

## **A STRATEGY FOR KEEPING THE U.S. BASES IN THE PHILIPPINES**

### **INTRODUCTION**

**Philippine and United States negotiators are meeting for their scheduled five-year review of the current Military Bases Agreement (MBA), which governs U.S. access to Subic Naval Base and Clark Air Base in the Philippines. The Reagan Administration expects that this review will allow the MBA to run at least to September 1991, when it expires. A new agreement is required, however, to allow the U.S. to occupy the bases beyond this date. Whether Manila will permit this is a matter of increasing doubt.**

Clark and Subic have been a traditional lightning rod for Philippine nationalists, who view them as a vestige of U.S. colonial rule. During the late 1985-early 1986 election campaign, President Corazon Aquino wavered on the issue of the bases, but she has since resisted the advice of leftists who oppose the U.S. military relationship. Regarding the bases, she consistently says that she will "keep our options open." Philippine Foreign Secretary Raul Manglapus, however, opposes the bases, as do many members of the new Philippine Congress. This Congress will have to approve a new bases agreement, which may be negotiated before 1991. In addition, the new Philippine Constitution contains an anti-nuclear clause that could be used to deny access to the bases by U.S. forces, which, as a matter of policy, refuse to reveal whether their ships or aircraft carry nuclear weapons.

**America's Gibraltar.** As the debate over renewing the bases accord nears, Washington must make clear to Manila that continued U.S. access to Philippine bases is crucial for regional and Philippine security well into the next century. To the U.S., Washington must make clear that the bases are America's Gibraltar in Southeast Asia. Subic and Clark sit astride sea lanes of communication essential to the economic survival of U.S. friends and allies from Northeast Asia to the Persian Gulf. These sea lanes are under growing threat from Soviet naval and air forces, especially those based in Vietnam's Cam Ranh Bay. U.S. forces in the Philippines deter the Soviets and deter conflict over minerals in the South

China Sea. Current alternatives to Subic and Clark, such as Guam, Australia, or Pelau, in Micronesia, cannot replicate the strategic position or experienced workforce found in the Philippines.

In sum, for the U.S. to be expelled from Subic and Clark is unthinkable. Washington thus should begin considering the full range of options to ensure that American forces remain at Subic Naval Base and Clark Air Base well into the next century.

**Symbol of U.S. Commitment.** These bases are also the most visible symbol of U.S. commitment to Philippine freedom. Washington has provided the Aquino government over \$1 billion in military and economic assistance. This far exceeds Ronald Reagan's pledge made during the 1983 MBA Review to make his Administration's "best efforts" to obtain \$900 million in such aid over five years. Indeed, the Reagan Administration apparently is coordinating a multinational assistance program of \$5 billion to \$10 billion over five years.

The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) rebel forces control about 20 percent of the Philippine countryside. The CPP and Moscow, with which the CPP is forging closer ties, want U.S. forces out of the Philippines. Communist terrorists killed three U.S. servicemen near Clark Air Base last October. There may be further attacks. U.S. officials recognize that the heavily burdened Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) cannot guarantee the safety of the 33,000 U.S. servicemen and dependents at Clark and Subic. As it is, the Philippine armed forces are far from winning their battle against the CPP. Were the U.S. to withdraw from the bases, Moscow surely would be emboldened to give direct assistance to the CPP. A CPP victory would destroy the still fragile democracy that President Aquino is trying to build.

To ensure continued U.S. access to Clark and Subic, Washington should:

◆◆ Remind Manila that the U.S. is fully committed to helping the Philippines defend its freedom. Continued U.S. access to the Philippine bases is a necessary part of that commitment.

◆◆ Offer Manila a "best efforts" pledge of \$2.5 billion for the next MBA five-year compensation package. In return the Aquino government should offer to do its best to preserve U.S. access beyond 1991.

◆◆ Urge Japan, Australia, and Western Europe to increase their economic assistance to Manila over the next five years.

◆◆ Make clear to Philippine officials and legislators that nuclear free zone legislation under consideration by the Philippine Senate threatens Washington's ability to fulfill its treaty commitments to Manila.

◆◆ Offer to improve the Philippine military's capability to defend Clark and Subic. If necessary, U.S. forces should play a greater role in cooperating with Philippine forces to defend the area around the bases.

◆◆ Offer to upgrade the Philippine military's defense capability significantly by granting aid for the military to purchase modern jet fighters and naval warships.

◆◆ Review the entire range of U.S. actions that may be needed to keep Manila from expelling U.S. forces from Clark and Subic.

## **THE U.S.-PHILIPPINE MILITARY RELATIONSHIP**

The U.S. military role in the Philippines began in 1898 when it replaced Spanish colonial rule. Until 1902, U.S. forces battled a revolt against U.S. rule. Philippine bases became strategically important to the U.S. when Japan began its military conquest of Asia in the 1930s. Since the liberation of the Philippines from Japanese occupation, and the granting of independence in 1946, U.S.-Philippine military relations have been governed by several agreements, including the 1947 Military Bases Agreement (MBA), the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty, and the 1953 Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement, known as the Manila Pact.

The original MBA has been amended over 40 times to reconcile the demands of Philippine sovereignty and U.S. need for unhampered access. The 1947 MBA gave the U.S. almost sovereign control over twenty base sites covering some 650,000 acres for 99 years. In 1956 Philippine President Ramon Magsaysay and U.S. Vice President Richard Nixon recognized Philippine sovereignty over the bases. A 1959 agreement, implemented in 1966, reduced U.S. tenure to 25 years (ending in 1991), after which the agreement will have an indefinite term, subject to one year's notice of termination. By 1959 the U.S. had also relinquished control of seventeen base sites.

**Reverting to Philippine Control.** In 1979 all bases reverted to Philippine control under an agreement that placed each base under a Philippine Base Commander, created an American facility — a legal term distinct from a base — within the Philippine bases, gave Philippine forces responsibility for perimeter security, and called for a complete review of the MBA every five years.

The 1983 review established a Joint Committee to oversee implementation of the MBA, affirmed the obligation of U.S. personnel to respect Philippine law, committed the U.S. to helping improve social and economic conditions around the bases, and affirmed the U.S. obligation to consult Manila before using the bases for combat operations.

**The Current Review.** Negotiations for the current review began on April 5 in Manila and should last for several months. Issues expected to be reviewed include the presence of nuclear weapons on the bases, issues pertaining to labor relations between the Filipino workers and the U.S., law enforcement, and U.S. compensation to the Philippines.<sup>1</sup> Of these, the most critical will be compensation.

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1 "Chronicle Interviews Ambassador to U.S.," *The Manila Chronicle*, March 13, 1988, p. 16, in *FBIS-East Asia*, March 15, 1988, p. 40; Marc Lerner, "Negotiations begin on U.S. bases in Philippines," *The Washington Times*, April 5, 1988, p. A8.

Many Filipinos would prefer this compensation be in the form of "rent," as opposed to "aid," which would guarantee a specified amount of money over which the U.S. would have no control. The U.S. objects to paying "rent" because Congress is not obliged to fully fund a "rent" agreement. Furthermore, "rent" implies the U.S.-Philippine strategic relationship can be reduced to a financial transaction that benefits the U.S. only. During a visit to Manila last June, U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz rejected the concept of "rent."<sup>2</sup> To reconcile this dispute, Presidents Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan have made a "best efforts" pledge to obtain a specified amount of U.S. assistance for the Philippines. The U.S. fulfilled a 1979 aid pledge for \$500 million and will surpass a 1983 pledge for \$900 million over five years with a total \$1.7 billion for that same period.

This year the Administration has requested \$236.6 million for Manila in fiscal 1989. Some Philippine leaders are demanding much more. Philippine Congressman Gregorio Andolana, a member of the communist front People's Party, has asked that the U.S. assume the Philippines' \$28 billion foreign debt.<sup>3</sup> A group of 50 Philippine Congressmen want \$1.2 billion a year "rent."<sup>4</sup> Filipinos also complain they fare worse than other U.S. allies: in 1988 Turkey is to receive \$522 million in U.S. aid; Pakistan, \$480 million; Greece, \$343 million, compared to \$299 million for the Philippines.

## U.S. FACILITIES IN THE PHILIPPINES

**Subic Naval Base.** This 36,000-acre base is located on a deep bay protected by high hills, about 50 miles northwest of Manila in Zambales Province. Its primary mission is to provide logistical support for the U.S. Seventh Fleet, which patrols the western Pacific and Indian Oceans. Nearly 65 percent of all the Fleet's repairs are carried out at Subic by a skilled local workforce with generations of experience. Its facilities can repair 27 ships simultaneously. Storage facilities include a 2.4 million barrel capacity fuel farm and a magazine for 50,000 tons of ordnance.

Cubi Point Naval Air Station can service all U.S. Navy aircraft and hosts a squadron of P-3 *Orion* anti-submarine aircraft. Although only one ship, the cruiser *USS Sterret*, uses Subic as a home port, the bay can accommodate several aircraft carrier battle groups. On the average, ten to twelve ships are visiting Subic at one time. U.S., Philippine, and other allied forces conduct regular amphibious assault and air support exercises on Zambales Range.

**Clark Air Base.** This U.S. facility occupies only 11,000 acres of a 130,000-acre reservation. Clark is the Headquarters for the U.S. Thirteenth Air Force. Clark has an airfield that can accommodate all types of U.S. military aircraft, including the largest bombers and transports, and it has extensive storage areas for ordnance and space for about

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2 "Shultz states position on Philippine bases," *Financial Times*, June 17, 1987, p. 3.

3 Marc Lerner, "Military Enclaves Pose Dilemma for Philippines, U.S.," *The Washington Times*, February 15, 1988, p. 1.

4 "Congressmen Seek \$1.2 Billion for Bases," *Hong Kong AFP*, February 10, 1988; in *FBIS-East Asia*, February 11, 1988, p. 31.

18 million gallons of jet fuel. More than two-thirds of the material support for U.S. forces in the Indian Ocean is shipped through Clark. It also hosts the Crow Valley Training Range, which provides realistic air combat and ground support training for U.S., Philippine, and other allied air forces.<sup>5</sup>

The largest American unit at Clark is the 3rd Tactical Fighter Wing, which flies F-4E and F-4G *Phantom* fighters and F-5E *Freedom Fighters* for combat training. Along with the 5th Fighter Wing of the Philippine Air Force it contributes to the air defense of the Philippines. In any general conflict the Thirteenth Air Force would play a major role in the Western Pacific and Indian Oceans and support the U.S. Fifth Air Force in Japan.

In addition to Clark and Subic, the U.S. is permitted to use other Philippine facilities including a jointly manned air-defense radar complex at Wallace Air Station and the San Miguel Naval Communications Station in Zambales. Also important are a transmitter site in Camp O'Donnell in Tarlac Province, which assists navigation and communication with ships, aircraft, and submarines throughout East and Southeast Asia, and a rest facility in Bagio City.

#### **WHY CONTINUED ACCESS IS ESSENTIAL**

Despite Philippine Foreign Secretary Manglapus's assertions to the contrary, the importance of U.S. forces in the Philippines to that country's external defense has grown, as the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has become more preoccupied with defeating the Communist Party of the Philippines. The Aquino government has redirected the AFP's resources to meet this threat, leaving less strength for external defense. To save money, the Philippine Air Force wants to sell its twelve F-8 fighters, which comprise over half its air defense aircraft.<sup>6</sup>

U.S. access to Clark and Subic is part of a complex network of facilities and bilateral defense relationships with Japan, South Korea, Thailand, and Australia, which help deter Soviet aggression from Northeast Asia to the Persian Gulf. Philippine bases are essential to this network because of their location near critical Southeast Asian sea lanes and their central position of support for U.S. and allied military operations in the Pacific and Indian Oceans. Washington has convinced Japan to increase its share of the defense burden in part because of the burden of maintaining forces in Southeast Asia and the Persian Gulf. As Japan expands its military forces to play a greater defense role in Northeast Asia, the importance of the U.S. presence in the Philippines will increase in order to facilitate regional defense cooperation and dispel fears by friendly states of Japanese rearmament.

**Growing Soviet Threat.** U.S. military forces in the Philippines are the most important balance, countering the Soviet Union's growing military presence in Southeast Asia.<sup>7</sup> Moscow's main ally is Vietnam, whose occupation of Cambodia and Laos has been

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5 Dave Griffiths, "Thunder at Crow Valley," *Air Force Magazine*, August 1987, p. 52.

6 "Philippines grounds C-130s, looks to sell F-8s," *Jane's Defense Week*, March 5, 1988, p. 390.

7 See the author's "Blocking Soviet Gains in Asia with a Reinvigorated Reagan Doctrine," Heritage Foundation Asian Studies Center *Backgrounders* No. 67, March 25, 1988.

subsidized since 1978 with over \$10 billion in Soviet economic and military assistance. In return, since 1979, Moscow has enjoyed access to the sprawling former U.S. naval base at Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam. It is now Moscow's largest overseas base, and for the first time in its history, Moscow has a warm water Pacific base. To the facilities at Cam Ranh Bay, the Soviets have added two new piers for a total of seven, expanded fuel storage facilities, communications, and electronic intelligence equipment. On the average some 25 to 30 Soviet ships visit Cam Ranh Bay each month. Since late 1984, the Soviets have based about 16 TU-16 *Badger* medium bombers at Cam Ranh, and in 1985 they added a squadron of MIG-23 *Flogger* fighters. Soviet nuclear weapons are believed to be stored at Cam Ranh Bay.<sup>8</sup>

**Violating Philippine Airspace.** From Vietnamese bases Soviet air and naval forces can threaten sea lines of communication vital to commerce from Northeast Asia to the Persian Gulf. Soviet nuclear capable, 3,000-mile-range *Badgers* and cruise missile submarines based in Cam Ranh Bay pose a nuclear threat to every Southeast Asian capital. In April 1984, Soviet and Vietnamese naval forces conducted amphibious naval assault exercises, and in February 1986, Soviet forces in Cam Ranh Bay conducted their first anti-aircraft carrier exercises in the South China Sea.<sup>9</sup> Soviet reconnaissance aircraft based in Vietnam regularly violate the airspace of the Philippines and other Southeast Asian countries.

A continued U.S. military presence in Southeast Asia is favored by almost every East Asian nation. Despite their long declared policy of making Southeast Asia a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN), all of Manila's noncommunist neighbors in Southeast Asia either publicly or tacitly support the U.S. presence in the Philippines to counter Soviet forces in Vietnam. The U.S. presence has allowed these Southeast Asian countries to devote more of their resources to economic development.

Last September, Singapore's President Lee Kuan Yew said that, if U.S. forces leave the Philippines, countries in Southeast Asia will have to "start a new way of life."<sup>10</sup> During his April visit to Manila, Australian Foreign Minister William Hayden said, "The American bases here are very important for the way they give a sense of security to the nations of the region."<sup>11</sup> Japan supports the continued U.S. military presence in the Philippines and provides the Philippines with about \$700 million a year in economic assistance.

## **AQUINO'S POSITION AND THREATS TO THE BASES**

Filipino politicians find Subic and Clark convenient issues. Former President Ferdinand Marcos, for example, attacked the bases while a candidate to appeal to populist sentiments.

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8 "Cam Ranh Bay May Be USSR N-Store," *Japan Times*, May 16, 1987, p. 3.

9 S. Bilveer, "Soviet-Viet joint maneuvers: A danger," *Asian Defense Journal*, August 1984, p. 66; U.S. Department of Defense, *Soviet Military Power, 1987* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1987), p. 137.

10 David Van Praagh, "Lee Optimistic About US Bases In The Philippines," *The Nation* (Bangkok), September 14, 1987.

11 *The Melbourne Herald*, April 13, 1988, p. 8.

Once in power, however, Marcos supported the bases as a means of securing political and economic support from Washington. Before becoming President, Corason Aquino and other opposition leaders in 1985 called for the end of the U.S. military presence. But as President, she has settled on a vague position of "keeping our options open" until 1991. Her vagueness tends to strengthen the hand of Foreign Secretary Raul Manglapus. A staunch nationalist apparently obsessed with the U.S. colonial past, he strongly opposes U.S. use of Clark and Subic.<sup>12</sup> Soon after his appointment as Foreign Secretary last October, he attempted to elicit a public consensus against the bases from neighboring Southeast Asian leaders. This caused them embarrassment by forcing them to choose between often stated positions of nonalignment or allowing Manglapus to state they do not support the U.S. presence in the Philippines.<sup>13</sup> He has also stated the bases do not contribute to the Philippines' external defense, do not improve its ability to combat the communist insurgency, and are part of the original U.S. "manifest destiny...adopted to the nuclear age."<sup>14</sup> By contrast, Philippine Defense Secretary Fidel Ramos recognizes that Clark and Subic contribute to the Philippines' external defense.<sup>15</sup>

**Nuclear Loophole.** Under the 1987 Philippine Constitution, a new MBA or Bases Treaty will have to be approved by the Philippine Senate, which can vote to subject the agreement to a national referendum. In this case, the position of Aquino, who still retains wide popularity, will be crucial.

For many years nationalists and the communist Left have warned that the presumed presence of U.S. nuclear weapons at Clark and Subic and on U.S. warships makes them a nuclear target. The new Philippine Constitution proclaims a "policy of freedom from nuclear weapons in its territory." The constitution then adds the loophole that this non-nuclear policy must be "consistent with the national interest." This means that nuclear weapons could be allowed at Clark and Subic if they were viewed as a means of defending the Philippines. Philippine Senator Wigberto Tanada, who wants an immediate U.S. withdrawal, is trying to eliminate this loophole by legislating a strict nuclear free zone. His bill has strong Senate support. As in the case of New Zealand, this bill could force the U.S. to abandon its longstanding policy of neither confirming nor denying the presence of nuclear weapons on bases and warships as a means of denying this information to enemies and terrorists. If forces were denied access to Clark and Subic because of possible nuclear armament, the U.S. ability to meet defense commitments to Manila in the face of nuclear armed Soviet forces in Vietnam would be reduced substantially.

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12 James Clad, "Stiffer stance on bases?," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, October 29, 1987, p. 44.

13 Susumu Awanohara, "Many East Asian countries want the U.S. to remain," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, April 21, 1988, p. 26.

14 "Manglapus Interviewed on U.S. Base Issue," *Malaya*, March 14, 1988, p. 1, in *FBIS-East Asia*, March 16, 1988, p. 39; "Manglapus Says Country Underpaid for Bases," *Kyodo*, March 28, 1988, in *FBIS-East Asia*, March 28, 1988, p. 33.

15 Max Sangil, "Ramos Cites U.S. Bases Role in Defense," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, February 19, 1988, p. 22, in *FBIS-East Asia*, February 19, 1988, p. 46.

**Avoiding Attacks on GI's.** The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) for almost twenty years has fought to destroy Philippine democracy. With its 25,000-guerrilla New People's Army (NPA), the CPP controls or threatens nearly 20 percent of the countryside and last year was responsible for almost 3,000 deaths. Through its National Democratic Front the CPP infiltrates churches, unions, universities, and the government.<sup>16</sup> Though its performance has greatly improved since the fall of Marcos, the Armed Forces of the Philippines still suffer from a lack of supplies such as medicines and spare parts. The AFP also lacks coordinated government support to attack the CPP's political strength in the countryside.

Clark and Subic are located in provinces that for years have been targets of CPP political organizing. For a long time the CPP avoided attacking U.S. personnel, presumably to avoid provoking greater U.S. military involvement. Now that CPP strength has increased, it has begun to be bolder. Last October 30, NPA assassins killed three U.S. servicemen near Clark. The CPP has threatened more attacks on U.S. businessmen and diplomats as well.<sup>17</sup>

## **IMPACT OF A U.S. WITHDRAWAL**

No other location in Southeast Asia can substitute fully for Clark and Subic. In Southeast Asia only Singapore seems willing to consider hosting some U.S. forces, but not as many as are in the Philippines. Indonesia, Thailand, and Malaysia are not interested. Australia's Coburn Sound is mentioned as a possible naval base, but would require substantial construction of facilities. One major problem is that it lacks the skilled labor force found in Subic. Another problem would be posed if Australia adhered strictly to the 1985 South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty. Guam, meanwhile, already hosts U.S. air and naval facilities. It is 1,500 miles east of the Philippines; it, too, lacks sufficient skilled labor. A base in Palau, 500 miles east, would have to be built from scratch. Taiwan offers some excellent sites for bases; moving Clark and Subic there, however, surely would anger Beijing.

**\$8 Billion Moving Bill.** Any relocation will be expensive. Minimum cost estimates begin at \$8 billion, plus the cost of additional aircraft carrier task groups, which would have to be built to maintain current levels of naval presence.

A withdrawal of U.S. forces would be a severe blow to the Philippine economy. With about 45,000 Filipino employees, the U.S. facilities are second only to the Philippine government as the largest employer in the country. Including employee salaries, expenditures by U.S. personnel, local construction, procurement, and retirement benefits, the U.S. facilities last year pumped about \$357 million into the Philippine economy. To increase the local economic benefit of the bases, the Reagan Administration has made a

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16. For an unprecedented description of CPP infiltration in the Manila area based on captured communist documents, see Antonio C. Abaya, "Meet Your Friendly Neighborhood Marxists," *Business World*, April 19, 1988, p. 4; "More On Marxist Infiltration," *Business World*, April 25, 1988, p. 4, in *FBIS-Asia Pacific*, April 28, 1988, p. 45, 46.

17. Gregg Jones, "Anti-American Threats Increase in Philippines," *The Washington Post*, December 18, 1987, p. A36.



special effort to procure supplies from the Philippine sources for U.S. forces in the Philippines and elsewhere. In 1986, such local procurement amounted to \$95.1 million, soaring to \$218 million last year. It is estimated that between 1980 and 1986 the bases generated 5.16 percent of the Philippine gross national product.

**Encouraging Soviet Intervention.** Were the U.S. to be expelled from the bases, Philippine and foreign investor confidence in the Philippines would fall sharply, compounding Manila's economic problems. Business confidence throughout Southeast Asia also would fall, once Moscow moved to fill the strategic vacuum left by a U.S. withdrawal.

A U.S. withdrawal might also prompt the Soviets to begin direct material assistance to the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), perhaps by covertly shipping U.S. weapons left in Vietnam in 1975. Since the early 1980s, both Moscow and Hanoi have been improving relations with the formerly pro-Chinese CPP.<sup>18</sup> During a recent congressional hearing, Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Armitage admitted the CPP was receiving financial support from the Soviets.<sup>19</sup> With today's Soviet occupation of the former U.S. base at Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam a reality, it is very possible that a communist regime in the Philippines would turn over Clark and Subic to Soviet forces.

Regional stability is also at risk if the U.S. loses Clark and Subic. It is likely that there will be increased conflict over the South China Sea's mineral resources claimed by the Republic of China, the People's Republic of China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines.<sup>20</sup> Heightened tensions between Vietnam and China in recent years over islands in the Spratly group flared up into violent naval clashes in early March.<sup>21</sup>

## **HOW THE U.S. CAN RETAIN ITS PHILIPPINE FACILITIES**

The bases at Clark and Subic are the most visible U.S. support for freedom in the Philippines and stability in Southeast Asia. Since World War II these facilities have enabled the U.S. to meet political and military commitments in Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia and, most recently, to support U.S. naval forces in the Persian Gulf. As the economic and political focus of the U.S. continues to shift toward Asia, the importance of Clark and Subic and of the U.S. strategic relationship with the Philippines will grow.

Philippine Foreign Secretary Manglapus and others who want to expel the U.S. from the bases ignore the stark consequences for the Philippines and for free world interests in Asia should the U.S. withdraw from the Philippines.<sup>22</sup> A U.S. withdrawal would start a major

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18 The most comprehensive CPP statement to date of its new pragmatic attitude toward the Soviets is, "On The International Relations Of The Communist Party Of The Philippines," *Ang Bayan*, July 7, 1987.

19 "Soviet aid," *Manila Bulletin*, April 1, 1988, p. 5.

20 See the author's "Brewing Conflict in the South China Sea," Heritage Foundation Asian Studies Center *Backgrounder* No. 17, October 25, 1984.

21 Daniel Southerland, "Vietnamese, Chinese Ships Exchange Fire," *The Washington Post*, March 15, 1988, p. A16.

22 See also James Fallows, "The Bases Dilemma," *Atlantic*, February 1988, p. 30.

shift in the Asian balance of power in favor of the Soviet Union. The economic and political dislocations caused by a U.S. withdrawal plus the likelihood of Soviet support could accelerate a communist victory in the Philippines.

**Fulfilling a "Best-Efforts" Pledge.** The U.S. has little choice but to seek to retain its military facilities in the Philippines. This can best be accomplished by a U.S. policy that strengthens Philippine democracy. Since the ascendance of the Aquino government in February 1986, Washington has demonstrated its support for Philippine freedom by providing generous economic and political support. Total assistance for the 1984 to 1989 fiscal years will be about \$1.7 billion, almost twice the \$900 million "best efforts" pledge made by Reagan in 1983. The U.S. also has provided military assistance that better enables the Philippine Armed Forces to combat the CPP insurgency.

The U.S. must continue assisting the Philippines economically and politically. In addition, the U.S. should:

◆ ◆ **State clearly to Manila** that continued access to Philippine bases is an essential part of the U.S. commitment to help defend Philippine democracy. U.S. forces in the Philippines counter Soviet meddling in the Philippines and are an essential part of the allied defense network in Asia that deters Soviet aggression, which endangers the Philippines.

◆ ◆ **Offer a "best efforts" pledge** to obtain \$2.5 billion in economic and military aid for the next five-year period as part of the current Military Bases Agreement review. In return, the Aquino government should promise its "best effort" to see that U.S. access continues beyond the 1991 ending of the current MBA.

◆ ◆ **Urge Japanese, Australian, and West European donors** to increase current levels of economic assistance. Australia should be urged to increase its military assistance.

◆ ◆ **Explain to the Philippine Senate** that legislation seeking to impose a strict nuclear free zone endangers the U.S.-Philippine military relationship. This legislation would challenge Washington's longstanding policy of neither confirming nor denying the presence of nuclear weapons on warships and bases. Manila should be told that U.S. forces need such flexibility to have access to tactical nuclear weapons to deter Soviet nuclear armed forces in Vietnam.

◆ ◆ **Offer to assist the Armed Forces of the Philippines** to improve security around Subic Naval Base and Clark Air Base by improving the equipment of these forces and increasing joint U.S.-Philippine operations. The U.S. should offer to help improve tactical intelligence and police forces in the provinces where the bases are located. The U.S. should state clearly that future terrorist attacks by communist insurgents will only increase its resolve to remain at Clark and Subic.

◆ ◆ **Offer to improve the Armed Forces of the Philippines** capability to provide for Philippine external defense. Most AFP resources are properly directed toward defeating the threat posed by the Communist Party of the Philippines. Additional U.S. assistance should be provided to upgrade the Philippine Air Force with F-5E *Freedom Fighters*, and

the Philippine Navy with larger patrol craft, to help deter Moscow and Hanoi from covertly assisting the CPP, and eventually, to allow the Armed Forces of the Philippines to play a greater role in regional defense.

◆◆ Mobilize leaders of Asian nations, including China, to convince Manila that regional security depends on the U.S. retaining access to Clark and Subic.

## CONCLUSION

Continued U.S. military access to Philippine bases will be necessary into the 21st century. Washington must strive to preserve this access, in part by committing itself to helping preserve Philippine freedom. This will entail greater amounts of U.S. military and economic assistance because of the continued serious communist threat to Philippine freedom. But despite the nationalist and, at times, anti-American sentiment in Manila, continued U.S. military access also is an essential part of the U.S. commitment to Philippine democracy.

**Greater Defeat than Vietnam.** The termination of U.S. access to Philippine bases would damage seriously the Philippine economy, probably encourage greater Soviet interference in the Philippines, and seriously set back the Western alliance. Asians might regard a U.S. withdrawal as a greater defeat than the Vietnam War, because the U.S. would be forced out of Southeast Asia. Moving into the vacuum would be the Soviet Union.

Richard D. Fisher, Jr.  
Policy Analyst

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