

That this story died breaks my heart. It is, first of all, one of my favorites – one of best pieces I've written, I think, since I started at the magazine. Also, it didn't die for cause, but because the editors simply forgot about it. I filed it in late May 2004, right before the summer, when there are lots of pre-prepared double issues and fewer people in the office. Despite my pestering John Bennet, my editor, the story sat and sat. Finally, the Atlantic ran a jingoistic, imperialist paen to the Special Forces, and this story was considered redundant. Months of work – some of it in uncomfortable conditions – down the drain.

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Philippines.24

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Letter from the Philippines

Surrogate Warfare

On April 20, half a dozen U.S. Special Forces soldiers stood in a dripping jungle clearing on Basilan island in the southern Philippines, teaching a company of Philippine soldiers how to shoot and walk at the

same time. Basilan, which lies an hour by ferry from the big southern Philippine island of Mindanao, is thirty miles across¹ and shaped like a turtle. Dense jungle spiked with coconut palms climbs its rugged hills; the heat and humidity are crushing. Staff Sergeant Isaac Wells, a thirty-six-year-old Dayton native with a torso like an upright piano, coaxed the Filipinos to keep a straight line abreast as they advanced. "Sebay, sebay," Wells cooed, using the Tagalog word for "together." "Two shots kaliwa." He extended his left hand. "Two shots kanan." He extended his right. He blew a whistle and a line of soldiers crouched over rusty Vietnam-era M-16² rifles and started forward through green, canopy-filtered light, firing couplets at crude plywood silhouettes. The natural tendency is to stop and aim, so the Americans walked behind the Filipinos, shoving hesitators forward with their hands. By the end of the walk, the rifles' blazing muzzles were inches from the targets.

"Some of these Fils have never fired their rifles before," said Major Bob Ball, as the Filipinos crawled around the undergrowth searching for spent cartridges. At forty, Ball is tall and broad, with a round closely-clipped head, a baby face, and a relaxed, even jolly air. He was commanding the American contingent, twenty-one soldiers and

¹ Major Bob Ball,xxxx

² Major Bob Ball,xxxx can confirm that these were M16/A1s, of the Vietnam era, and not the more modern M16/A2s

an Air Force staff sergeant, down from Okinawa for a three-week counter-terrorism exercise,³ one of twenty-eight scheduled throughout the islands this year.⁴ "The A.F.P. (armed forces of the Philippines) doesn't have money for bullets. Basically they don't shoot except when we're here,"⁵⁶ Ball said. The whistle sounded, and another line of soldiers began firing. "Our primary mission is surrogate warfare, or warfare by proxy," Ball said as he watched his soldiers prod the Filipinos forward. "We train people to fight their own battles so we don't have to."⁷

The battle Ball's men are training the Filipinos to fight is officially called Operation Enduring Freedom, Philippines.⁸ Ball calls it "The Global War on Terror, Asia division." The enemy on Basilan is a group known as Abu Sayyaf, Arabic for "Bearer of the Sword."

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After Mohammed died in Medina in 632 A.D.⁹, Islam migrated east across India and then in a crescent through what is today Indonesia and Malaysia. Muslim missionaries, proselytizing without

³ Major Bob Ball,xxxx

⁴ 28 US-Phil exercises in 05

⁵ Major Bob Ball,xxxx

⁶ Major Bob Ball,xxxx

⁷ Major Bob Ball,xxxx

⁸ Major Bob Ball,xxxx

⁹ File, "biography of Mohammed"

benefit of warships or armies,¹⁰ got as far northeast as Basilan and Mindanao before the cross-and-sword expeditions of Spanish Emperor Charles V landed in 1542 and stopped their progress.¹¹ The Inquisition was at full boil and the Spaniards, fresh from expelling dark-skinned Mohammedans from Iberia, called the Philippine Muslims "Moros," or Moors. They spent the better part of four hundred years trying without success to subdue and convert them.¹²

Moro fighters were the suicide bombers of their day. In a ritual oath-taking which the Spaniards called juramentado, or amok, the Moros vowed, before each battle, to hack to death with their wavy-bladed krises as many of the enemy as possible, and bound their limbs with leather tourniquets to prolong rampages.¹³ When the United States inherited the Philippines in 1898 at the end of the Spanish-American War, establishing its first and only colony "to uplift the little brown brother," in President McKinley's immortal words,¹⁴ the Army inherited a Moro rebellion so ferocious that it had to adopt the .45-

¹⁰ File, "Islam comes to the Philippines," from "Swish of the Kris: A History of the Moros," by Vic Hurley, 1936 E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., all which is available online at <http://www.bakbakan.com/swishkb.html>

¹¹ file "Spanish history timeline"

¹² "Swish of the Kris: A History of the Moros," by Vic Hurley, 1936 E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., all which is available online at <http://www.bakbakan.com/swishkb.html>

¹³ see "Kris vs. Toledo Blade," in "The Swish of the Kris."

<http://www.bakbakan.com/swishkb.html>

¹⁴ one place I've seen this quoted is in "American Empire," by Andrew Bacevich, page 60

calibre pistol; its .38s couldn't stop Moros fighting juramentado.¹⁵ In what may be the first such use of the term to describe a war, Mark Twain called the engagement a "quagmire."¹⁶ The United States never defeated the Moros. When President Theodore Roosevelt signed a peace proclamation at the end of the Philippine insurgency in 1902, he noted that "peace has been established in all parts of the archipelago except in the country inhabited by the Moro tribes, to which this proclamation does not apply."¹⁷ Nor did independence, in 1946, bring peace. Ferdinand Marcos, who was president of the Philippines from 1965 to 1986, relocated Christians to Mindanao to dilute the Muslims' influence and usurp their property, and on March 18, 1968, his army massacred dozens of Muslims who had been lured with the promise of admission to an elite army unit.¹⁸ Muslims, who comprise about five percent of the Philippine population, organized several new guerilla armies to resist the Catholic-dominated government; the Indonesian extremist group Jemaah Islamiah began recruiting in the southern Philippines; and in the nineteen eighties as many as a thousand Filipinos answered the call to fight the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. In

¹⁵ file "The Colt .45"

¹⁶ File "Mark Twain on the Philippines"

¹⁷ file "Radical Islam & Philippine insurgency"

¹⁸ files "Jabidah massacre, " "Evolution of Muslim insurgency"

1991, one of those jihadists, a Basilan native named Abdurajak Janjalani, returned to his home island to found Abu Sayyaf.¹⁹

Basilan was fertile ground for an insurrection. Seventy-one percent of the people are Muslim, but three quarters of the land is owned by Christians and three quarters of the trade is controlled by ethnic Chinese.²⁰ Basilan Province is the country's fourth poorest; six families in ten live below the poverty line and three quarters lack access to health care or potable water.²¹ During the nineties, the U.S. paid scant attention to Abu Sayyaf. What little military assistance the U.S. gave the Philippines went largely toward helping defeat the New People's Army, a Maoist faction that has simmered ineffectually for more than two decades.²² Even in May of 2001, when Abu Sayyaf kidnapped two American missionaries from a Philippine resort, the U.S. largely let the Philippine army handle it.²³ Then came September 11.

"We will not send American troops to every battle," President Bush said after the attacks on New York and Washington, "but America will actively prepare other nations for the battle ahead."²⁴ Air Force General Richard Myers, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, put the

¹⁹ "Seeds of Terror," by Maria A. Ressa, page 108

²⁰ file "B A S I L A N_ The Next Afghanistan.pdf"

²¹ file "B A S I L A N_ The Next Afghanistan.pdf"

²² Colonel Mathias Velasco, the commander of the Joint US Military Assistance Group (JUSMAG) at the U.S. Embassy, Manila, Phone #: xxxx

²³ file, "US won't negotiate, 11.01," also, Major Bob Ball,xxxx, who followed the kidnapping and planned for the first big post-9/11 exercise in the Philippines

²⁴ quoted in "The Sorrows of Empire," by Chalmers Johnson, page 132-133

Philippines on a short list of “emerging target countries”—along with Somalia, Yemen, Indonesia, and Georgia.²⁵ The Philippines, said U.S. Senator Sam Brownback, Republican of Kansas, is “the next target after Afghanistan.”²⁶ Though impoverished villagers in the southern Philippines have been fighting over resources and religion for four hundred and fifty years, the recent connection to Afghan training camps painted an American bulls eye on Abu Sayyaf. “They’re the Asian arm of Al Qaeda,” one American psychological operations officer told me.²⁷ It is an article of faith among American soldiers and diplomats in the Philippines that every major terrorist attack of the past dozen years -- the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, a 1995 plot to bomb eleven U.S. airliners simultaneously, the 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in East Africa, the 2000 attack on the USS Cole, the Bali nightclub bombing of 2002 and even 9/11 itself – is connected to guerillas and training camps in Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago, of which Basilan is a part.²⁸ Philippine intelligence officials believe that as early as 1988 Osama bin Laden sent his brother-in-law, Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, to Mindanao to begin establishing financial networks.²⁹

Of all the military operations underway in America’s Global War on

²⁵ file, “Myers – “emerging target countries”

²⁶ “B A S I L A N_ The Next Afghanistan.pdf”

²⁷ he is xxxx, xxxx

²⁸ “Seeds of Terror,” by Maria A. Ressa, page 10, which is quoted incessantly by the Americans in the Philippines

²⁹ “Seeds of Terror,” by Maria A. Ressa, page 10

Terror, only the one in the Philippines carries the same name --
Operation Enduring Freedom -- as the war in Afghanistan.³⁰

[line break]

U.S. Special Operations Command has the lead responsibility for waging the Global War on Terror.³¹ Its commander answers directly to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and the President³² and its forty-nine thousand troops include, among other units, Navy SEALs,³³ Air Force combat controllers who parachute secretly into combat zones to direct air strikes,³⁴ and the Army Special Forces, also known as Green Berets.³⁵ The Green Berets are best known for such daring and cinematic missions as the furtive hunt for Iraqi Scud missiles prior to the 1991 war and the horseback-and-satellite-phone search for bin Laden in the mountains of Tora Bora. But many Green Berets, like Major Ball, never see combat. Ever since the Special Forces were organized in 1952, their bread-and-butter work has been missions like this one, spreading martial good will and lethal know-how to the world's dark corners. Green Berets are expensively trained to be fluent in at least one foreign language (Ball speaks Thai), and are both selected for and trained in an aggressively friendly ambassadorial

³⁰ Major Bob Ball,xxxx

³¹ Special Ops in GWOT.pdf," page 3

³² file ""Special Ops in the GWOT," page 11

³³ file ""Special Ops in the GWOT," page 19

³⁴ file "Special Ops in the GWOT," page 23

³⁵ file "Special Ops in the GWOT," page 14

presence so they can show up in remote areas with no advance notice and quickly gain the trust of locals. "We are a force multiplier," Ball told me one evening after a team-building volleyball game with Filipino soldiers. "If I go my whole career and never have to shoot anybody, that will be fine with me." The day-to-day Green Beret mission is oddly similar to the Peace Corps's, tenderly imparting first-world skills in the locals' own language, even if the skills are marksmanship and maneuver instead of fish-farming and crop rotation. President Kennedy, who created the Peace Corps, was a big fan of the Special Forces. He doubled the size of the unit and allowed its soldiers to wear the signature green beret. When Special Forces are training a foreign government's troops, as on Basilan, their mission is called "foreign internal defense."³⁶ When they're on the side of guerillas trying to overthrow a government, as in Afghanistan after September 11, their mission is "unconventional warfare."³⁷ Special Forces soldiers tend to be older than regular-Army soldiers of similar rank because until recently making it into the Special Forces took a long time; Ball's enlisted men, all high-ranking non-commissioned officers, are in their late thirties and early forties. That is changing; three months after September 11 the Army waived the requirement that applicants for the

³⁶ file "SF-foreign internal defense"

³⁷ file "SF-unconventional warfare"

Green Berets be experienced soldiers and began accepting volunteers off the street for the first time since the end of the Vietnam War.³⁸ In February, alarmed that Special Operations troops were resigning to sell their skills to private military contractors for astronomical wages, the Pentagon boosted reenlistment bonuses to as high as a hundred and fifty thousand dollars.³⁹

To address the tinderbox of poverty and Muslim resentment that is Basilan, the U.S. government selected Major Ball's Alpha Company, First Battalion of the First Special Forces Group. The soldiers stayed at a Philippine army camp on the north side of the island, an unfenced and unguarded collection of careworn buildings that ranged from cinderblock to woven-palm-frond-and-palapa. Wives and children of the Philippine soldiers lived at the camp, cooking meals over outdoor wood fires. The visiting Americans slept in a two-room screened-in hall, where mosquito-net-draped cots lined the walls. A long table held the soldiers' AM-FM-UHF-satellite radios and half a dozen Dell and Toshiba laptops, some of which were patched into the Pentagon's secret Internet. On the wall above hung a large American flag, and on the floor lay black high-impact cases containing each man's M-4 carbine, a head-high stack of wooden ammunition boxes, and a

³⁸ file "SF taking people off the street"

³⁹ file "SF retention money"

mysterious aluminum trunk as big as a refrigerator. Scattered casually everywhere were an assortment of walkie-talkies, DVDs, automatic pistols, plastic sandals, military-issue switchblade knives, dirty laundry, computer games, and ammunition clips. The wives of Philippine soldiers washed the Americans' fatigues and three times a day a nearby restaurant delivered meals: bacon and pancakes, fried chicken and potato salad, fish and rice.

The Americans had a triple mission on Basilan. The Air Force staff sergeant, a combat controller who asked not to be identified, spent his days roaming the island with a surveyor's tripod and line level, looking for sites firm and flat enough to accommodate four-engine C-130 transports.⁴⁰ Half the Green Berets taught warfighting skills; the other half set up day-long primary-care clinics in remote locations. I rode out to one of these with a thirty-one year old captain named Jason Roundy, who is descended on both sides of his family from the Mormon pioneers who first settled Utah. Erect and cool behind imitation Ray-Bans, Roundy carefully slicks back his longish blond hair every morning no matter where he is. ("Gel is okay; mousse is girly.") Roundy was unenthusiastic about the Basilan mission. Like all Green Berets, he is a specialist in high-end killing. In addition to knowing how to parachute, at night, into any terrain as well

⁴⁰ His name is xxxx

as the ocean and fire a silenced M-4 accurately, in the dark, to half a kilometre, Roundy is trained to approach beaches in scuba gear and pop out of the water fighting. "If I were king for a day, I'd have a ship just over the horizon, come onto the beach in Zodiacs, find the bad guys and make them go away," he said of Basilan, as he wove our air conditioned SUV among the motorcycle taxis that are the main form of transportation on the island. Roundy envies the Green Berets of the Fifth and Tenth Special Forces Groups, which are fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan. "I'd like to be making the contribution I'm trained to make instead of riding the pine" – sitting on the bench – he said. Though the rules on Basilan allowed the Americans to carry weapons for self-defense, they couldn't get any closer to a Philippine combat operation than battalion headquarters, several levels removed from any fighting on the ground.⁴¹ Since 9/11, no Americans on Basilan have personally been involved in a firefight, but they have participated peripherally in A.F.P. combat missions. During the search for kidnapped American missionaries in 2002, for example, Americans advised Philippine Air Force helicopters by radio and conducted night surveillance from U.S. Navy P-3 Orion airplanes. After a Philippine army unit blundered upon the kidnappers and accidentally killed one

⁴¹ Major Bob Ball,xxxx

American and one Filipina hostage, American Black Hawk helicopters evacuated casualties.⁴²

Despite his eagerness for direct action, Roundy was throwing himself into the spirit of the hearts-and-minds mission. He kept his window open to the heat and greeted passersby with the obsessiveness of a political candidate, never missing an opportunity to add a friendly brushstroke to America's image—"Hey! How ya doing! Hey there!"⁴³ We left the pavement and headed up a bumpy track, little more than a muddy smear among the trees, and followed it for about forty minutes to the baranguay, or village, of Lower Mahayhay, which straddles the ankle-deep Maluso River. Lower Mahayhay is little more than a glade in the foliage. There are no streets and no vehicles; a large open-sided shelter and a tiny store built of bound sticks leaned beside the river. Palm-frond-and-palapa houses were barely visible through the jungle. Several Philippine Army trucks rolled in behind us and soldiers began unloading tents and folding tables, keeping rifles on their backs as they did so. They set up a crude dais, flanked by the Philippine and American flags. They unloaded boxes of amoxicillin and vitamin supplements. Staff Sergeant Bill Carter, one of the psychological-operations soldiers on Ball's team, wore a t-shirt with

⁴² file "SOCPAC role in Burhnam rescue"; paper written by the official historian of the U.S. Army Special Operations Command

⁴³ Captain Jason Roundy, xxxx

the unit's slogan -- "Because Physical Wounds Heal --"⁴⁴ as he rooted through cardboard boxes of stuffed animals, winnowing out pigs. "Pretty stupid to give pigs to Muslims," he said dryly.⁴⁵ Each stuffed animal had a paper heart tied around its neck, hand lettered "We Care About You!" by the children of the Bob Hope Elementary School at Kadan Air Force Base on Okinawa. Staff Sergeant Bobby Muscara set down his M-4, took a bundle of black sticks from his backpack, and spent ninety seconds building what looked like a Tinkertoy contraption that he plugged into a small radio, connecting Lower Mahayhay by satellite to the rest of the planet.⁴⁶

The people of Lower Mahayhay stood at the edges, watching quietly. None of the women was veiled and only a few wore headscarves. Islam came relatively late to Basilan and its symbols – veiled women, the loud call to prayer, white hajji caps – only started appearing in the nineties when radicalized Afghanistan veterans began returning home. Islam is still relatively easygoing here; publicly, at least, Basilaños express little interest in strict sharia law.⁴⁷ Yet hostility to Christian oppression is strong, four centuries ingrained, and the Americans were wary. "We may be the first white people these folks have ever seen," Roundy said, strapping on a nine-millimetre pistol.

⁴⁴ file "psyops slogan"

⁴⁵ Staff Sergeant Bill Carter; his email is coming

⁴⁶ Staff Sergeant Bobby Muscara, xxxx

⁴⁷ Father Angel Calvo, who has lived on Basilan since 1972. xxxx

The open-sided building by the river might have served as the clinic, but it was lined with prayer rugs. None of the Philippine or American soldiers ventured inside. Instead, they laboriously set up a huge canvas canopy and several smaller ones.

Brigadier General Raymundo Ferrer, commander of the Philippine forces on the island, bounced into the clearing in a Humvee with a machine gun mounted on the roof. He and Ball, both wearing camouflage fatigues, took seats on the dais. A couple of hundred villagers materialized from the forest and sat under the big canopy or fidgeted at the periphery. A wizened man in a white hajji cap took the microphone and prayed in Arabic. During interminable speeches by local officials and General Ferrer, Ball sat erect, attentive, and smiling in the searing sun, applauding lustily at appropriate moments and never so much as sipping water or wiping his brow. Then he stood and read to the assemblage from "The Peace Book," an American picture book for toddlers written by Todd Parr. "Peace is keeping the water blue for all the fish," Ball said, turning the page and waiting for the translation by a headscarfed woman interpreter. "Peace is keeping someone warm."⁴⁸ Roundy leaned toward me and whispered, "Seriously, the regular Army could never do this. It would roll its

⁴⁸ see http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0316835315/qid=1116450118/sr=1-1/ref=sr_1_1/102-7563464-7960100?v=glance&s=books

eyes.” When Ball was finished, the crowd was largely stone-faced; a few people applauded.

Ball had brought two Navy doctors, a Navy medical corpsman, and an Army doctor, all wearing holstered pistols, and by the end of the presentations, I was worried that they would have to treat everybody for heatstroke. The Filipinos sat placidly on plastic chairs while the doctors looked in their throats and ears and directed them to the “pharmacy,” two folding tables covered with colorful boxes. Under one canopy, the Navy doctors performed bloody circumcisions on boys from about seven to fifteen years old. Under another, Army doctor Jim Grady examined a rough gray patch under a pretty young woman’s left eye. “Leprosy,” he told me. “It’s treatable with six months of Rifampin, which costs about eleven dollars a month and which she won’t get.” The doctors had no x-ray machines or laboratory equipment in Lower Mahayhay, only otoscopes, stethoscopes, tongue depressors, bandages, antibiotics, and vitamins.⁴⁹ Sweat poured down Grady’s face and arms as he diagnosed scabies, ear infections, malnutrition, and tumors, doing what he could for each and sending most people away with a little cardboard box of pills. At one point he looked up and said to nobody in particular, “I’m a doctor with borders. And a gun.”⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Major Bob Ball, xxxx

⁵⁰ Captain Jim Grady, xxxx

The four clinics of Alpha Company's mission on Basilan provided cursory relief to about two thousand of Basilan's three hundred and fifty thousand people.⁵¹ Their value was symbolic; the Americans hoped word would spread that they and the Philippine army were friends of peace-loving Basilaños. But as we watched the doctors work, Ball wasn't sure the Americans were scoring a hearts-and-minds victory. "I'm not getting as warm a feeling here as I have in other places; I watch their eyes and their body language." We watched General Ferrer hand out what were surely, for many if not all of the children, the first storebought toys they had ever received. "We'll be out of here in a few hours," Ball said, "and we won't know who'll be in here tonight, telling them whatever."⁵²

General Ferrer, who is soft-spoken and unimposing, chose to enter the Philippine military academy only months after Marcos declared martial law in 1973. Now, at forty-nine, his aim on Basilan is to create "a culture of peace," he said, a mission which extends beyond the clinics, well-digging, and road-building he has had his men doing for two years. "We need to replace a culture of violence. We need to de-emphasize warfare. You notice when we hand out toys, there are no toy guns. Until a couple of years ago, the mentality of the

⁵¹ Major Bob Ball,xxxx

⁵² Major Bob Ball,xxxx

Philippine military was 'go to Mindanao and fight the Muslims.' Some of my fellow generals still say, 'Why are we doing peace operations? We are warriors; we should be fighting.'" Ferrer is swimming against a history of corruption, ineptitude and undisciplined violence on the part of the Philippine Army. (Ball and his men still shake their heads and grumble about a 2001 incident when the Filipinos had a band of Abu Sayyaf leaders surrounded in a hospital compound and yet, incomprehensibly, the guerillas slipped away with their hostages.⁵³) Ferrer was featured in April on the cover of Peace Works, published by the Peace Advocates Zamboanga Foundation on Mindanao, which is usually critical of the Philippine Army. "Comrade in Arms, Partner in Peace,"⁵⁴ read the headline of the article, which went on to call Ferrer "enlightened" and his peacemaking effort on Basilan "ground-breaking." Ferrer argues that his battalion's community-service projects have yielded the first two years of relative calm the island has known in decades.⁵⁵ I asked him how he'd transformed himself from one of Ferdinand Marcos's martial-law warriors into the peacemaker of Basilan. He smiled. "In 1985 I attended the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare School at Fort Bragg, North Carolina" – the Green Beret's

⁵³ file "Basilan rep on demilitarization," Also, Major Bob Ball, bobball70@hotmail.com

⁵⁴ I mislaid my copy. But this can be confirmed by Grace Reballos, Director, Center for Peace and Development, Western Mindanao State University, Zamboanga City, Tel/FAX: 062-993-0949, Email: reballos@wmsu.edu.ph, Mobile: 0917-711-2692

⁵⁵ see file "Q&A with Gen. Ferrer"

training camp – “where I studied psychological operations and civil affairs.” Half his soldiers are former Muslim guerillas, he said.⁵⁶ He calls them “integrees.” Roundy calls them “spies.”⁵⁷

General Ferrer is an example of another aspect of the Special Forces mission. As the Green Berets work alongside soldiers and officers of other nations’ armies, they develop friendships which they hope will prove useful in the future. When Roundy took the Special Forces qualification course in 2003, for example, he was paired with a Philippine officer taking the course at the same time. “I text-messaged him as soon as I got to the P.I.,” Roundy said, using the old colonial abbreviation for Philippine Islands. “He’s someone I’ll know forever, as we both get promoted.” On Basilan, as in all training missions, Alpha Company was keeping a “mission roster” of Filipinos, noting each soldier’s training, his proficiencies and weaknesses, and such personal information as marital status and cellphone number. Multiply this mission by hundreds a year worldwide for the fifty-three years of the Special Forces’ existence, and you end up with a Rolodex of the world’s military the size of a Ferris wheel. “When something goes down, we know who to call,” said a former Green Beret who was working for Halliburton when I met him in Iraq in 2003. “If we want to

⁵⁶ Brigadier General Raymundo Ferrer can be reached through his aide, Captain Vince Bantilan, xxxx

⁵⁷ Captain Jason Roundy, xxxx

turn a general against his government, we know his cellphone number. We know his kids' names. If we need access to a country's territory and don't want to bump it up to the level of a diplomatic request, we can get it done. The cool thing is we can maintain friendships within the militaries even if the two governments are hostile." ⁵⁸

Though the Basilan clinic in Lower Mahayhay was conceived as a means of de-militarizing the island and supporting a culture of peace, it was almost entirely military. A nurse from the U.S. Embassy in Manila and four Filipinos wearing USAID credentials and civilian clothes helped record people's names, but the people placing pills on children's tongues were armed American and Philippine soldiers and the American Army was clearly in charge. I asked General Ferrer whether the clinic might inadvertently be sending a message that the only people who can get anything done are men with guns. "That's true," General Ferrer said with a sigh. "But the civilian government doesn't do anything for these people. The only entity in the Philippines with the capabilities to provide services here is the military."⁵⁹ As we were packing up to leave, I asked Ball a variant of the same question: If the goal is to pacify the region and leave behind a warm feeling toward Americans, why do these clinics bristle with weapons? His answer was

⁵⁸ his name is xxxx, but he doesn't want to be quoted. I saw him in New York in February, when we had this conversation.

⁵⁹ Brigadier General Raymundo Ferrer can be reached through his aide, Captain Vince Bantilan,xxxx

an American version of Ferrer's. "Who's going to do this, the Peace Corps? USAID? They don't have the vehicles, or the comms, or the capabilities we have." He laughed. "You sound like my mother. She's always saying, 'we have a National War College, why don't we have a National Peace College?'"⁶⁰

[line break]

"America is a nation at war," declares the National Defense Strategy that the Pentagon released in March.⁶¹ That the war is against a tactic, terrorism, rather than a country makes victory difficult to picture. "Before September 11, the conventional wisdom had been that globalization was fast making war obsolete," writes Boston University professor Andrew Bacevich in his 2002 book, "American Empire." "After September 11, the conventional wisdom was that globalization was making war an all but permanent and inescapable part of life in the twenty-first century."⁶² Like economic globalization, the new kind of war is dismissive of borders. Nations, the new National Defense Strategy argues, "must exercise their sovereignty responsibly."⁶³ They are "obligated" to prevent terror organizations from operating on their soil,⁶⁴ and those who fail to meet

⁶⁰ Major Bob Ball,xxxx

⁶¹ file, "1. America's Role in the World" from the National Security Strategy

⁶² "American Empire" by Andrew Bacevich, page 225

⁶³ file, "1. America's Role in the World" from the National Security Strategy

⁶⁴ file, "1. America's Role in the World" from the National Security Strategy

that obligation are susceptible to American force. "The United States must defeat the most dangerous challenges early and at a safe distance,"⁶⁵ the Strategy says.⁶⁶ Though only four countries besides the Philippines are considered "emerging targets," forty-five are considered by the Pentagon war-on-terror combat zones where American soldiers can receive a new Combat Action Badge for "actively engaging or being engaged by the enemy." On the list besides Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Philippines are Algeria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Burundi, Colombia, Cote D'Ivoire, Croatia, Djibouti, East Timor, Egypt, Eritrea, Georgia, Greece (within fourteen kilometres of Athens), Haiti, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Liberia, Macedonia, Malaysia, Montenegro, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkey, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Yemen, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and Zaire.⁶⁷ In American eyes after September 11, the the global marketplace became the global battlefield.

Until the early nineties, the biggest affronts to many Filipinos' sense of sovereignty were Clark Air Base north of Manila and the Subic Bay Naval Base on the west coast of Luzon, which anchored American

⁶⁵ file "implementation guidelines"

⁶⁶ file "implementation guidelines"

⁶⁷ paper files, Army Times, page 8

might in east Asia during the Cold War and Vietnam. In 1987, the Philippine Senate rewrote the national constitution to banish foreign militaries⁶⁸ and, to the surprise of many in both Washington and Manila, followed through by voting, on September 16, 1991, to eject the bases rather than renew their leases.⁶⁹ Once the last Americans left in November of the following year,⁷⁰ the Philippines were free of foreign forces for the first time since the Spanish took over in 1524.⁷¹

“That is what we thought, anyway,” said Wigberto Tañada, when I met him in his office in Manila. Tañada is one of the senators who campaigned to oust the bases, just as his father had done as a senator before him. At seventy, Tañada looks fifty, with dark hair and a strong build beneath a gleaming white barong, the elegant tunic that is Philippine formal attire. He runs a rural development non-profit and continues beating the drum for Philippine sovereignty. Almost every year since the bases closed, American troops have come for exercises with the Philippine military, though usually the exercises were confined to Philippine Army bases, rather than out amidst areas in conflict. Despite raucous demonstrations and the burning of Bill Clinton in effigy,⁷² the Philippines Senate eventually passed a visiting forces

⁶⁸ file “1987 Philippine constitution”

⁶⁹ file “the vote to close the bases”

⁷⁰ file “US left Clark & Subic 11/92”

⁷¹ file “Philippine history timeline”

⁷² file “VFA vote and demos”

agreement that stipulates, among other things, that American soldiers accused of crimes in the Philippines will be tried in American, not Philippine, courts. Soon after 9/11, an American colonel and the Philippine military's Deputy Chief of Staff signed a "Mutual Logistical Support Agreement" that specifies terms for Americans "to train Filipino soldiers in anti-terror techniques."⁷³ This time, the Philippine Senate was not consulted,⁷⁴ and the nine-page document is secret.⁷⁵ A summary released by U.S. Pacific Command in Hawaii says the agreement bars the U.S. from building permanent bases or structures, but allows it to "set up centers for ammunition, spare parts, fuel, food and other supplies."⁷⁶

"What is a 'center?' It's a base," Tañada said. "We thought in 1992 we sort of got our self-respect, our national dignity." I told Tañada about the clinic I'd witnessed on Basilan. "I suppose they're doing good, but they're doing it through the military, so the message is you must trust the military, that only the military can help you," he said. "Why should it be only the military? And not just any military; the American military." He planted his hands on his knees and looked at the floor. "It's the . . . the assumptions the Americans make. The

⁷³ file "MLSA summary"

⁷⁴ Former Senator Wigberto Tañada,xxxx

⁷⁵ Colonel Mathias Velasco, the top military liason officer in the US Embassy, Phone xxxx

⁷⁶ file "MLSA summary"

assumptions that they can be in the Philippines any way they like, that they know best. They're still uplifting the little brown brother." He looked up and thrust out a hand. "Don't write that I'm anti-American. I took my Masters at Harvard Law in 1962. I like Americans. We remain" Here he stopped and searched for the word a moment. "We remain charmed by you."⁷⁷

Despite the occasional demonstration, it would be hard to argue that there exists a groundswell of Philippine sentiment to expel the forces of Operation Enduring Freedom. On the street, Filipinos are cloyingly friendly, deferential to Americans to the point of obsequy, incessantly yelling "hey Joe!" at any American-looking face. Though Tagalog is the national tongue, English, which is nearly as common, is the language of most advertising and media. Even in Zamboanga on the island of Mindanao, Radio Station FM 103.5 sounds so American – the DJs playing top-forty music and speaking thoroughly unaccented American English – that for days I thought Ball and his men were listening to recordings of radio shows they'd brought from the United States. Filipinos retain an affection for American style and substance that is noticeably stronger than, say, East Africans' affinity for the

⁷⁷ Former Senator Wigberto Tañada, xxxx

British or Mexicans' for the Spanish.⁷⁸ This makes it easy for American officials to dismiss critics of the U.S. military presence like Tañada as isolated "nationalists."⁷⁹

Even so, it was striking to see how presumptuously the Americans wore, displayed, and used their weapons on Basilan. On the way back from the clinic in Lower Mahayhay, the Americans' parked their SUVs at Jollibee's, a Philippine fast-food restaurant whose arrival on the island a year ago is taken by many Americans and Filipinos as evidence of the spread of peace and civilization. The Americans parted a sea of excited children as they bellied up to the counter, pistols hanging heavily on their hips. On another evening, Ball and his men drove to the town of Isabella to a beauty pageant – they'd sponsored one of the contestants as part of their unending public relations campaign – and though they wore plain clothes, pistols bulged under their golf shirts. None of the civilians at Jollibee's or the pageant seemed intimidated or offended, but I tried to imagine how authorities in a small American town would react if a squad of visiting Filipino soldiers went strutting around fully armed.

Among the political constraints of being based on Okinawa is that Ball and his soldiers don't get to shoot often enough to maintain

⁷⁸ we lived in Zimbabwe for three years (1987 through 1989) and in Mexico for two (1998 to 2000). I also lived in the Philippines for six months in 1983.

⁷⁹ See interviews with Paul O'Friel and Colonel Mathias Velasco

proficiency. So when they come on a mission like this one, they make up for lost time. Sergeant First Class Patrick Adams is Alpha Company's engineer, a balding, motherly forty-one year old and inveterate scrounger; whenever the men thought they were out of something – double-A batteries, .45-calibre ammunition – Adams had an extra cache squirreled away.⁸⁰ One afternoon as the sun slipped behind the trees, he unlocked the refrigerator-sized aluminum trunk that dominated the floor of the Americans' hut. It was full of foreign weapons. Green Berets train to be expert in whatever weapon they might encounter, and they'd brought along a selection they thought relevant to Basilan. Adams pawed among Second World War-vintage Soviet Moisin-Nagant bolt action rifles and a Soviet DPK machine gun fed from a round pan on the top, eventually coming up with a Swedish K—a lightweight submachine gun – and an AK-47, which he and Ball slung over their shoulders along with their own M-4s. We walked down the grassy slope behind their building, where a ten-foot-high berm bordered a mangrove-choked bay. Adams hopped up briefly on the berm to make sure no canoes were passing, then he and Ball took wide stances on the slope and ripped through clip after clip of ammunition. Their M-4s – shortened M-16s that are rapidly becoming the Army's standard infantry weapon—were angular, black, and so

⁸⁰ Sergeant First Class Patrick Adams, xxxx

loaded with laser and night-vision sights that they seemed designed by Klingons. The foreign weapons felt like nineteenth-century farm implements by comparison. Whichever weapons they used, Adams and Ball shot groups small enough to cover with a quarter, and were lightning quick about reloading. When they'd finished, a fine haze of burnt cordite and berm-dust hung in the air. Climbing the berm, I found a Philippine family's palm-frond house on the other side, about a hundred yards to the right. We had been wearing ear protectors; for them, the racket must have been apocalyptic. An hour later, as Ball and his men were watching "Monsters Inc." amidst the reek of gun-cleaning solvent, there came a light tapping on the screen door. Half a dozen of the Philippine soldiers' children cowered on the stoop, their shirt fronts sagging with the brass cartridges we'd fired. Each got a big five-peso coin, worth about a dime.

[line break]

Several U.S. laws, among them the so-called Leahy Amendments, prohibit military assistance to foreign military units determined by the Secretary of State to be violators of human rights.⁸¹ The exigencies of the Global War on Terror, though, have frequently overridden these provisions. Eleven days after the September 11

⁸¹ files "diplomat's guide to the Leahy Amendments," and "Dangerous Dealings by HRW," also, see file "Human Rights Watch" with interview at the bottom with Tom Malinowski.

attacks, President Bush lifted military sanctions on both India and Pakistan that had been imposed after they conducted nuclear tests in 1998.⁸² He eliminated arms-sale restrictions against Tajikistan that had been imposed for human-rights violations in 1993.⁸³ Though Indonesia lost most U.S. military support after its army fired on demonstrators in East Timor in 1992, it has, since 9/11, received almost two million dollars worth of military training.⁸⁴

The Pentagon makes no secret of its contempt for tailoring defense policy to human rights concerns. Although the State Department decertified Uzbekistan in 2003 because of its human-rights record, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Myers, while on a visit to Tashkent last August, broke with a government tradition of not criticizing U.S. policy while on foreign soil to call the move “shortsighted.”⁸⁵ The 2006 supplemental defense budget, released in February, is full of new loopholes allowing military aid to bareknuckled countries. Jordan, for example, is eligible to share in a one-point-three billion dollar aid fund in the new budget,⁸⁶ even though the State Department finds it responsible for torture, arbitrary arrest, and

⁸² File “Dangerous Dealings by HRW”

⁸³ File “Dangerous Dealings by HRW”

⁸⁴ file “CDI on Indonesian arms trade”

⁸⁵ a characterization by Professor Gordon Adams, Director, Security Policy Studies, Elliott School of International Affairs, The George Washington University, (202) 994-0188, or gadams@gwu.edu. He was for five years white house OMB associate director for national security and international affairs, under Clinton.

⁸⁶ File “2006 supplemental (“notwithstanding”)” pages 20 and 61

“significant restrictions on freedom of speech, press and assembly.”⁸⁷

Jordan can be aided, the budget says, “notwithstanding any other provision of law.”⁸⁸ A new two hundred million dollar “Global War on Terror Partners Fund” in the budget is likewise to be distributed among cooperating countries “notwithstanding any other provision of law.”⁸⁹

“That’s the code for the waiver,” Gordon Adams told me. Adams, a professor at George Washington University, oversaw defense and international-affairs budgets for five years at Bill Clinton’s Office of Management and Budget. “DoD’s argument is ‘ain’t got time to screw around with the State Department; we have to keep this money flowing.” Adams said the Defense Department, through arms sales and the kind of training underway in the Philippines, has eclipsed the State Department as the nation’s main instrument of foreign policy. “We don’t have a strategy for dealing with terrorism, we have a Global War on Terrorism,” Adams said. “So who takes responsibility for a war? The military. The Pentagon has become the strategic planning instrument for the U.S. government. Why are soldiers reading to school kids? We have this whole State Department with thousands of diplomats. We have seventy-five thousand Peace Corps volunteers. Why aren’t they in the National Defense Strategy? When I think of

⁸⁷ File “State Dept. on Jordan Human Rights”

⁸⁸ File “2006 supplemental (“notwithstanding”)” pages 20 and 61

⁸⁹ File “2006 supplemental (“notwithstanding”)” page 81

Green Berets reading to school kids, I think of Vietnam. The Army ran hearts-and-minds in Vietnam, too."⁹⁰

In a report issued in February, the State Department characterized the Philippines as having generally respected human rights during 2004, though "some elements of the security services were responsible for arbitrary, unlawful, and, in some cases, extrajudicial killings; disappearances; torture; and arbitrary arrest and detention,"⁹¹ and an undisclosed number of Philippines soldiers were excluded from U.S. training this year for violating human rights.⁹² Military aid to the Philippines has jumped almost tenfold since 9/11.⁹³ As a stalwart ally in the Global War on Terror, the Philippines in 2001-2002 received, in addition to training, about a hundred million dollars worth of M-16 rifles, grenade launchers, sniper rifles, mortars, helicopters, patrol boats, and a C-130 transport.⁹⁴ Most of this was surplus, like the Vietnam-era M-16s they were firing on Basilan;⁹⁵ the Philippines is the biggest recipient of surplus American weapons in Asia.⁹⁶ About a fifth of it was in the form of Foreign Military

⁹⁰ Professor Gordon Adams, Director, Security Policy Studies, Elliott School of International Affairs, The George Washington University,xxxx

⁹¹ file "State on Phil human rights 04"

⁹² see file "State Dept.," interview with Peter Sawchyn, State Department spokesman who asked not to be identified by name, 202-647-1255 or SawchynPP@state.gov

⁹³ file "CDI on Philippines" and "Military aid to Philippines"

⁹⁴ file "Dangerous Dealings"

⁹⁵ file "Dangerous Dealings"

⁹⁶ file "State Dept on mil. assist. to Philippines"

Financing,⁹⁷ a program in which the U.S. government finances the purchase of new American-made weapons without any cash passing through the hands of a foreign government.⁹⁸ (In fiscal year 2003, the U.S. financed the purchase of six billion dollars' worth of American weapons worldwide, which, as a State Department release puts it, "contributes to a strong U.S. defense industrial base, which benefits both America's armed forces and U.S. workers.")⁹⁹ In 2006, arms sales to the Philippines will fall by a third because the last few years have showered hardware on the country,¹⁰⁰ while funds for training will stay about equal¹⁰¹ and counter-terrorism funding will grow by a hundred and fifty percent.¹⁰²

The person who oversees American military assistance to the Philippines is Colonel Mathias Velasco, the Philippine-born son of an American sailor and a Filipina. His title is Administrator of the Joint U.S. Military Assistance Group – JUSMAG – and though he works in the historic seaside embassy in Manila, he answers to Ambassador Francis Ricciardone only after answering to Admiral William J. Fallon, the

⁹⁷ file "Dangerous Dealings"

⁹⁸ Colonel Mathias Velasco, the top military liason officer in the US Embassy, Phone #xxxx

⁹⁹ file "Descriptions of Programs"

¹⁰⁰ see file "Rep Neil Abercrombie," who is fighting the administration's budget priorities, also, Colonel Mathias Velasco, the top military liason officer in the US Embassy, Phone #:xxxx

¹⁰¹ file "military aid to Philippines"

¹⁰² see file "Rep Neil Abercrombie," who is fighting the administration's budget priorities, also file "civilian aid to Philippines" from USAID website

Commander of Pacific Command in Hawaii, and to the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, which is the arms-sales unit of the Pentagon.¹⁰³ His office is large and luxurious, decorated with Lionel electric trains from the nineteen-fifties. He met me in civilian clothes, relaxed and voluble. "What do we want here? From my perspective it's because we believe we're at war," he said. "We are building capacity. We want our allies to have more capacity so they can fight their own fight. We don't want to come here and do the fight." Like Roundy, Velasco believes that American advisors should be allowed to follow Filipinos into battle at the company level (a company is about a hundred soldiers) instead of being stuck at battalion headquarters, "and we're working that at the Sec Def level right now." He dismissed the idea that the military was America's dominant force on Basilan or in the Philippines in general. "The embassy nurse was there (at the Lower Mahayhay clinic) when you were," he said. "It doesn't have to be us conducting the circumcisions and pulling the teeth. The great thing about it is you have the N.G.O.s and the U.S. military and the A.F.P. and the civilian doctors all there. They're not really caring what the other guy is wearing."¹⁰⁴ Still, the shift is evident. As counter-terrorism aid skyrockets, the Bush administration proposes to cut

¹⁰³ Paul O'Friel, First Secretary, US Embassy, Manila,xxxx

¹⁰⁴ Colonel Mathias Velasco, the top military liason officer in the US Embassy, Phone xxxx

development assistance to the Philippines next year by anywhere from seventeen to forty-two percent, depending on the program.¹⁰⁵

I crossed the hall to the much smaller and plainer office of Paul O’Friel, who is first secretary and political officer for the embassy. Though O’Friel works for the State Department, he too is a military man, with an earlier career as a Marine officer and continuing service as a lieutenant colonel in the Marine reserves. He looks the part; tall and angular, with a handshake that could crush filberts. O’Friel described such civilian projects as a bridge at Tawitawi that will link two islands and make life easier for the locals. But it too is strategic. “Our first key area in our mission plan is the War on Terrorism,” he said. “This is an area of insecurity. So yes, the military is running the show.” He enumerated Islamic threats in the south: Abu Sayyaf murdered an American Green Beret with a bomb on October 2, 2002.¹⁰⁶ It has kidnapped Americans as well as entire villages of Filipinos;¹⁰⁷ it has beheaded as many as forty-seven captives including at least one American;¹⁰⁸ it started a ferry-boat fire that killed a

¹⁰⁵ see file “Rep Neil Abercrombie,” who is fighting the administration’s budget priorities

¹⁰⁶ file “Zamboanga bomb kills US soldier”

¹⁰⁷ file “Radical Islam & Philippine insurgency”

¹⁰⁸ files “B A S I L A N_ The Next Afghanistan.pdf,” “Radical Islam on Basilan,” “Radical Islam & Philippine insurgency,” “SF role in Burnhams rescue,” as well as the book, “Seeds of Terror,” by Maria A. Ressa

hundred people in February 2004,¹⁰⁹ and on Valentine's Day of this year it detonated three big bombs at various sites around the Philippines that killed seven people and injured a hundred and fifty.¹¹⁰ "We don't have a Department of Peace right now," O'Friel said. "Let's look at nation-building. Do we have a Department of Nation-Building? We don't. So the military has to step in with its capabilities."¹¹¹

In early May a detachment of about twenty-five Americans, including some who had been on Basilan, ventured farther south in the Sulu Archipelago, to assess the situation on the island of Jolo, which is entirely Muslim and considered by the Americans a hotbed of insurrection.¹¹² Jolo was the site of the first caliphate in the Philippines, in 1450.¹¹³ For armed American soldiers to set foot on Jolo was explosive; in 1905, the U.S. Army killed at least a thousand Moro men, women and children trapped in the island's volcanic crater, Bud Dajo.¹¹⁴ This time, when word of the Americans' visit spread, demonstrations broke out.¹¹⁵ The Americans visited thirty-six

¹⁰⁹ file "superferry bombing"

¹¹⁰ file "Valentine's Day Bombings"

¹¹¹ Paul O'Friel, First Secretary, US Embassy, Manila,xxx

¹¹² file "Calvo's Jolo Report"

¹¹³ file "Islam to the Pippines," also, Father Angel Calvo, who has lived on Basilan since 1972. xxxx

¹¹⁴ file "Bud Dajo," from "The Swish of the Kris." Also, Father Angel Calvo, who has lived on Basilan since 1972. 011-63-62-991-11-68 or (cell) 011-63-0917-710-2926 or acalvo@claret.org

¹¹⁵ Grace Reballos, Director, Center for Peace and Development, Western Mindanao State University, Zamboanga City , xxxx

barangays to determine the need for a humanitarian mission.¹¹⁶ They examined the sea port. The Air Force combat controller I'd met on Basilan surveyed the airstrip and looked for places that could accommodate C-130s. Whenever they were outside their Philippine army camp – which one Green Beret described to me in an email as “like some sort of ‘Apocalypse Now’ set”¹¹⁷—they carried weapons and wore body armor.¹¹⁸ “I am more than happy to go there to see bad people ‘taken care of,’” Roundy wrote in an email after participating in the exploratory mission. All that’s standing in the way, he wrote, is “the Phil. Constitution, our political fear of SE Asia, etc.”¹¹⁹

While on Jolo, the Americans were met by members of Mindanao Peaceweaver, a peace organization led, in part, by Father Angel Calvo, a Spanish priest who has been living on Basilan since 1972 and refers to the Filipinos as “we.” At sixty-one, Calvo looks a little like Peter Sellers – full dark hair, big plastic-rimmed glasses, and a sheepish smile. It was “tremendously insensitive,” he said, to send armed Americans to the island of the Bud Dajo massacre. He shares, he said, the local suspicion that the United States is looking to reestablish a permanent military presence in the Philippines. “If this was a humanitarian mission, why assess the pier facilities and why look for

¹¹⁶ file “Calvo's Jolo Report”

¹¹⁷xxxx but he wouldn't want to be quoted saying that.

¹¹⁸ xxxx but he wouldn't want to be quoted saying that.

¹¹⁹ Captain Jason Roundy, xxxxl

landing zones for big airplanes?" he asked. "This was a 'humanitarian mission' funded by the Department of Defense.

"Don't tell me we need American Green Berets to teach us how to provide aid," he continued. "We are exporting doctors and nurses to the United States,¹²⁰ and engineers to the Middle East. The country needs money, but the country has more than enough technically capable people. We are exporting teachers, and America is exporting soldiers."¹²¹

End

¹²⁰ confired in file "exporting Philippine nurses"

¹²¹ file "exporting Filipino nurses," also, Father Angel Calvo, who has lived on Basilan since 1972. xxxx