

U.S. Security Interests in the Philippines

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I appreciate the interest of your respective subcommittees in the Philippines, and I welcome the opportunity to discuss with you vital U.S. security interests in that country. One of the hallmarks of our Philippine policy during the past several years has been the close consultation between the executive and legislative branches regarding the formulation and implementation of our Philippine policy objectives. The recent dramatic changes in the Philippines that produced a return to democracy and the election of a popular new leader are eloquent testimony to the value of the bipartisan approach. When the U.S. Government speaks with one voice, that voice is heard abroad and the effectiveness of our foreign policy is enhanced.

I intend to continue this tradition of close consultation and look forward to a productive dialogue with you and the members of your subcommittees regarding the security aspects of our Philippine relations.

U.S. SECURITY INTERESTS

U.S. security interests in the Philippines stem from three agreements signed with the Philippine Government in the years immediately following its independence in 1946. These agreements concern military bases, security assistance, and mutual defense. The first of these agreements was the basing accord signed in March 1947. It marked the beginning of our defense relationship with the modern Philippines and has been the focus of our defense policy there ever since.

The military basing agreement was amended in 1966 to shorten the term of our basing arrangement in the Philippines from 99 to 25 years. A further amendment in 1979 specified that the bases at Subic and Clark become Philippine bases encompassing U.S. defense facilities and also provide for regular five-year reviews of the agreement. At the expiration of the original 25-year agreement period in 1991, the basing agreement's term becomes indefinite. Thereafter, either side has the option to terminate the agreement on one-year's notice. This provision is quite similar to those in our security treaties with NATO, Japan, and Korea. It is, therefore, a misapprehension that the agreement automatically terminates in 1991.

While our basing agreement has been amended many times during the past four decades, the fundamental import of our facilities at Subic Bay and Clark Air Base to our defense posture in Asia remains constant. The location of these two facilities, in close proximity to each other, and their combined capabilities place them among the most important military establishments anywhere in the world.

Essentially, these facilities:

- Guarantee the external security of the Philippines and represent our most significant contribution to the U.S.-Philippines mutual defense pact;
- Support our wide-ranging commitment all along the Asian littoral, including our security commitments in Korea, Japan, and Thailand and important national interests in the Persian Gulf--the geostrategic location of the Philippines is unsurpassed with regard to meeting these vital national security commitments; and
- Offset the expanding Soviet military presence at Cam Ranh Bay and, as a consequence, preserve the stability of Southeast Asia by securing the vital South China sealanes against the ever-increasing Soviet threat.

The facilities at Subic and Clark have also helped to preserve a stable regional environment which has permitted East Asian states to avoid diverting excessive amounts of scarce resources to military efforts and to concentrate instead on economic development which is critical to long-term stability. Possible locations other than our present facilities exist but would be much more expensive and considerably less effective in terms of contributing to regional peace and prosperity.

FUTURE OF THE U.S. SECURITY RELATIONSHIP

Seven Philippine administrations, including the present government, and eight American presidents have supported close defense ties between the United States and the Philippines and have attested to the importance of the facilities at Subic and Clark in serving our mutual interests. We look forward to a continuation of this close security relationship with the new democratic government in the Philippines headed by President Aquino. Her position with respect to the U.S. facilities has been consistent. She has pledged to uphold the current agreement until 1991 and to keep her options open for the post-1991 period. Both sides will have the opportunity to look closely at bases issues during the next five-year review scheduled for 1988.

We believe the importance of the bases to the security of the Philippines is well understood by Filipinos. Recent, reputable public opinion surveys point to acceptance of the bases by the majority of the Filipino people. This high approval level represents a fundamental recognition by Filipinos that U.S. access to the facilities benefits their country. Economic factors may also influence this approval, as the U.S. facilities are the second largest employer in the Philippines and contribute an estimated \$350 million to the Philippine economy each year.

We also note that the Philippines' ASEAN [Association of South East Asian Nations] neighbors [Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand], as well as Japan, Korea, and other key states in the region, have expressed their strong support for our continued presence at Subic and Clark. These countries have a keen appreciation of the direct contribution our facilities make to regional security.

In view of this widespread support and because there are no other attractive locations, we have no plans to relocate our facilities from the Philippines. As a great power, we must, of course, plan for contingencies. Evaluations of other possible locations are a regular feature of our strategic planning. Prudence demands it. But no one should underestimate our resolve to maintain our defense and mutual security arrangement with the Republic of the Philippines and to preserve our access to the facilities at Subic and Clark through 1991 and beyond--with the continued cooperation and support of the Filipino people.

Because we have close ties with the Philippines, we are concerned about the threat posed by the communist insurgency. Measures to improve the security of our facilities at Subic and Clark have been undertaken and will continue. We have also targeted our security assistance program to support Philippine efforts to counteract the internal threat they face. The twin objectives of our aid are:

- **First**, to help restore professionalism to the "new" Armed Forces of the Philippines; and
- **Second**, to provide the armed forces with the means to fight the communist New People's Army.

The coming to power of the Aquino government has dealt a political blow to the communist insurgents. The principal target of their propaganda--former President Marcos--is now gone, as is the "crony" military leadership which so demoralized the Philippine Armed Forces. Reform of the military has taken a big step forward with the forced retirement of many "extende" generals and colonels and their replacement by professionally qualified officers.

The efforts of the communists to organize a boycott of the recent presidential election were a dismal failure, repudiated by Filipinos even more emphatically than during the 1984 National Assembly election. President Aquino is considering several new approaches to dealing with the communist insurgents, including a possible amnesty and a cease-fire.

However, in order to be successful, the government's program against the insurgents should also include economic and political reforms which promote an effective system of justice that punishes wrongdoers down to the village level, including errant military personnel who violate the human rights of civilians. A close, coordinated relationship between civilian and military authorities in an anti-insurgency strategy will be required--the type of plan that Defense Minister Enrile and [Armed Forces Chief of Staff] General Ramos are now proposing to the civilian leadership. Although great difficulties remain, there exists now the vital element that previously was lacking in the Philippines anti-insurgency struggle--a credible government.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, our facilities at Subic and Clark continue to play an indispensable role in contributing to the stability of the region. They support our strategy of forward deployment in Asia and provide a secure foundation which makes possible the pursuit of our larger political and economic interests in this key part of the globe.

Our bilateral relationship with the Philippines, which is crucial to maintaining U.S. facilities, is excellent. We are impressed with the skillful leadership of President Aquino and the team she has assembled to carry out her policies. We look forward to working with the Aquino government, as appropriate, in helping to find solutions to the formidable challenges facing her country. There are occasional problems, of course, and there will be others in the future. But with good will they can be worked out to the full satisfaction of both sides.

We believe that the prospects for continued, unhampered access to Subic and Clark are very good. Access to our facilities is best preserved, we maintain, by supporting broader U.S. interests in the Philippines--particularly a healthy free market economy and the development of democratic institutions.