

## **Popular Resistance to U.S. Military Base Expansion in the Philippines**

A category of semi-secret U.S. bases is vastly extending the Pentagon's military presence around the globe. Innocuously called CSLs, for Cooperative Security Locations, these bases are a new, covert form of intervention.

The Cooperative Security Locations (CSLs) and other loose security agreements allow the Pentagon to set up facilities and structures, lease warehouses, and maintain roads, airstrips and seaports using a combination of private contractors and local forces.

The Pentagon maintains a network of military bases in about 70 countries. But the new Collective Security Locations are being established in up to 100 other countries.

Senior Editor Adam J. Hebert wrote an article in the August 2006 Air Force Magazine online entitled "Presence, Not Permanence" that described the Pentagon's changing approach to its worldwide bases and its need, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, to reorganize and break out of its "strategically obsolete Cold War straitjacket."

Hebert described how, with the closing of bases, such as in Iceland, the Air Force didn't bring home large numbers of airmen but instead updated its basing structure with a series of new locations and temporary bases.

Hebert further described the world network of military installations as reported in an earlier background briefing by a senior

official of the Defense Department. This official explained that the U.S. had been operating from “5,458 distinct and discrete military installations around the world. ... We don’t need those little pieces of property anymore.”

The Commission on Review of Overseas Military Facility Structure of the U.S., also known as Overseas Basing Commission, was established by Congress to conduct a thorough study on the global realignment of U.S. bases. The commission defined a series of new basing arrangements.

**The CSLs were supposedly envisioned as facilities with little or no permanent U.S. presence, maintained with contractor and/or host nation support.**

They contain prepositioned equipment and are rapidly scalable and expandable. The Overseas Basing Commission also defines Forward Operating Sites as places with prepositioned equipment that can host rotational forces and be a focus for bilateral and regional training.

Other categories, such as Forward Support Location, Preposition Site, and En Route Infrastructure, are defined as new base arrangements beyond the traditional Main Operating Base that has permanently stationed combat forces and command and control structures.

The expanding U.S. military presence throughout East, South and Central Asia appears to be focused on surrounding and attempting to isolate the growing influence of China.

The Pentagon also uses joint military exercises to exert overwhelming influence over the militaries of many smaller and developing nations. Former U.S. Pacific Command head Admiral Thomas Fargo explained in March 2003 that relationships built through exercises and training are “our biggest guarantor of access in time of need.”

There are CSLs in Thailand, throughout South and Central Asia, and in Senegal in West Africa.

Growing popular struggles against the joint military exercises and the CSL bases in the Philippines may have an impact on anti-base struggles around the world.

For over 110 years the Philippines has been U.S. imperialism's prime military outpost and stepping stone to China and the Asian mainland. U.S. bases in the Philippines enabled the U.S. military to control strategic sea lanes.

**Philippine law has banned U.S. bases since a mass movement forced them out in 1992. Yet, as of March 2008, some 30,000 to 50,000 U.S. troops are stationed there and are in constant operation.**

Under the Balikatan joint war exercises, the Pentagon is bringing in logistical equipment and building installations.

According to a Feb. 26, 2008, report from Foreign Policy in Focus, the number of troops, ships, equipment and infrastructure grows each year. The year 2005 saw 24 joint military exercises involving U.S. and Philippine troops. This grew to 37 scheduled exercises in 2006 — or one U.S. military exercise every 10 days.

“Training missions” and military exercises mean a continuing presence of U.S. troops in the Philippines. It also comes with a special name: the Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines. The JSOTF-P has been based in the Philippines for more than six years on an ongoing “temporary training mission.” The U.S. stay has become open-ended and, as with the “temporary” CSL bases, its permanence is unofficial and unacknowledged.

Immediately after 9/11 Washington used as an excuse for the re-entry of its forces that the Philippines needed help in fighting a “terrorist threat” from a small, secretive armed group known as Abu Sayyaf. The Manila Times of Aug. 27, 2007, reported that,

“Even as the United States denies plans to set up a military base in the Philippines, the American military is reportedly building a host of projects across Mindanao.”

A Rand Corporation report prepared for the U.S. Air Force entitled “Ungoverned Territories” and available online summarizes U.S. military presence globally. It highlights the Pakistan/Afghanistan border area, East Africa, West Africa, the Caucasus, the Venezuela/Colombia border and Mindanao Island in the Philippines. The U.S. “area of operations” in the Philippines presently covers 8,000 square miles, including the entire island of Mindanao and surrounding islands.

**In the Philippines and many other underdeveloped countries drowning in debt, the “host” country must pay for the U.S. military presence.**

### **Paying for occupation**

According to a Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (available online) that the Philippines signed with the U.S. in November 2002, the Philippine government must supply the Pentagon with all the logistical support needed during the endless military and training “exercises” and “other U.S. military deployments” to maintain their forces in the region. This Support Agreement lists everything from food and water to ammunition, spare parts and components, billeting, transportation, communication, medical services, operation support, training services, repair and maintenance, storage services, port services and construction of “temporary structures.”

Everything the U.S. used to supply for its own use at its former bases in the region, such as the giant Clark Air Base and Subic Bay Naval Base, is now to be provided by the impoverished Philippine government on an as-need basis.

The newsletter U.S. Intervention Watch, published by Initiatives for Peace in Mindanao in coordination with U.S. Troops

Out Now! Mindanao Coalition, explains that the widely publicized U.S. humanitarian missions are really military operations and a cover for a permanent military presence.

“The objective is not to provide health care to peasant farmers, but to secure U.S. economic interests in the Asia-Pacific by turning the Philippines into a base of operation. This base will serve to protect U.S. multi-billion dollar investments and promote prospective commerce in the Philippines in oil, energy, minerals and plantations, keep an eye on the Malacca Straits where 25 percent of all globally traded oil passes, and threaten nearby China as its rise to global power continues,” says the newsletter.

**U.S. occupation troops bring attacks, massacres and rapes of the local civilian population.**

**Massacre made in USA**

According to a news article in *Bulatlat*, a weekly Philippine online news magazine, “U.S. troops were present during the February 4, 2008, assault by combined Army and Navy elite forces on Barangay, (village) Ipil, Maimbung, Sulu, that killed eight non-combatants, including an Army soldier home on vacation.”

Sulu’s Governor Abdulsakur Tan said: “This is not the first time that the U.S. troops were reported to have taken part in Philippine military operations in Sulu.” He corroborated the U.S. role in an attack in early 2007, when U.S. troops were supposedly doing “road construction” in the village of Barangay Bato-Bato, Indanan.

Temogen Tulawie, convener of the Concerned Citizens of Sulu and former Jolo councilor, said the latest massacre is part of a larger picture. Starting in 2003, Balikatan military exercises were held in Sulu. This provoked waves of protest from the people, who still remember an historic massacre committed in 1906 when hundreds of Moro resistance fighters were gunned down by U.S. occupation forces.