strengthen their will to fight the enemy.

42 LTC Jefferson S. Omandam, executive office of CRS-CMO (J7), interview with author, Camp Aguinaldo, Manila, Philippines, July 25, 2008. Hereafter cited as LTC Omandam, July 25, 2008.

43 LTC Omandam, July 25, 2008.

44 Civil Military Operations Battalion, "The CMO Way," Anniversary Issue, (2008). Available online at: <http://www.cmobn.com/journals/CMO.pdf>; "The AFP Annual Modernization Report."

45 Major Batara, July 31, 2008; LTC Omandam. July 25, 2008.

46 LTC Ferozaldo Paul T. Regencia, PA., October 8, 2007.

47 Rear Admiral Emilio C. Maragay, interview with author, Commander, Naval Forces Western Mindanao, HQ, Naval Station Zamboanga, Zamboanga City, Philippines, July 31, 2008.

One of the largest organizational changes for the engineering function emerged with the establishment of the National Development Support Command (NDSC)<sup>48</sup> on October 20, 2007. Though its status equals those of other regional military commands<sup>49</sup> it has no area of responsibility. In short, it is one of the implementing arms of CMO that handles large construction projects. It is tasked to direct the AFP's Army, Navy, and Air Force engineering brigades. Previously, development work was given to various regional commands, but since most of the attention went into their respective operations, it left little attention for development activities. The NDSC now takes the lead responsibility in orchestrating and synchronizing development work through their engineering brigades. The main purpose of NDSC is to initiate development in remote areas where the government has limited or no access to.<sup>50</sup>

In regards to funding, the government has increased funding for CMO activities within their respective services. The years 2003 and 2005 reflect a gradual increase under the heading of CMO. With the establishment of the NDSC in 2007, the heading has changed to national development. Funds for the Army has since, more than doubled and has tripled for the Navy and Air Force.

In summary, the majority of the changes are organizational. There are no dra-

FIGURE 3 : Budget Appropriations for CMO and National Development within the 3 Services of the Armed Forces of the Philippines 2003-2009 (Pesos)

	CMO	CMO	National Development	National Development	National Development
Services	2003	2005	2007	2008	2009
Philippine Army	56,835,000	75,780,000	1,197,836,000	1,197,606,000	1,377,596,000
Philippine Navy	7,480,000	9,973,000	323,277,000	320,987,000	377,610,000
Philippine Air force	7,137,000	7,984,000	254,574,000	352,288,000	380,696,000
The total for the 3 services as percentage of the total appropriations for Department of Defense (DOD)	0.18%	0.20%	3.6%	3.7%	3.8%
DOD total appropriations	40,038,541,000	46,036,935,000	49,341,721,000	50,927,127,000	56,483,128,000

Source: Compiled from the Department of Budget and Management, *General Appropriations Act*. Available online at: <http://www.dbm.gov.ph/>. Accessed May 17, 2009.

48 Pursuant of DND Department Order NR 238

49 The AFP is basically territorial-based with 7 regional commands which operate from fixed bases throughout the archipelago.

50 Mgr. Gen. Jaime Buenaflor, interview with author, NDSC, Camp Aguinaldo, Manila, Philippines, July 25, 2008. Hereafter cited as Mgr. Gen. Jaime Buenaflor, July 25, 2008.

matic changes on how CMO is conducted on the ground. Nevertheless, the institutionalization has created clearer guide lines for the CMO operators. As one military officer points out, "What was once considered to be common sense is now institutionalized."<sup>51</sup> The institutionalization has increased the name-recognition of CMO and has elevated the non-traditional components of military tasking to a new status which has helped it secure more funding and visibility.

## V. The Internal Threats and the CMO response

The following section will briefly present the profile of the main insurgent groups. It will be followed by a CMO response to it.

### 1. The Communist Armed Movement

The beginning of 2009 marked the 40th anniversary of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA) movement and they have publicly reaffirmed their commitment to overthrowing the existing leadership and installing their own government.<sup>52</sup> Though the movement never regained its peak strength of 25,000 fighters of the mid-1980s, the movement remains a significant threat. With an estimated 4,500 fighters, the CPP-NPA is reported to have influence in 1,470 barangays<sup>53</sup> out of 41,995 barangays throughout the archipelago.<sup>54</sup>

#### a. Special Operations Teams (SOTs)

One counter-NPA program which has been in existence since the late 1980s are the SOTs. SOTs practiced then were a triad concept where the psyops component of CMO was used to gather intelligence in preparation for securing a rebel stronghold. Now SOTs have evolved to place more emphasis on the Civil Affairs and Public Affairs.<sup>55</sup> SOTs are used to counter the spread of the communist armed movement by "winning the hearts and minds" of people by

1. Explaining what the communists are and about
2. Explaining the principles of the communist ideology
3. Explaining to the community about government programs

---

51 LTC. Regencia, October 8, 2007.

52 "Strengthen the Party and intensify the people's struggle in celebrating the 40th founding anniversary," Message of the Central Committee, Communist Party of the Philippines," *Ang Bayan*. December 26, 2008. <http://www.philippinerevolution.net/cgi-bin/ab/text.pl?issue=20081226;lang=eng;article=01>. Accessed January 8, 2009.

53 The loose translation of barangay is "village." It is the smallest administrative division in the Philippines.

54 Robert Karniol. "Communist threat still a priority." *The Strait Times*. December 15, 2008. Available online at: <http://www.asianewsnet.net/news.php?id=3124&sec=3&t=->. Accessed January 8, 2009.

55 PAM-700

#### 4. Providing basic education (reading and writing)

SOTs target remote barangays that often times lack basic government services and/or for security reasons, local government units (LGU) cannot enter. SOT programs often work with village leaders, the Department of Health, and the Department of Education to try to help people with basic needs such as adult education and livelihood training programs.

SOTs still retains an intelligence-gathering function. The AFP say they have gained grounds on impressing upon the people misled by the communist movement that the government is there to try to help them. As a result, the AFP says that this can get people to cooperate with the AFP to share information about the communist insurgents' activities.<sup>56</sup>

However, according to a Philippines human rights group, Karapatan, SOTs are responsible for numerous human rights' violations. Some of the issues that surround SOTs lie in COIN operations which face the challenge of differentiating the insurgents from the populace. Even though the military express that the communism is legal and should be respected and that they are only putting down an armed struggle,<sup>57</sup> Karapatan argues that in order for the AFP to destroy the communist armed movement, they also have to destroy the political infrastructure as well. This includes the targeting of legal left-leaning political organizations and their activists. Karapatan claims AFP engages in aggressive information campaigns to denounce leftist groups and subjects them to surveillance and general harassment.<sup>58</sup>

While SOTs target rural areas, the AFP has also developed a CMO battalion exclusively for Metro Manila. This was established in 2006 in response to a perceived threat that the CPP-NPA was infiltrating the capital.

##### b. The CMO Battalion

The CMO battalion has two distinct purposes. The first is to address the urban poor. The CMO battalion conducts social services such as medical missions, livelihood training, small-scale road or path repair, cleaning streets and creeks. Based on their initial survey, depressed barangays were a potential recruiting ground for NPA. To counter the threat, CMO soldiers are trying to alleviate poor economic conditions

---

<sup>56</sup> Maj. Eugenio S. Batara, October 3, 2007.

<sup>57</sup> Bert M. Laput, "Denounced Armed Struggle, 101st Brigade Commander Challenges Bayan Muna, Karapatan." *Philippine Information Agency*, March 5, 2007. Available online at: <http://www.pia.gov.ph/?m=12&fi=p070305.htm&no=10>. Accessed May 22, 2009.

<sup>58</sup> Spokesperson for Karapatan, interview with author, Manila, Philippines, July 24, 2008. See Karapatan's *The 2007 Year-End Report on the Human Rights Situation in the Philippines* for statistics on AFP-related human rights violations.

which can lead people to support the communist cause.<sup>59</sup> The CMO battalion also follows CMO principles of forging partnerships with other agencies. In June 2007, the CMO Battalion, the CMO Group, the Philippine Army signed an agreement with the Technical Education Skills and Development Authority (TESDA), a government job agency.<sup>60</sup>

An example of AFP-CMO and TESDA cooperation is seen in one squatter area of Taguig City consisting of 356 households. When the CMO battalion entered the area, they organized a five-day food processing session with the cooperation of TESDA. The military provided the manpower to setup the venue such as tents and managed the coordination between the barangay officials and TESDA. As a result of the TESDA hands-on training on learning how to process ham and shumai, 30 community members were expected to get food processing certification from TESDA. The certification will allow them to work in food processing plants in and outside of the Philippines.<sup>61</sup>

The second purpose of CMO is targeting the youth sector because they are also popular recruiting ground for NPAs. The CMO battalion launches information drives in high schools and universities to discuss the recruiting methods of NPA and the dangers of joining the organization.<sup>62</sup>

Some barangay officials have expressed gratitude even though they admitted initially having some hesitation in soldiers entering their neighborhood. A barangay head in Taguig city said the visibility of the AFP had decreased petty crime and the AFP were helpful in cleaning up the garbage in their canal. This in turn helped improve the image of the neighborhood.<sup>63</sup>

Nevertheless, CMO battalion activities have had their share of criticism. From November 2006 to the height of its operations in March 2007, CMO units were deployed in over 27 communities in Manila as a deterrent against a renewed campaign by NPAs in urban areas. Soldiers were deployed to slum areas in Manila to conduct basic services such as medical, livelihood training, information drives about drug

---

59 Col. Buenaventura Pascual, interview with author, PA, Battalion Commander, CMO Battalion, Camp Aguinaldo, Manila, Philippines, October 9, 2007. Hereafter cited as Col. Pascual, October 9, 2007.

60 "CMO Battalion and Tesda Forge a Memorandum of Agreement," *CMO Battalion* website. June 27, 2007. Available online at: <http://www.cmobn.com/archives/moa.html>. Accessed May 25, 2009. The Philippines' Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), is an agency of the Philippine government under the Department of Labor and Employment responsible for managing and supervising technical education and skills development in the Philippines.

61 Lt. Ronaldson C. Cutillon, interview with author, October 10, 2007, CMO Battalion, Fort Bonifacio, Manila, Philippines; Anita, Neighborhood Association Head, interview with author, October 10, 2007, Purok 2a, Lower Bicutan, Taguig City, Manila, Philippines.

62 Lt. Ronaldson C. Cutillon, interview with author, PA, Platoon Leader, CMO Battalion, Camp Aguinaldo, Manila, Philippines, October 9, 2007. Hereafter cited as Lt. Cutillon, October 9, 2007.

63 Eufrancinio C. Silvestre, Barangay Kagawad (elected barangay official), interview with the author, Manila, Philippines, October 9, 2009.



abuse and communist infiltration. However, the action caused an outrage, where critics called the move as a flashback to martial law.<sup>64</sup> Some universities students have also expressed indignation at CMO personnel entering university campuses to give lectures on the dangers of communism while monitoring and putting under surveillance leaders of student organizations.<sup>65</sup>

c. The National Development Support Command (NDSC)

The National Development Support Command (NDSC), implements many of the heavy construction projects for CMO. Their main project is the “Kalayaan Barangays” (Freedom Village) program which focuses on bringing peace and development to rural areas where the government has limited or no access. The NDSC works with national agencies such as the Department of Public Works and Highways, Department of Agriculture, Department of Education, Department of Social Welfare and Development, and the Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process. The engineering brigades mobilized for these efforts repair or construct farm-to-market roads, health facilities, school buildings, water supply systems, and install electrification.<sup>66</sup> Currently the program covers 600 barangays in 12 regions. Each barangay is allocated a ceiling of P5 million. The government identified 500 of those barangays a communist security concerns.<sup>67</sup> As of October 2007, the completion rate was 30 per cent<sup>68</sup> and as of 2008, 75 per cent.<sup>69</sup> Though the NDSC is on-schedule with their timeline to provide economic assistance to target barangays, the heat of criticism falls on the funding component of the Kalayaan Barangays. Due to the overlapping nature of the NDSC work with other agencies doing development work, much of the money released to the projects comes from special funds which are separate from defense funds. Critics say the President is misusing the funds for pork-barrel projects to sustain her position in power.<sup>70</sup>

---

64 Rene Q. Bas, “Where are the AFP troops posted? What are they doing?” *The Sunday Times*, April 1, 2007, p. A7; Genalyn D. Kabling, “AFP to pull out troops in slum areas on May 14.” *Manila Bulletin*, March 29 2007.

65 Anna Salonga, “Crossing the line of duty: accounts of militarization of campuses,” *Phil. Collegian*, Issue 15, (October 14, 2008). Available online at:

<http://yoopee.multiply.com/journal/item/4860>. Accessed November 18, 2008.

66 From undated document “Executive Summary: Kalayaan Barangays Program,” provide to the author by Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Civil Military Operations, March 27, 2007.

67 “PGMA awards P20, 000 each to 21 rebel-returnees in Cebu Friday; gets update on SIP, KALAHI programs,” *Office of the Press Secretary*, March 12, 2009. Available online at: <http://www.ops.gov.ph/archives2009/mar12.htm>. Accessed May 12, 2009.

68 LTC Regencia, October 8, 2007.

69 Maj. Gen. Buenaflor, July 25, 2008.

70 Gemman Bagayaua, “P1.4 trillion 2009 budget must be cut deep due to revenue shortfall,” *ABS-CBN News*, September 10, 2008. Available online at: <http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/special-report/09/10/08/p14-trillion-2009-budget-must-be-cut-deep-due-revenue-shortfall>. Accessed May 18, 2009.

## 2. The Armed Muslim Movement

The Muslim Filipinos account for about 5 percent of the predominantly Roman Catholic country. They are concentrated in Mindanao and Manila. Mindanao has traditionally been their homeland even before the arrival of the Spanish in the 16th century. The Muslims have ceased to become the majority in Mindanao due to the arrival of Christian Filipino settlers after World War II. However they still retain a majority in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), a semi-autonomous region in the Philippines.<sup>71</sup> Though some progress has been registered in poverty reduction in the region, the ARMM still has the lowest average family income, life expectancy, and functional literacy in the nation according to 2009 statistics.<sup>72</sup>

Many of the Muslim grievances towards the central government were espoused by militant Muslim groups which began in the late 1960s with the MNLF. However their movement has declined dramatically since the signing of the 1996 Peace Agreement with the government. Still, the Philippines has had to contend with two splinter groups that opposed the peace agreement: the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG).

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) is currently the largest armed Muslim organization in the Philippines. According to 2008 statistics, they were estimated to have over 11,000 regular fighters.<sup>73</sup> The group was officially founded in 1984 after their leader, Hashim Salamat split from the MNLF in 1977 over an ideological rift. The MILF largely derives its support from Islamic religious preachers, urban professionals, and the rural poor. Concerning the stance of the Philippine government, President Arroyo sees them as legitimate and a ceasefire was put into place since 2001, though punctuated by occasional skirmishes between the government forces and the militants.

On the other hand, the ASG is a Muslim splinter group with an extremist agenda. The founders of the group were part of the Afghan alumni that fought the war against the Soviets. The group has launched a series of attacks, the largest being the attack on the SuperFerry which left over 130 people dead and also have been responsible for high-profile kidnappings of both Filipinos and foreigners. The numbers of the ASG stood at its zenith at 1000 but with intense operations by a combined AFP and US military effort, the numbers of their fighters have fallen to the 200 range. They currently operate in the southern islands of Basilan, Tawi Tawi, and Sulu. Since the death of the original leaders, the group's political agenda has dissipated, and are now

---

71 ARMM is the autonomous region created as a compromise to Muslim separatist demands in 1989. Though it cedes its sovereign to the Philippine state, it is the only region with an independent government. It includes 6 provinces and 2 cities which are located in the Mindanao area.

72 Philippines National Statistics Office. Available online at: <http://www.census.gov.ph>. Accessed May 17, 2009.

73 *The Military Balance 2008*, The International Institute for Strategic Studies, London: Oxford University Press, 2007.

labeled as a mere bandit group. However security concern stems from their links with rogue elements of the MILF, other criminal groups, and international terrorist organizations such as the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI).<sup>74</sup>

a. CMO response

The AFP-CMO in regards to the Muslim problem has launched various CMO programs which targets socio-economic improvement and religious reconciliation for the Muslims. One of the significant features of these CMO activities include many civil society groups and government agencies.

A highlighted program is the Special Advocacy and Livelihood Assistance for the Advancement of among Muslims (Salaam).<sup>75</sup> In 2007, a Salaam manual was created by the AFP-GHQ.<sup>76</sup> Salaam seeks to alleviate poverty for Muslims in the Mindanao region. Its units operate under similar lines as SOTs but have developed concepts specific to the Muslim problem. Salaam was developed after 2000. Some units are composed of MNLF and MILF integres that work with their AFP counterparts that are mostly Muslim. At the beginning, they were deployed to rural Muslim communities to conduct information campaigns about government programs and the dangers of ASG. Now they operate in cities as well.<sup>77</sup>

For instance, Salaam units deployed to Zamboanga City in 2008 conducted operations for about 45 days. During this time, soldiers mingled and lived in the community. The soldiers conducted studies on what was needed in the barangay and provided medical and pediatric projects. The soldiers also educated the community on what the government had done such as the building of roads, schools, etc. in order to counter the propaganda that an enemy might use to negate government initiatives.

Salaam units consist of voluntary soldiers, who are mostly Muslim. The prerequisites for the assignment include being a member of a CMO group, undergoing CMO training, and some understanding of the culture of the community that they will be deployed to.<sup>78</sup>

Opinions regarding Salaam are that like views on other developmental work the military has been involved with. In short it has very little impact on spurring development. However, the attitude shift in the AFP with their opening to Muslim culture is

---

74 "The Philippines Southern Insurgency: Is Peace in sight," *IISS Report*, Vol. 11 Issue 3, (May 2005) Available online at: [www.iiss.com/stratcom](http://www.iiss.com/stratcom). Accessed May 3, 2009; Zachary Abuza, "Balik-Terrorism: The Return of the Abu Sayyaf," Carlisle: U.S. War College, 2005. p.27.

75 The word Salaam means peace in Arabic.

76 AFP Modernization Program, *AFP Annual Accomplishment Report 2007*, p. 33.

77 Major Eugenio Batara, October 3, 2007.

78 LTC, Maria Courdes P. Manandes, interview with author, Task Group Zamboanga, 1st D. P.A., Camp Arturo Enrile, Zamboanga City, Philippines, July 31, 2008.

considered to be a symbolic gesture which has the potential to reconcile the military and Muslim societies that have been caught up in years of conflict and help create a culture of peace.<sup>79</sup>

CMO activities conducted in the southern Philippines also involve American Troops. The Visiting Forces Agreement (1999) allows the US to maintain their troop presence in a series of annual joint exercises "Balikatan."<sup>80</sup> Since September 11th, the US has taken action based on their concern that the Southern Philippines have become a haven for international terrorists and have stepped-up their cooperation with their AFP counterparts to help eradicate terrorist. The US military personnel are forbidden to take part in any combat activities other than for self-defense are limited to providing advice and engaging in CMO activities.

The US forces see CMO as a strategy to help remove conditions that create terrorism which lies in socio-economic woes. In the Southern Philippines they have extensively conducted civic-action programs in Sulu, Tawi Tawi, and Basilan. Their activities have included the construction and building improvement of schools, roads, community centers, and water improvement facilities as well as providing dental and medical and veterinary services. The US forces say "CMO is applied in a combined and coordinated effort between the AFP, USAID, NGOS and the Philippine government."<sup>81</sup>

The United States involvement in CMO activities has mixed reviews. Though successes were lauded in extensive roadwork on Basilan island, the impact has been short-lived. The surge in kidnappings and the beheading of 10 marines in 2007 by MILF/ASG<sup>82</sup> have been a major setback. International Crisis Group reports that civic action can only register tactical success because for one, there is limited progress on the political front and second, the US forces are not differentiating their target between the ASG and the MILF. Once "the net is cast too widely" it would push more moderate elements of the MILF to link-up with the ASG and pose a bigger threat.<sup>83</sup>

---

79 Father Angel Calvo, Nagdilaab Foundation president, interview with author, Zamboanga City, Philippines, July 28, 2008.

80 Balikatan translated as "shoulder-to-shoulder" is a joint military exercise held between the AFP and US forces.

81 Lt. Cmdr. of the Joint Special Operations Task Force Philippines, Fred Kuebler (US Forces), Western Mindanao Command, Zamboanga City, October 3, 2007. Hereafter cited as Lt. Cmdr. Fred Kuebler, October 3, 2007.

82 In July 2007, there was a military operation to rescue an abducted Spanish priest on the island of Basilan. 14 marines, including 10 of them being beheaded by what is believed to be elements of the MILF and ASG sent shock waves through the nation.

83 International Crisis Group (ICG), *The Philippines: the Collapse of Peace in Mindanao*. Asia Report (October 23, 2008), No. 83.

## VI. Conditions that Limit the Effectiveness of CMO

There has been research done on whether CMO had any impact towards fight against insurgents during the previous administrations. It is still difficult to take the same approach for Arroyo's administration since the institutionalization of CMO only began in 2006. Nevertheless, while the administration calls CMO as part of the comprehensive approach to the problem, an approach echoed through each succeeding generation after President Magsaysay, the research came across conditions that CMO operates in which limits its effectiveness and CMO cannot be expected overcome these conditions on its own.

### 1. The 2010 Timeline

At least in rhetoric, it appears that the nation is mobilizing all its resources to bring an end to the conflict in a comprehensive manner. President Arroyo has directed the military to crush the insurgencies by 2010, when she steps down as president.<sup>84</sup> These are unrealistic expectations considering that the military works under low-budgeting and lack of progress in weakening the insurgencies. In regards to the NPA, the communists still remain active. Currently there are no peace talks between the CPP-NPA and the government at this moment.<sup>85</sup> Similarly, in response to the MILF, there have been more setbacks than progress. The biggest obstacle being the impasse on peace talks between the government and the MILF. Peace talks have been ongoing but an October 14th 2008 Supreme Court Ruling declared that the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) was unconstitutional. If the agreement had passed, it would have given the MILF administrative control over Muslim ancestral domain. Hardliners in the MILF who protested the earlier restraining order on the court ruling unleashed attacks on Christian villages which lead to a massive deployment of AFP troops to North Cotabato.<sup>86</sup> As a result of the military operations, it was estimated at the end of December that over 600, 000 people were displaced and 200 killed, half of them being civilians. It has also been estimated that frequent military encounters with the MILF since 2000 in southern Mindanao have displaced 2 million people.<sup>87</sup>

---

84 "Arroyo tells military to end rebellions in 3 years," *GMA News.TV*, August 24, 2007. Available online at: <http://www.gmanews.tv/story/57587/>. Accessed May 1, 2009.

85 As of July 8, 2009, the Philippine government has decided to resume talks with the communist rebels since talks were suspended in 2004.

86 Katherine Evangelista, "MILF firm: No MOA-AD, no peace talks," *Inquirer.Net*, November 13, 2008 Available online at: <http://www.inquirer.net/specialfeatures/mindanaopeaceprocess/view.php?db=1&article=20081113-172001>. Accessed March 27, 2009.

87 *Internal Displacement Monitoring Center*. Available online at: [http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/\(httpInfoFiles\)/58237F587AD39147C12575A600535FA5/\\$file/GO\\_08\\_philippines.pdf](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/(httpInfoFiles)/58237F587AD39147C12575A600535FA5/$file/GO_08_philippines.pdf). Accessed May 15, 2009.

Even though CMO was resurrected to a new status and plans accordingly to the 2010 timeline, CMO operators know all too well that CMO cannot promise immediate effects. A military officer admits it's difficult to assess current CMO operations in the short-term and "it will takes years for (CMO) efforts to bear fruit."<sup>88</sup> The problematic implications for aligning CMO activities to the time line is that it would release numerous CMO projects that are for the short-term such as one-day medical missions that could fall-short of gaining enduring good will from the public. Furthermore, if CMO projects are based on the timeline, it would encourage the military to make hasty decisions on choosing the project and/or target beneficiary. Consequently, CMO needs to be integrated into a long-term plan that exceeds the time-line set out.

## 2. The Lack of Progress Made on the Political Front

While the details on the lack of progress made on the political front is beyond the scope of the article, it is suffice to say that Arroyo is not able to gain the support of the both judicial and legislative branch in resolving key issues concerning the internal security problem. For instance, Arroyo was unable to have the judiciary to vote on an agreement, the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA\_AD) that would have fast-tracked the peace process with the MILF. The judiciary, by voting down the MOA-AD, signaled the exercise of independence despite executive interfering and pressure.<sup>89</sup> On the other hand, Arroyo has not been able to elicit a green-light for more funding for the cash-strapped military. This is due to the legislation's general suspicion over the military and general lack of interest in defense affairs.<sup>90</sup> Political wrangling between the government branches does not reflect the government's unified ownership of the problem. While debate over policies should be exercised, existing problems within the political system reflect poorly on the response of the government to the insurgencies..

One of CMO's missions is to promote the sincerity of the government. As one AFP spokesperson explained, the AFP-CMO's role is to bridge the gap between the

---

88 LTC Regencia, October 8, 2007.

89 The MOA-AD ruling did not go through with Arroyo's initiatives to sign an eventual peace agreement with the MILF. Analysts say, the Supreme Court, considered to be the weakest of the three government branches, was trying to execute their independence from the executive office and free its self from their interference. Aries C. Rufo and Purple S. Romero, "Voting pattered of Supreme Court justices shows they play power," October 22, 2008, *Newsbreak*. Available online at: [http://newsbreak.com.ph/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=5512&Itemid=88889066](http://newsbreak.com.ph/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=5512&Itemid=88889066). Accessed on October 20, 2008.

90 Renato Cruz De Castro, "The Dilemma Between Democratic Control versus Military Reforms: The Case of the AFP Modernization Program, 1991-2004," *Journal of Security Sector Management*, (March 2005), Asian Special Issue. Hereafter cited as Cruz de Castro.

people and the central government.<sup>91</sup> However if the people have already genuine concerns about sincerity and commitment of the government, even resurrecting CMO practices to promote the government and its programs cannot make up for the lack of political initiatives. As a result, CMO would only be perceived as a tool for government propaganda.

### 3. Building the Legitimacy of the AFP

One of the largest organizational changes in the CMO structure is the shift to managing the military and civilian interface.<sup>92</sup> What this entails for the military is that building trust with the community becomes an important mission. Or simply known as “winning hearts and minds,” this evolves around the concept that if the community has good will towards the AFP, it would deter people from taking sides with the enemy.

Many of the programs that CMO units launch include information drives and socio-economic projects, which is in part, geared towards building the legitimacy of the AFP and to remove some of the negative images created by atrocities committed by some of its personnel.<sup>93</sup> It holds true that the AFP hasn't enjoyed good relations with the public due to their human rights' violations record<sup>94</sup> and building trust is a Herculean task considering that the AFP like other armed forces in Southeast Asia has been known to protect the elites or the military establishment rather than to protect the people.<sup>95</sup>

In regards, to recent human rights records, in 2007, Philip Alston assigned by the United Nations Human Rights Council to investigate the state of political killings in the Philippines concluded the military was responsible for the extrajudicial killings of between 100 to 800 leftist activists since 2001.<sup>96</sup> Under this climate, the mere presence of the military can invoke a suspicious response. While several beneficiaries of CMO programs in Zamboanga City and Manila said the soldiers' good works helped improve their image of the AFP and were thankful for their work in medical check-ups and school refurbishment,<sup>97</sup> faultfinders of AFP-COIN operations say CMO is utilized for the primary purpose of military intelligence gathering. The military is not prioritizing

---

91 Maj. Batara, October 3, 2007.

92 Lt. Colonel Omamdram, July 25, 2008.

93 Major Eugenio Batara, October 3, 2007

94 Lt. Cmdr. Fred Kuebler, October 3, 2007.

95 Mark Beeson and Alex J. Bellamy, *Securing Southeast Asia: The Politics of Security Sector Reform*, London & New York, 2008, p. 2.

96 Philip Alston, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Summary or Arbitrary Executions, Philip Alston, On his Mission to Philippines (12-21 February 2007)*.

97 CMO beneficiaries interviewed include Culianan Village (14 km from Zamboanga City) October 3, 2007 and Boalan Elementary School, Zamboanga City, July 28, 2008.

the socio-economic welfare of the people and so therefore, they should be left up to civilian agencies.<sup>98</sup>

In short, CMO may have the utility of “civilianizing” the soldiers, or making them closer to the people through partnerships in socio-economic activities, and the immediate benefits from CMO can be enjoyed by the community. However, it cannot on its own erase the generations of abuse. CMO cannot effectively improve the image of the AFP with the persistence of human rights abuses. Since CMO does not have the mechanisms to reign in errant soldiers, better working relationships need to be fostered between the government’s Commission on Human Rights, the recently established AFP-Human Rights office, and NGOs. A better coordination and report-sharing between the involved groups would improve existing mechanisms to monitor, report, and try soldiers for abuse.

#### 4. Insufficient funding for the military

The renewed attention on CMO to fight the internal security problem can be viewed as one of the strategies to offset the lack of funding for the AFP. In recent years the AFP has experienced severe under-funding. The Philippines has one of the lowest military expenditures in the region. In 2007, its defense budget as percentage of the GDP was 0.7 percent, and the highest being Myanmar at 8.2 per cent and Brunei Darrusalam at 5.8 per cent.<sup>99</sup>

Faultfinders of the lack of money for the AFP say defense spending needs to be increased to a level commensurate with the military capabilities required to fight the insurgencies. Especially with President Arroyo’s 2010 deadline to end insurgencies, the AFP needs to step up their “operational tempo”<sup>100</sup> but since the AFP suffers from the lack of resources, it has become virtually impossible.<sup>101</sup>

In the field, the AFP is poorly equipped to fight the insurgencies. Their inventory consists mostly of used and out-dated American equipment including vehicles and weapons dating back to the Vietnam War. Though a Defense Reform Program (PDR) has been put into place since 2003 to address these problems, fundamental issues such

---

98 Ibon Foundation representative, interview with the author, March 2007, Manila, Philippines.

99 “Officials renews calls for increased defense budget,” *The Jakarta Post*, November 2, 2007. Available online at: <http://www.jakartapost.com>. Accessed May 25, 2009

100 The term tempo in COIN operations means, “The speed of action and reaction (of a military operation) relative to the insurgent.” See section ‘Tempo ad Simultaneity’ in Gavin Bulloch, “Military Doctrine and Counterinsurgency: A British Perspective,” in *Parameters*, (Summer 1996), pp. 4-16.

101 Ruffy Biazaon, “AFP Budget Does Not Support the President’s Target to Defeat Communist Insurgency by 2010,” January 20, 2009. Available online at: [http://www.ruffybiazaon.ph/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=22:afp-budget-does-not-support-the-presidents-target-to-defeat-communist-insurgents-by-2010-&catid=27:latest-news&Itemid=8](http://www.ruffybiazaon.ph/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=22:afp-budget-does-not-support-the-presidents-target-to-defeat-communist-insurgents-by-2010-&catid=27:latest-news&Itemid=8) . Accessed May 16, 2009.



as lack of funding due to the stagnated economy has stalled the PDR.<sup>102</sup> The Department of Defense (DOD) has proposed a budget of P56.54 billion for FY2009 but despite addition funding from other government funds, they still need a total of P159.96 billion.<sup>103</sup>

CMO has the advantage of being able to share costs with other agencies and secure funding from outside of the defense budget. In CMO projects where the military works in coordination with other agencies, the AFP often does not cover the cost or the material. For instance, local governments would provide the funding and material, and the military would offer their manpower, equipment, and logistics. For many of the large civic action projects, the brunt of the cost would be covered by other government agencies such as the Department of Public Works and Highways.

Funding for CMO operations also can come from outside of what is allocated for the Department of Defense. For instance, the Karayaan Barangay, a CMO program (see section V.1.c) mobilizing military engineers to conduct infrastructure work in rural areas was able to secure P988 million pesos from the Special Appropriations Funds (SPF). The SPF are lump-sum appropriations are designated for special purposes outside of the appropriated funds of the year and are released upon the president's discretion.<sup>104</sup> Since the Karayaan Barangay has an overlapping function with socio-economic development, it does not have to directly come from defense funds. Therefore, CMO itself has the cost benefit of working with other government agencies and the civilian sectors. However, this does not properly address the underfunding for the AFP and more efforts need to be made to examine this problem.

## Conclusion

Throughout the history of AFP, CMO has always been called upon to fight internal security problems, though in varying degrees. The core of this article examines CMO under President Arroyo. The primary conditions for the reemergence of CMO are

---

102 Criselda Yabes, "Soldiers contend with stalled promise of AFP modernization," *Newsbreak*, August 27, 2008. Available on line at: <http://newsbreak.com.ph>. Accessed April 20, 2009.

103 Fernan Marasigan, "RP's low defense spending rued," *Business Mirror*, September 11, 2008. Available online at: <http://www.businessmirror.com.ph/09112008/headlines08.html>. Accessed May 9, 2009. Recently there was a case when the president directed the new chief of staff of the AFP to improve the welfare of the soldiers without relying on AFP funds and instead to seek the generosity of business communities and NGOs. From President Macapagal-Arroyo's speech at Chief of Staff Victor Ibradao's assumption of office ceremony cited in Katherine Evangelista, "New AFP chief vows to defeat security threats," *Inquirer. Net*, May 1, 2009. Available online at: <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/breakingnews/nation/view/20090501-202577/New-AFP-chief-vows-to-defeat-security-threats>. Accessed May 1, 2009

104 Fernan Marasigan, "RP's low defense spending rued," *Business Mirror*, September 11, 2008. Available online at: [www.businessmirror.com](http://www.businessmirror.com). Accessed May 17, 2009; "Social Watch Philippines Identify Budget Provisions Vulnerable to Manipulation and Abuse," *Social Watch Philippines*, September 30, 2008. Available online at: [http://socialwatchphilippines.org/news\\_sowatbudget.htm](http://socialwatchphilippines.org/news_sowatbudget.htm). Accessed May 19, 2009. See also *The Philippine National Center for National Budget Legislation*. Available online at: [www.budgetlegislation.com](http://www.budgetlegislation.com).

to bolster counter-insurgency efforts. There is no dramatic change in this age-old practice but the institutionalization of the operations has increased its status and has added more rigor to its standard operating procedures. The potential for CMO lies in their programs which are crafted to target socio-economic issues which are particular to a region or group. Furthermore, mobilizing soldiers who have the linguistic and cultural knowledge to interact with the target community such as those seen in Salaam programs appear that the AFP is making one step ahead in overcoming a cultural bias.

Nevertheless they can only register as tactical successes and these can quickly be overrun and undone by political problems and sudden outbreaks of violence. The development of CMO in Arroyo's administration appears to work in conditions that limit the effectiveness of the CMO. It is problematic because it turns CMO into a stop-gap measure of addressing the woes of the AFP such as budget shortfalls and human rights' problems, as well as trying to make up for the lack of cohesion to deal with the insurgencies at a political level. Therefore, in order for CMO to maximize its efforts, progress also has to be made in the problems mentioned above.

## Appendix A

### List of Acronyms

AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
ASG	Abu Sayyaf Group
CA	Civil Affairs
CAO	Civil Affairs Office
CHDF	Civilian Home Defense Force
CMO	Civil-Military Operations
COIN	Counter-insurgency
CPP-NPA	Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army
DOD	Department of Defense
EDCOR	Economic Development Corps
JI	Jemaah Islamiyah
LGU	Local Government Unit
MBO	Mass Base Operations
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
MILVED	Military Values Education
MOA-AD	Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain
NDSC	National Development Support Command

PA	Public Affairs
PSYOPS	Psychological Operations
SALAAM	Livelihood Assistance for the Advancement of Among Muslims
SPF	Special Purpose Funds
SOT	Special Operations Teams