



Armed Conflicts Report

Philippines-Mindanao (1971 - first combat deaths)

Update: January 2009

Summary

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Background

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Summary:

2008 One day before its formal signing in August, Supreme Court intervention marred an agreement between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) that would have extended autonomy to regions within Mindanao. Rogue MILF commanders reacted by launching new offensives in the region. The government then retracted its support for the agreement, dismantled its peace panel, demanded disarmament and launched a series of reprisals. This renewed conflict is estimated to have killed at least 300 people, including at least 104 civilians. About 610 000 civilians were displaced; with 370 000 still displaced, there have been warnings of an impending humanitarian crisis. Meanwhile, a resurgence of local predominantly Christian militia groups, now being supplied with arms by the government, weakens the prospects of renewed peace talks and has led to warnings of an impending civil war.

2007 Fighting between the government and rebel groups continued throughout the year, resulting in the deaths of hundreds. May elections caused significant violence, with over 100 civilians and politicians killed leading up to and during the elections. Peace talks between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) progressed in 2007, but recent breakdowns over demarcation of territory left talks stalled. There was a re-emergence of the rebel group Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), as eleven years of peace broke down over the government's request for the group to permanently disarm. Over a hundred thousand people were displaced from Mindanao, as increasingly dangerous territories forced them from their homes. US troops remained in the south, assisting the government in training the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), as well as providing intelligence.

2006 Heavy fighting between the government and rebel groups resulted in the deaths of 200-300 and the displacement of thousands. Peace talks between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) took place intermittently throughout the year, but without any resolution of the conflict.

2005 Peace talks between the government and MILF rebels led to a tentative agreement on a future semi-autonomous Muslim territory in Mindanao. The Philippine army launched a large-scale army operation in February on Jolo island against MILF and Abu Sayyaf rebels resulting in many casualties and mass displacement of civilians.

2004 Fighting between government forces and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) as well as terrorist attacks continued sporadically through the year resulting in the deaths of over 125 people. Talks between the government and MILF rebels continued in part to isolate more militant organizations. US military assistance continued as part of the US-led "war on terror".

2003 Intense fighting between the government and the two main Islamic rebel groups, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), occurred in early 2003, resulting in several hundred deaths. Informal peace talks in Malaysia involving the government and MILF officials got underway in November following a July cease-fire signed by the two parties. However, the ASG and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), a regional Islamic militant organization, continued to be targeted by government forces. US military assistance to the Philippines, in the form of arms and training, continued as part of the global "war on terror".

2002 Fighting remained intense between the government and the main rebel groups, the ASG and the MILF, resulting in the deaths of over 800 people. The Philippine government accepted military anti-terrorist training and support from the United States military.

2001 Fighting between government and rebel groups intensified in 2001 even during peace negotiations. In November, a rebel faction abandoned a 1996 peace agreement and launched an attack against government troops. More than 1,000 people lost their lives due to the fighting.

2000 Tensions in the southern island of Mindanao heightened significantly as the Philippine government mobilized more troops to counter rebel attacks. In March and April, foreign and local hostages were abducted by Abu Sayyaf rebels, held for ransom, and most were eventually released. At least 600 people (civilians, rebels and government soldiers) died this year as a result of the clashes, a sharp increase over 1999.

1999 Despite commitments to peace talks, periodic clashes between government forces and Muslim rebels persisted in Mindanao in 1999. More than 100 people were killed during the year, an increase over total conflict fatalities in 1998.

1998 Sporadic clashes between government forces and rebel groups in 1998 continued alongside government peace talks with the largest remaining Muslim separatist group.

1997 In spite of a government peace agreement with the largest Muslim insurgent group, and a cease-fire and talks with separatist rebels, clashes continued through 1997.

1996 A peace agreement between the largest Muslim rebel group and the government did not prevent clashes between other Mindanao rebels and security forces.

1995 Government troops struck against Muslim rebels following attacks on Mindanao towns attributed to break-away rebel factions.

Type of Conflict:

State formation

Parties to the Conflict:

1) a) Government, led by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo-elected in January 2001. She was then elected to a six-year term as president in May 2004.

- Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP);
- Philippine National Police (PNP).

"In May 2007 approximately 73 percent of registered citizens voted in mid-term elections for both houses of congress and provincial and local governments. The election generally was free and fair but was marred by violence and allegations of vote buying and electoral fraud. Long-running Communist and Muslim insurgencies affected the country. Civilian authorities generally maintained effective control of the security forces; however, there were some instances in which elements of the security forces acted independently." [2008 Human Rights Report: Philippines. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, US State Department, 2009]

b) The United States of America:

Since 2002, the US has had a significant military presence in the Philippines in order to train the latter's troops

in "counter-terror" operations. Although under the Philippine constitution the US is presently only permitted to arm and train members of the Philippine Armed Forces, there are indications that this may lead to the direct involvement of US forces in the conflict.

"US soldiers are backing the Philippine military's offensive against Muslim rebels in the south but the Americans are not directly involved in combat operations [...] the US troops, who have been stationed in Mindanao since 2002 for joint military exercises, help Filipino troops in providing supplies, maintenance of equipment, medical and casualty evacuation and humanitarian efforts" [Source: *Asia-Pacific News*, Sept 12, 2008]

"A 1999 Visiting Forces Agreement allows foreign forces to train Philippine troops. But a ruling last year by the Philippine Supreme Court ... specified that foreign troops could not take part in offensive combat operations and could only fire weapons in self-defense. A key issue to be worked out, (Philippine Defense Secretary) Reyes said, is whether U.S. troops would be prohibited from opening fire except when fired on, or whether the Americans would be allowed to shoot while simply under threat of potential attack." [*washingtonpost.com*, March 1, 2003]

2) Muslim rebel groups based in Mindanao are fighting to attain an independent Islamic state. These include:

(a) Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), led by Al Haj Murad following the death of Salamat Hashim in July 2003, is a splinter group of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) with reported support from overseas militant Islamic organizations. The MILF was established in 1984 and has an estimated force of 12,500 fighters, based primarily in central Mindanao. . The armed wing of the MILF is known as The Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF) [*Amnesty International*, October 2008]. The number of troops is still estimated to be at least 12,000.

(b) Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), a fundamentalist Muslim group led by Khadafi Janjalani. The group has an estimated 300-400 fighters in Sulu and Basilan, is alleged to have links to the al Qaeda network, and is labelled a terrorist organization by both Manila and Washington. They are believed to have joined forces with Manila-based Rajah Solaiman Movement, a group of radical Muslim converts.

"From mid 2008, the [ASG] rebels resumed their kidnapping activities on Basilan and other parts of Sulu, apparently in a desperate attempt to secure new funds. Though much weakened, the ASG also continued to mount small-scale but sometimes lethal attacks on the AFP." [*Military Balance 2009*]

(c) Jemaah Islamiyah, a regional organization with ties to al Qaeda, whose objective is to establish an Islamic state across the arc of Southeast Asia.

(d) The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), a Muslim group which reached a peace agreement with the government in 1996 establishing the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). The MNLF had become relatively insignificant, with many factions splintering from the main group, but in early 2007 the AFP renewed armed hostilities with the group, reasserting old claims that they were working with Abu Sayyaf.

"As of early last month, Manila and the MNLF were still officially engaged in that peace process, and the two sides held negotiations on social and economic issues as recently as February. After nearly 11 years of relative calm, since mid-April the Philippine Army has renewed armed hostilities with the MNLF, reasserting old government claims that the MNLF is secretly supporting the ASG." [*Asia Times Online*, 17 May, 2007]

"To counter the threat from Jemaah Islamiyah, the C.I.A. has more agents clandestinely operating around the region than at any time since the Vietnam War, officials said ... United States officials have extensive intelligence showing that Jemaah Islamiyah has a major training base on the southern Philippine island of Mindanao ..." [*The New York Times*, November 22, 2003]

"The Philippine military claims that the Abu Sayyaf guerrillas have been on the run since the U.S. military conducted a counterterrorism exercise in the southern Philippines last year. Many of their leaders and members have been killed or captured, but remnants of the group are still scattered,

mainly on the southern islands of Basilan and Jolo, their traditional strongholds." [*Associated Press*, September 13, 2003]

3) Various Civilian militia groups are becoming active players in the conflict, developing in response to the heightened threat of MILF attacks in their villages. These include:

- a) The Ilaga, a Christian militia group, is said to have resurfaced after 20 years of inactivity. They are being tolerated/supported by the military in regions of Mindanao as civilians attempt to protect themselves from MILF forces.
- b) government backed Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Units (CAFGU)
- c) Civil Volunteer Organizations (CVOs)
- d) Police auxiliaries

"A particularly worrisome development since the escalation in fighting as been the reappearance of the vigilante group Ilaga, a vigilante group that was known in the 1970s to have targeted and killed Moros (Philippine Muslims) whom they perceived as subversive. Government backed Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Units (CAFGU), Civil Volunteer Organizations (CVOs), police auxiliaries and other civilian militias supported by local politicians have also joined the conflict." [*Amnesty International*, October 2008].

"Already the Ilaga faction in Aleosan, led by Felimon Cayang, 48, has threatened their own raids against Muslim communities sympathetic to the MILF. 'For every Christian killed, we will kill 10 MILF rebels. We are prepared to die and will not let them take away our lands,' Cayang promised, brandishing an M4 assault rifle he bought on the black market for about US\$1000." [Source: *IRIN: UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs*, 20 Nov 2008]

Status of Fighting:

2008 The failure of peace talks in August resulted in renewed and intensified violence between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). However, reports of increased skirmishes and military activity began several weeks prior. The presence of armed MILF fighters in communities of the North Cotabato province, and the ensuing evacuation by some civilians in advance of conflict, was reported as early as June 9th. In July, municipal and provincial governments began to request ammunition and arms from military and police forces. Skirmishes began on July 24th in North Cotabato between the MILF and 400 fighters from Civil Volunteer Organizations (CVOs). By August 1st, at least 73 houses had been burned and dozens of civilians killed. AFP documents report a possible total of 67 attacks on military positions between May 1st and August 3rd. Although some attacks may be double counted in these totals, they are nonetheless frequent. Two or three rogue MILF commanders (known as Ameril Umbra Kato, Abdurahman "Bravo" Macapaar and "Pangalian") are believed to be responsible for these attacks, and the government has demanded their surrender. An Amnesty International fact finding mission to Mindanao found evidence of increased human rights abuses and proportion of civilian deaths in general. Specifically, the military has been accused of looting and burning civilian homes and crops, as well as killing civilians in attacks and aerial bombings. Likewise, MILF continues to be accused of targeting Christian civilians in Mindanao, using guns and machetes to kill villagers, and of using children as soldiers and in "auxiliary" roles. About 610 000 civilians fled their homes after renewed violence in August and some 370 000 are still displaced.

"Muslim separatist rebels are expected to step up guerrilla attacks against government and civilian targets in the coming months, leading to more displacement and suffering on the southern island of Mindanao" [*IRIN*, Nov 19, 2008]

"Philippine opposition lawmakers and Muslim rebels on Tuesday rejected a political formula offered by the government to restart peace talks and end nearly 40 years of separatist rebellion in the south. A regional security analyst warned the risk of violence breaking out was becoming progressively higher as the peace talks between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) were going nowhere." [*Reuters*, 15 January, 2008]

2007 President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo moved the headquarters of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) south, in an effort to better combat Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) rebels. Clashes between the rebel group and government forces continued throughout the year, with the ASG responsible for numerous kidnappings, beheadings and mutilations. US-backed missions continue in the south, with American military advisors

providing training and intelligence to the AFP. The Manila government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), have remained in an uneasy ceasefire agreement, but the threat of renewed violence remained constant throughout the year as all attempts at peace talks were unsuccessful.

"As part of its war on terror, the US has provided an estimated 300 military advisors to Filipino units stationed in the south. The Americans train their Filipino special force counterparts and are thought to assist in intelligence provision and gathering. But, they are prohibited from taking direct part in combat by the Visiting Forces Agreement." "This latest drive against Abu Sayyaf comes after an 18-month campaign waged by the AFP in which two leading Abu Sayyaf figures were killed in September 2006 and January 2007. However the group signaled its return to form in April 2007 with the beheading of seven Christian hostages. Some 5,000 – there are even reports of up to 12,000 – government troops are now seeking a few hundred fighters on the two small islands. Over the weekend, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo ordered the army to move its headquarters to the south in an effort to intensify the government's hunt for the group." [ISN, 22 August, 2007]

"The army headquarters was temporarily moved to the south at the weekend to boost efforts to target the militants. The move follows clashes between troops and militants in Jolo last week, that left 50 dead, including 25 soldiers." [BBC News, 13 August, 2007]

"The heads of seven men who were kidnapped by the al-Qaeda-linked Abu Sayyaf group on southern Jolo island have been delivered in sacks to the Philippine army, officials say...the beheadings may have been in response to the deaths of more than 70 Abu Sayyaf members, including two leaders, in an eight-month military offensive backed by US troops and equipment." [Aljazeera.net, 20 April 2007]

2006 Intermittent clashes took place between government military/paramilitary forces and MILF rebels, and between government military forces and Abu Sayyaf. Heavy fighting between MILF and government paramilitary forces took place in June and July, causing 16,000-20,000 villagers to be displaced. In August, 5,000 members of the Philippine military, backed by U.S. intelligence and equipment, began a land, air and sea offensive against members of Abu Sayyaf on Jolo island, in hopes of capturing their leader and two members believed to have been involved in the 2002 Bali nightclub bombings. This heavy fighting resulted in the displacement of up to 2,000 civilians. A number of bomb blasts occurred in cities throughout the region; Responsibility was not taken, but Abu Sayyaf and MILF were among those suspected.

"Paramilitary troops and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) rebels today (Tuesday, July 11) agreed to a formal truce to end more than a week of clashes that displaced about 20,000 people in the southern Mindanao province of Maguindanao." ['MILF rebels, paramilitary sign truce agreement to end clashes in southern Philippines', *Asia Pacific Daily Report*, July 11, 2006]

"...about 5,000 soldiers, backed by US equipment and military advisers, launched operations in late July to flush out members of Abu Sayyaf, believed to have links to the al Qaeda and regional Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) terror groups. Officials said they hoped to capture Abu Sayyaf leader, Khadafy Janjalani, and two JI members, Umar Patek and Dulmatin, who are wanted for the 2002 Bali bombings." ['At least 14 killed in heavy fighting between Abu Sayyaf rebels and military in southern Philippines', *Asia Pacific Daily Report*, September 5, 2006]

2005 Clashes in January and February in parts of Mindanao and Jolo islands between a breakaway faction of MILF rebels and government troops ended as peace talks recommenced in April. Abu Sayyaf and Jemaah Islamiyah carried out a series of deadly bombings in several Mindanao cities while government security operations against the two groups continued. Fighting was particularly heavy on Jolo island causing the displacement of tens of thousands of civilians. Later in the year the government announced an end to an unsuccessful three month operation aimed at capturing Abu Sayyaf leader, Khaddafy Janjalani.

"The Southeast Asian terror network Jemaah Islamiyah, working with the Filipino extremist group Abu Sayyaf, could be behind bombings in a southern Philippine city that wounded 26 people, the

authorities said Thursday." [Carlos H. Conde, *International Herald Tribune*, August 12, 2005]

2004 Despite a cease-fire and peace negotiations, there were several clashes between MILF rebels and government forces. There also were reports of attacks on civilians by Muslim militants. Government air raids on rebel targets occurred in November, killing several rebels. The US military maintained a presence in the Philippines, including training government troops as part of the "war on terror".

2003 The rebels continued their bombing campaign while government forces with the aid of US military assistance intensified efforts against the Islamic "terrorists". The main government offensives occurred in February, resulting in as many as 200 deaths and displacing over 40,000 civilians. The rebels responded in the following months, attacking government targets and detonating bombs, killing over a hundred people. Although the government attributed most bombings to the MILF, it denied responsibility, stating that its fighters only target military forces, not civilians. Fighting subsided in the latter part of the year following a July MILF-government cease-fire.

2002 The Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) stepped up its attacks on Christians and foreigners in response to the Philippine government's willingness to accept US military support to combat insurgency. The MILF also intensified its operations by retaking camps it lost to the Armed Forces of the Philippines several years ago.

"US troops spent six months earlier this year helping train Philippine troops to combat the Abu Sayyaf. On Thursday the two countries finalised a five-year military logistics agreement aimed at strengthening their fight against terror." [BBC News, November 21, 2002]

2001 Sporadic fighting was reported between government troops and rebels throughout the year. A number of kidnappings by rebel groups led to numerous government raids against rebel strongholds. In November, a MNLF rebel faction broke the peace agreement reached with the Philippines government in 1996 by launching an attack against army units. In December and January 2002, US troops were sent to the region to assist the Philippine government against the Abu Sayyaf rebels.

"Hundreds of Muslim rebels have launched attacks on army units in the southern Philippines, reneging on a 1996 peace deal with the government. The regional army commander said 51 followers of former rebel chief Nur Misuari had been killed in the attacks on the island of Jolo. He said four soldiers had also died." [BBC, November 19, 2001]

"The United States is sending 650 soldiers to the southern Philippines, where the military is fighting the Muslim militant Abu Sayyaf group. Philippines government officials said the American troops would not be directly involved in the fight, but some would enter combat zones." [BBC, January 14, 2002]

2000 Tensions in the southern island of Mindanao heightened significantly as the Philippine government mobilized more troops (about 70,000 soldiers) to counter attacks by MILF and Abu Sayyaf (ASG) rebels. The increased violence was triggered by a government attack on a highway held by the MILF linking southcentral and northern Mindanao. In March, ASG fighters kidnapped 53 persons on Basilan island, mostly teachers and school children. Four hostages were killed but all others released following negotiations with the government. In April, twenty-one foreign and local hostages were abducted in the island resort of Sipdan, Malaysia by the ASG and brought to the Philippine island of Jolo. Most hostages were released, reportedly after millions of dollars in ransom were paid by Libya and Malaysia. In September, the Philippine armed forces launched a major offensive in Jolo, deploying 4,000 air and ground troops to rescue the remaining hostages. By year end, all but two were released or rescued.

"For the first time in 25 years, the southern island of Mindanao saw the longest and most intense fighting between rebel forces and government troops. The military took over the main camps of the MILF – and the rebels have now shifted to guerrilla tactics." [InterPress Service, 22 September 2000]

"...the armed forces have carried out indiscriminate bombings, resulting in civilian casualties, summary executions, arbitrary arrests and 'disappearances' of suspected Abu Sayyaf sympathizers." [Amnesty International, 5 October 2000]

1999 Intermittent clashes between government forces and rebels continued in Mindanao in 1999, mainly over the control of territory.

"Periodic AFP clashes with the main remaining Islamic Insurgent Group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) continued to inflict hardships on civilians. Most of the fighting took place in western Mindanao provinces and was related to the control of territory, a central issue in the Government's peace talks with the MILF." [*Philippines Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1999*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, US Department of State, 2000]

1998 Sporadic clashes between government forces and rebel groups in 1998 continued alongside government peace talks with the largest remaining Muslim separatist group.

1997 In spite of a government peace agreement with the largest Muslim insurgent group, and a ceasefire and talks with separatist rebels, clashes continued through 1997.

"Despite a 1996 peace agreement between the Government and the Moro National Liberation Front, a major Islamic insurgent group, occasional clashes between government and insurgent forces loyal to the militant Moro Islamic Liberation Front continued to inflict hardship on civilians. ... In June despite a negotiated cease-fire with the MILF, the army attacked a large MILF base area in Maguindanao province to rescue alleged kidnap victims, displacing more than 18,000 families." [*The Philippines Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1997*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, US State Department, 1998]

1996 Occasional clashes between MILF rebels and government security forces continued in Mindanao.

"Despite an historic September peace agreement between the Government and the Moro National Liberation Front, a major Islamic insurgent group, occasional clashes between government and insurgent forces continued to inflict hardship on civilians. Most of the fighting took place in the Mindanao provinces, particularly North Cotabato, Maguindanao, Sultan Kudarat, and Basilan." [*Philippines Report on Human Rights Practices for 1996*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, US Department of State, January 30, 1997]

1995 Government forces struck against Muslim rebels in April after masked men, believed to be renegade members of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), attacked the city of Ipil in Mindanao, killing dozens of civilians. The rebels attacked a second town later in the month.

"According to the Ecumenical Commission for Displaced Families and Communities, internal conflicts forced some 14,000 families to flee their homes in the first 10 months of 1995. While several communities in Mindanao were caught up in this violence, the 43,000 residents of the city of Ipil suffered the most. On April 4, some 200 masked men arrived in boats, buses, jeeps, and other vehicles. They set afire and looted buildings in the town center, robbed 4 banks, killed some 50 people and wounded a dozen others in indiscriminate firing and fled with 40 hostages. Military authorities, who were criticized for failing to anticipate the attack or come to the city's aid, believe that the assailants were renegade members of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the ASG." [*The Philippines Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1995*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, US State Department, 1996]

Number of Deaths:

Total: At least 100,000 people are estimated to have died in the conflict in Mindanao, with some estimates exceeding 150,000 deaths. Some two million people have been displaced as a result of the four decades-long conflict in the south.

"The MILF also turned down the government's proposal to set up a federal form of government for Muslims as a solution to a conflict that has killed 120,000 and displaced about 2 million in the south." [*Reuters*, 15 January, 2008]

2008 Heightened conflicts in the aftermath of the MOA-AD collapse killed an estimated 460 people.

Amnesty International found that the number civilian deaths was at least 104 as of October; however, there are likely to be a higher number of unreported deaths in less accessible rural regions. The number of injuries due to the conflict is also estimated to be in the hundreds. The government reports the killing of 100-200 MILF soldiers since the renewed violence. The US State Department also cites police and military sources which report 209 AFP troops killed in 2008, including 56 by the ASG and 13 by the MILF.

2007 Several hundred people died in the continuing conflict between government troops and rebel groups. The majority of deaths were of army or rebel group members, but there were sporadic bombings that also took civilian lives. Violence leading up to and during May elections saw some 125 people killed. This number includes both civilian and government officials' deaths.

"While the AFP claimed over the weekend to have overrun an elaborate Abu Sayyaf base replete with bunkers, underground tunnels and trenches, it has tallied heavy losses with almost sixty troops dying in recent weeks." [*ISN*, 22 August, 2007]

"Another militant group engaged in peace efforts with the government, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), admitted involvement in clashes on Basilan island last month, in which 14 marines were killed, 10 of whom were beheaded." [*BBC News*, 13 August, 2007]

2006 200-300 people were killed in clashes between the army and rebel groups. Most of the deaths were of army or rebel group members. Bomb blasts in urban areas were responsible for some civilian deaths. (compiled from Asia Pacific Daily Reports' 2006 news reports)

2005 Over 200 people were killed in a series of bombings and clashes between the army and rebels. The deadliest fighting occurred in February on the island of Jolo where approximately 150 people were killed during a large army operation.

"Security forces [are] on alert for [a] revenge attack after 15 March police storming of [a] Manila prison left 22 [people] dead, including 3 top Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) commanders. ASG detainees killed 3 guards in [an] attempted jailbreak." [International Crisis Group, *CrisisWatch* April 1, 2005]

2004 Over 135 people, mostly civilians, were killed as a result of either terrorist attacks or clashes between government forces and MILF rebels in 2004.

"The cease-fire between the government and rebel group Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) was breached as the two sides clashed in a southern province on Tuesday morning and left three dead." [*Xinhua*, August 17, 2004]

"A militant Muslim group says it planted a bomb on board a Philippine ferry which caught fire at sea...which killed more than 100 people and left 100 others missing." [*BBC News*, February 19, 2004]

2003 Independent media reports indicate that approximately 200 to 300 people were killed in the conflict this year, many of them civilians killed in bombings.

"The Moro rebels who have been fighting for Muslim self-rule in the southern region of Mindanao for more than 30 years, have been blamed for bombings and other attacks that have killed more than 200 people this year." [*Associated Press*, July 10, 2003]

2002 An estimated 800 people died as a result of the conflict, many of them Muslim combatants and military personnel, although Filipino Christians and foreigners were also targeted.

"An explosion has killed a US soldier and a Filipino serviceman outside a bar near a military base in the southern Philippines city of Zamboanga." [*BBC News*, October 2, 2002]

2001 According to media reports at least 1,000 people were killed as a result of the fighting, the majority of them combatants.

"Officials in the Philippines say at least 24 members of the Aby Sayyaf rebel group have been killed in fierce fighting on two southern islands. Military officials say at least 16 rebels, and one government soldier, were killed in clashes in a village Talipao on the Island of Jolo where patrols were attacked by guerrillas. They said in a separate incident on the southern Island of Basilian that at least 8 rebels were killed." [BBC, October 21, 2001]

2000 At least 600 people (civilians, rebels and government soldiers) died this year as a result of government-rebel clashes.

"Eighty-four soldiers have been killed and nearly 500 others wounded after nearly two weeks of fighting, with 21 others missing and presumed dead. The military said 150 civilians were killed this year in terrorist bombings blamed on the 15,000 member MILF and the Abu Sayyaf, a smaller Islamic separatist group." [<http://news.sawaal.com/11-May-2000/Reviews/25.htm>]

1999 At least 100 people died in 1999 as a result of fighting between government forces and rebels.

"During November Government and the MILF clashed in North Cotabato and Maguindanao provinces in Mindanao. A reported 45 combatants on both sides were killed in the fighting. An estimated 6,000 persons reportedly were displaced during the skirmishes." [*Philippines Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1999*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, US Department of State, 2000]

1998 Figures are difficult to obtain, but it appears that casualties declined significantly from the number killed in 1997 fighting.

1997 At least 150 combatants and some civilians died in the fighting of 1997.

1996 Between 50 and 100 people were killed in clashes between rebels and security forces.

1995 Between 50 and 100 people were killed in clashes between government troops and rebels and in rebel attacks on Mindanao cities and towns.

1994 Fighting between the government and the MILF and the ASG killed over 100 people.

Political Developments:

2008 In keeping with the historical pattern, initially positive steps towards peace talks between the government and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) ended in a new phase of heightened violence. In June, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo announced a new draft of the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD), which would set a framework for extending autonomy in traditionally Muslim regions. The MOA-AD was agreed upon in July, and was scheduled to be signed formally on August 5th, 2008. However, on August 4th the Philippine Supreme Court issued a temporary restraining order on the document. Increased fighting ensued, and by early September the government abandoned the MOA-AD, dissolved its peace panel and demanded MILF's unconditional disarmament, as well as the surrender of 3 rogue commanders considered responsible for the renewed attacks. On October 14th, the Supreme Court announced the MOA-AD would represent an unconstitutional application of Presidential power. Although the government's abandonment of the plan made the Court's decision somewhat inconsequential, the ruling is feared to be a harbinger of renewed violence and a complete collapse in peace negotiations. Meanwhile, Malaysian peacekeepers were unable to negotiate a second mandate extension in Mindanao, and began the process of complete evacuation in December. In late 2008, MILF officials rejected a CPP call for a joint "intensified campaign" in Mindanao (see CPP/NPA conflict); however, the parties are said to have a "tactical alliance" inasmuch as they have a common enemy but different aims in Mindanao.

"In the past when talks broke down, as they did many times, negotiations always picked up from where they left off, in part because the sub-jects being discussed were not particularly controversial or critical details were not spelled out. This time the collapse, followed by a scathing Supreme Court ruling calling the MOA the product of a capricious and despotic process, will be much harder to reverse." [International Crisis Group: *The Philippines: The Collapse of Peace in Mindanao*, 23 October, 2008]

"[T]he 'framework' for any future peace talks had been radically reversed by President Gloria Arroyo, who insisted MILF rebels must first disarm and surrender rogue elements to authorities before new talks. The policy shift 'is a clear departure' from previous negotiations that have been marked by violations of a ceasefire set in 2003." [IRIN, November 19, 2008]

2007 Peace talks continued throughout the year between the government and the country's main Islamic separatist group the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The government has taken unprecedented steps in recognizing the self-determination of Muslims in the Philippines, but issues over border demarcation have stalled talks. An eleven-year ceasefire ended between the government and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), as government forces attempted to disarm the group. The MNLF refused to turn in their weapons, and have demanded that the terms of their peace deal of 1996 be reviewed in light of new deals being made with the MILF. May elections saw a significant increase in violence in the south, with over 100 civilians and politicians killed. An estimated 120,000 people were displaced from their homes in Mindanao this year as a result of continued fighting between government forces and rebel groups. President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo has been called upon by the international community to investigate the hundreds of extrajudicial killings that have occurred since she took office in 2001. An estimated 800 human rights defenders, political activists and journalists have been kidnapped and 'disappeared' since the beginning of her term as President.

"A top Philippines official said Tuesday (January 8) that the government is again pursuing a peace deal with the country's largest Muslim rebel group after negotiations broke down in December. Accusing the government of renegeing on the original terms of an agreement on the creation of a separate homeland for more than 4 million Muslims and indigenous tribes living in the southern region of Mindanao, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) refused to participate in talks in Malaysia last month at which the two sides were expected to sign the deal." [Center for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance, 8 January, 2008]

"The Philippine government and the country's largest Islamic rebel group are moving closer to a deal on defining Muslim ancestral land in the south of the mainly Catholic nation, guerrilla leaders said on Wednesday. Talks between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to end one of the world's longest-running Islamic insurgencies have been stalled since September over the size and wealth of the proposed Muslim region in the south. In December, the government peace panel offered to recognize the right of Muslims for self-determination, which it has never done in over three decades of fighting and intermittent talks." [Reuters, 30 May, 2007]

"The Philippine government's offer to grant extensive self-government rights to Muslim communities in the south is unprecedented. 'It is a breakthrough because since the peace process started in 1975 this is the first time that the government is offering recognition of the right to self-determination,' said Rudy Rodil, with the government's negotiating panel. However, Manila officials say the offer does not mean an independent state. The central government would keep control of defense, foreign affairs, the monetary system and the postal system." [VOA News, 13 March, 2007]

"Since President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo took office in 2001, an estimated 800 political opponents, human rights campaigners and members of groups and churches critical of her government have been assassinated. Many others have survived assassination attempts. In fact, legitimate opponents of her government are just as likely to be targeted as Muslim terrorists and Communist rebels." [International Herald Tribune, 18 December, 2007]

2006 Peace talks with MILF continued throughout the year, with some progress made in the area of sharing natural resources and the formation of self-governance of Muslim homeland. No resolution was made on the issue of determination of Muslim territorial rights, which is the main issue to be resolved before political settlements can be made. Although talks surrounding this issue have been difficult, there are hopes of an agreement to be made in 2007.

"The Philippine government has expressed hope today (Wednesday, December 27) that an agreement with the rebel Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) will be signed early next year, saying that the group has softened its stance on the issue of ancestral domain, local Philippine

media reported. " ['Philippine officials express hope on peace process with Moro rebel group', Asia Pacific Daily Report, Dec 27, 2006]

2005 A breakthrough in peace talks between the Philippine government and MILF was reached in September. A peace deal is expected in 2006. Although details of the tentative agreement were not released, negotiators stated that they had agreed on the future governance of a Muslim homeland, its boundaries, its rights over natural resources, the granting of independent tax powers to the region as well as its own charter. However, it remains unclear whether breakaway MILF factions, who early in the year had carried out major attacks on government troops, would be part of the agreement. President Arroyo survived months of political scandals and large demonstrations after Congress dismissed impeachment charges that had been made against her involving electoral fraud and corruption.

"The Philippine government has agreed in principle to allow Muslims in the south to write their own charter and impose their own tax system in the biggest breakthrough in talks to end a decades-old rebellion. A member of the government's peace panel confirmed a report in Thursday's Philippine Daily Inquirer newspaper that informal talks in September between the two sides had produced a draft consensus on tax powers and other key areas." [Stuart Grudgings, *Reuters*, October 13, 2005]

2004 Government negotiations with MILF rebels continued and the MILF launched a large information campaign to educate its members about the peace process. Additionally, the governments of Malaysia and Brunei agreed to send teams to monitor the fragile cease-fire between rebel and government forces. With persistent reports of training links between the MILF and more militant organizations, the US and Philippine governments want a peace deal with the MILF to "deny sanctuary" to Islamic militants believed to be hiding in MILF camps. The conflict remains part of the war on terrorism, reinforcing military ties between Philippine government forces and the US military. Libyan observers arrived in Mindanao in December to observe the tenuous ceasefire between the government and rebels.

"Terrorist cells are being 'isolated' in the southern Philippine island of Mindanao through the peace talks, a senior government official said Monday. 'Firm mechanisms are being worked out to isolate terrorist cells through the GRP-MILF (Government of Republic of the Philippines-Moro Islamic Liberation Front) cease-fire process,' President Press Secretary and Presidential spokesman Ignacio Bunyesaid in a statement." [*Xinhua*, September 13, 2004]

"Malaysia and Brunei will send special teams to the Philippines in October to monitor a ceasefire between the government and Muslim separatist rebels, President Gloria Arroyo's spokesman said Wednesday...Formal peace talks between the government and the Muslim separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) are being scheduled at about the same time as the deployment of the Malaysian and Brunei peace monitors..." [*Agence France Presse*, September 8, 2004]

"Persistent reports of links between the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) terror network overshadow and put at risk the peace process between the MILF and the Philippine government. While the MILF leadership continues to deny any ties, all evidence points to ongoing operational and training links. What is uncertain is whether top leaders are aware of the activity and unwilling to admit it, or whether members of JI and other like-minded jihadist groups have established their own personal ties to individual MILF commanders without the knowledge of the MILF leadership." [*International Crisis Group*, July 13, 2004]

2003 A July cease-fire between the government and MILF remained intact for the remainder of the year. This allowed the government to focus its military resources on the regional Islamic militant network Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), which was declared a national security threat by President Arroyo in October. Informal peace talks between the government and MILF got underway in Malaysia in November, following the latter's declaration that it had severed links with JI and al Qaeda. The alliance between the US and Philippine governments was strengthened when the Philippines was designated a Major Non-NATO Ally by the US in May. In November, President Arroyo declared that she would run in the May 2004 presidential election, contrary to earlier statements.

"Despite arrests of some of the group's [Jemmah Islamiyah] top leaders, including Riduan

Isamuddin, the group remains intact and is growing in strength and numbers, American and Asian officials said in interviews this week. Recruiting of new members and fund-raising have been easier for the group because of widespread opposition in the region to the American war in Iraq, the officials said. In the last few months, men, money and arms have flowed to the group through the Philippines, a center for training and money laundering." [*The New York Times*, November 22, 2003]

"The visit of Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to Washington and the designation of the Philippines as a Major Non-NATO Ally (MNNA) of the US marks the beginning of a new phase of increased US military assistance to the Armed Forces of the Philippines." [*Jane's Defence Weekly*, May 28, 2003]

2002 A number of embassies closed this year following a wave of attacks on foreigners. As part of its "war on terror" the American government provided a military training and equipment package to better equip the Philippine military to fight Muslim extremists, specifically the ASG. The role of the US forces was limited to training and the Philippine government prohibited the US from establishing a permanent presence in the country. The Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) signed a peace pact in June and committed to follow-up negotiations.

"Canada and the European Union have joined Australia in closing their diplomatic missions in the Philippines indefinitely after receiving information about an 'imminent' terror attack... Earlier this month, the authorities in the Philippines said they had foiled a plot to bomb the US embassy in Manila. This, they said, was hatched by a group allegedly linked to the al-Qaeda network. " [*BBC News*, November 28, 2002]

2001 In August the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and government negotiators signed a cease-fire agreement in Malaysia which lasted only a few weeks before fighting resumed. In October a supplementary agreement was signed. The government has refused to negotiate with the smallest and most extreme rebel group, the Abu Sayyaf.

"Philippine government negotiators and Muslim separatist rebels have signed a cease-fire agreement bringing closer an end to almost 30 years of fighting. The deal with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front was finalised in Malaysia. It follows an accord with a smaller rebel separatist group, the Moro National Liberation Front, which struck a peace deal with the government in 1996. The pact leaves only the extreme Aby Sayyaf group still fighting for independence in the southern Philippines. The authorities refuse to negotiate with them." [*BBC*, August 7, 2001]

2000 Philippine President Estrada called off peace talks with the MILF and initiated a military attack against the rebels. Later, in a bid to bring the rebels back to the negotiating table, Estrada ordered the withdrawal of criminal charges against MILF leaders accused of a series of bombings and massacres. In November, the President was impeached by the nation's House of Representatives on bribery charges setting in motion a trial to determine whether he should be removed from office.

1999 Launched in October, formal peace talks between the government and the MILF made no progress by year's end.

1998 Following a cease-fire accord jointly signed the previous year, peace negotiations between the MILF and the government resumed in November.

"The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) resumed peace talks with government negotiators Wednesday to avoid accidental clashes with government troops in the Southern Philippines. The Muslim secessionist rebel group sought government recognition of 46 of their camps in Mindanao." [*ABS-CBN NewsOnline*, November 5, 1998]

1997 In 1997 the integration of MNLF personnel with government forces began, a condition of a 1996 peace settlement. A January cease-fire between the government and the MILF was ineffective, and after postponing peace talks when government troops captured a major rebel camp, in October the MILF agreed to further cease-fire discussions.

"In January, Philippine Government representatives and leaders of the separatist Moro-Islamic Liberation Front started talks to end fighting in the southern Philippines. On Jan. 27, the military signed a cease-fire with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, an insurgent group left out of last year's peace accord. By June fighting led MILF vice chairman to announce that the rebels had decided to indefinitely postpone scheduled exploratory peace talks with the government in view of the recent fighting." [*Reuters*, 26 June 1997]

1996 After talks brokered by Indonesia on behalf of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), the government and the MNLF Muslim rebels signed a September peace agreement, to which other Muslim and Christian groups in Mindanao remain opposed. This established a three-year peace and development council headed by MNLF leader, Nur Misuari, after which a referendum will determine which provinces join an autonomous Muslim region. Over one-third of the rebel forces will be integrated into the Philippine army and police.

1995 Peace talks between the MNLF and the government progressed during 1995, although the rising influence and threat of the MILF and other rebel groups have drawn a large deployment of government troops to Mindanao.

"Despite differences, ongoing Government-MNLF peace talks made significant progress. In a climate of growing mutual confidence, MNLF Chairman Nur Misuari toured Christian-majority parts of Mindanao to promote a broader autonomous region." [*The Philippines Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1995*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, US State Department, 1996]

Background:

A massive US resettlement program early in the 20th century was accelerated after Philippine independence in 1946, resulting in an 80 per cent Christian population in Mindanao by 1983 and causing deep resentment among local Muslims. Since 1971 the government of the predominantly Roman Catholic Philippines has faced armed opposition from several Muslim groups, earlier from the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), which sought greater autonomy for the island of Mindanao; and more recently from breakaway groups, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the fundamentalist Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), both of which seek Mindanao independence. Following the 1972 declaration of martial law by President Marcos and several years of intense fighting, the government agreed to a 1976 framework that led to an autonomous region of four Mindanao provinces in 1990. In 1996, the government and the MNLF signed a peace agreement but other Mindanao Muslim rebels and Christian groups opposed the settlement. Following a cease-fire accord jointly signed in mid-1997, peace negotiations between the MILF and the government resumed in November 1998. By the end of 1999 peace talks had made no progress and in 2000, Estrada called off the talks with the MILF, unleashing military attacks against the rebels. By mid-2003, the MILF had reached a ceasefire with the government but fighting with the ASG and Jemmah Islamiah continued. US military assistance to the Philippines, in the form of arms and training, increased dramatically since the outset of the US-led "war in terror" in 2001. US military aid has totaled in the hundreds of millions since early 2002, and US troops continue to train Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) troops, while supplying sophisticated military intelligence. This assistance has strengthened the AFP in its campaign against the terrorist organization Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG). There are currently only an estimated several hundred rebels left fighting for the group in and around Mindanao.

"A US Embassy spokesman denied the US forces were destined for combat, but simply 'assisting and supporting' according to various media outlets. As well as sending personnel, the US has allocated hundreds of millions of dollars worth of military aid to the AFP since early 2002, and the largesse has bolstered the army's self-belief that it can eliminate Abu Sayyaf once and for all. This latest drive against Abu Sayyaf comes after an 18-month campaign waged by the AFP in which two leading Abu Sayyaf figures were killed in September 2006 and January 2007. However the group signaled its return to form in April 2007 with the beheading of seven Christian hostages. Some 5,000 – there are even reports of up to 12,000 – government troops are now seeking a few hundred fighters on the two small islands. Over the weekend, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo ordered the army to move its headquarters to the south in an effort to intensify the government's hunt for the group." [*ISN*, 22 August, 2007]

Economic Factors:

There is socio-economic disparity between the Christian majority and the Muslim minority in Mindanao. The Muslims in the most impoverished parts of western Mindanao believe government efforts to integrate them have not been successful. They point out that socio-economic development in those areas is lagging far behind the rest of the island. Mindanao is also a resource rich area, and the Philippine government would like to open the area to foreign mining companies, which could cause further contention. Since 2002, the Philippines has been the recipients of hundreds of millions of dollars in US military aid, despite having a poor human rights record. The US government has worked to improve socio-economic development in the south by not only supplying military aid, but by building new classrooms, medical clinics, roads, and wells with the more than \$250 million in aid it has given the Philippines since 2001.

"Although the U.S. State Department has reported that Philippine security forces have been responsible for a wide range of human rights abuse, American financial aid has increased year by year since 2001. In November 2007, the Senate increased regular military funding from \$11 million to \$30 million." [*International Herald Tribune*, 18 December, 2007]

"Beyond helping to track and kill terrorists, Washington has promoted economic development in the region and has tried to assist in settling local conflicts that very often have taken on an Islamic cast. In the southern Philippines, the US has built new classrooms, medical clinics, roads, wells, and other social-welfare projects, spending over \$250 million in aid since 2001." [*Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 30 May, 2007]

"The southern region of Mindanao is rich in resources and fertile land, but remains impoverished due to Muslim insurgencies that have been waged for decades. There have been disagreements over the administration and division of revenues from resources in the region among Muslims, Christians, local indigenous tribes, as well as the local and federal governments." ['Muslim rebels express doubt on peace deal with Philippine government this year', *Asia Pacific Daily Report*, June 1, 2006]

Arms Sources:

The USA is the largest recent supplier of arms to the Philippines. Other suppliers include Singapore, Thailand, Turkey, Australia, Taiwan, Israel and others. Muslim rebels are armed with weapons captured or illegally purchased from government forces. North Korea is also said to have supplied the rebels. In 2002, the United States offered a military training and support package to the Philippines government to help fight Muslim extremists, and this was extended in 2003 and 2004. Hundreds of thousands of illegal arms are in circulation around the Philippines. Initiatives by the newly-elected governor of the southern Sulu province, will attempt to ban firearms in the heavily armed region. If his plan is successful, the heavily armed Philippines could hopefully see a disarmament program in the next few years. However, in 2008, the government's Interior Department provided 1000 shotguns for use by civilians in selected townships in Mindanao. These weapons are in addition to the estimated 60,000 unlicensed fire-arms possessed by civilians in Central/Southern Philippines. MILF alone possesses an additional 20 000 fire arms, as well as landmines. In addition to the now \$260 million provided for "development aid" in the last 6 years, the United States gave the Philippines \$250 million in military aid between 2002 and 2006, equivalent to 10% of the military budget. Between October 2007 and September 2008 alone, the United States provided the Philippines with almost \$30 million in financing for military equipment.

"In October, the Brussels-based International Crisis Group, which tracks conflicts worldwide, warned the government against arming paramilitary groups. 'While the need for defense against attacks by MILF units in a place like North Cotabato is real, Philippine officials should know by now that arming poorly trained civilian forces only makes things worse,' the group said in a report. But for [Ilaga militia leader] Cayang, a gun is a man's best friend in hostile territory. 'Let them live in Mindanao, then they will realise we are right,' Cayang said. 'If I didn't own guns, I'd be dead by now. My family would be dead by now'" [*IRIN: UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs*, 20 Nov 2008]

"Shotguns for civilians is like pawning them in the war front and sacrificing their lives in the war zones. Is government already relinquishing its constitutional and moral mandate to protect its citizens? Is the AFP and

PNP already saying we could not protect the civilians anymore and that is why each one should now carry his/her own shotgun?' – Mindanao People's Caucus" [*Amnesty International*, October 2008].

"The United States is the most influential ally and the largest donor to the Philippines. The US military has access to Filipino lands and seas under a Visiting Forces Agreement, and the two militaries hold joint annual exercises. In fiscal year 2008 (October 2007-September 2008), the US government provided the Philippines almost US\$30 million under Foreign Military Financing for procurement of military equipment and almost US\$1.5 million in the International Military Exchange Training program under which AFP officers are trained in the United States. The US Foreign Operations Bill approved in December 2007 requires the Philippine government to show progress in addressing human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings, in order for some additional US military funding to be approved." [Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2009*]

"For an island with a population of only 750,000, as many as 100,000 illegal firearms are in circulation on Sulu. Obtaining a heavy weapon, grenade or mortar is as easy as going to the market...there are more guns on Sulu than any other province in the already heavily armed Philippines." [*Asia Times*, 1 November, 2007]

"Australia plans to expand its training of Philippines soldiers to help them root out Indonesian militants believed to use the south of the country as a base, its defence minister said on Monday." [*Reuters*, October 17, 2005]

"Altogether...Washington budgeted \$284.8 million in military aid to the Philippines over US Fiscal Year 2002 to Fiscal Year 2004." [Robert Karniol, *Jane's Defence Weekly*, January 19, 2005]

"North Korea sold more than 10,000 rifles and other weapons in 1999 and 2000 to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)...according to Southeast Asian security sources." [*Daily Yomiuri*, January 4, 2005]

"The PAF [Philippine Air Force] has a fleet of 11 C-130/L-100 aircraft, which are vital to Manila's lift capabilities in its campaign against communist and Muslim secessionist rebels...Tactical lift was bolstered with the delivery this year of the first six of 20 reconditioned UH-1H utility helicopters from Singapore Technologies Aerospace at a cost of \$12 million. The USA is also providing 48 UH-1H helicopters..." [Robert Karniol, *Jane's Defence Weekly*, December 22, 2004]

"The US government has recently supplied military equipment worth over US \$100 million to the Philippine government. The equipment included helicopters, transport planes and 30,000 M16 rifles. ... There is already a thriving illegal market in small arms in the Philippines and there are fears that the injection of military equipment from the USA – which includes small arms – may contribute to a further proliferation of these weapons. Through loss, theft or illegal sale, Philippine government munitions sometimes end up in the hands of criminal and armed political groups." [*Amnesty International*, June 4, 2003]

"After meeting with President of the Philippines Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo on November 20, President Bush announced a generous military assistance plan for this Southeast Asian ally. In addition to a 'robust training package' and the \$19 million already promised in foreign military financing, Bush said he would earmark \$10 million in Defense Department goods and services for the Philippine military and \$10 million for counterterrorism initiatives and law enforcement...The first piece of equipment, a C-130 transport plane, arrived on November 30 with '16,000 pounds of military hardware, including rifles.' On December 20, the U.S. Army sent thirty sniper rifles, twenty-five 81mm mortars, and 350 —203 grenade launchers. Philippine officials said the equipment package would also include eight UH-1 'Huey' helicopters, Cyclone-class patrol boats, and 30,000 —16 infantry rifles with 120,000 magazines. Other items on their wish list are twelve AH-1 'Cobra' attack helicopters and an unmanned reconnaissance plane, or 'drone'." [*Human Rights Watch*, February 2002]

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