



# OPERATION PACIFIC EAGLE-PHILIPPINES

LEAD INSPECTOR GENERAL REPORT TO THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS



JULY 1, 2019–SEPTEMBER 30, 2019

## **ABOUT THIS REPORT**

In January 2013, legislation was enacted creating the Lead Inspector General (Lead IG) framework for oversight of overseas contingency operations. This legislation, which amended the Inspector General Act, requires the Inspectors General of the Department of Defense (DoD), Department of State (DoS), and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to provide quarterly reports to Congress on active overseas contingency operations.

The DoD Inspector General (IG) is designated as the Lead IG for Operation Pacific Eagle-Philippines (OPE-P). The DoS IG is the Associate IG for OPE-P. The USAID IG participates in oversight for the operation.

The Offices of Inspector General of the DoD, DoS, and USAID are referred to in this report as the Lead IG agencies. Other partner agencies also contribute to oversight of OPE-P.

The Lead IG agencies collectively carry out their statutory missions to:

- Develop a joint strategic plan to conduct comprehensive oversight of the contingency operation.
- Ensure independent and effective oversight of programs and operations of the Federal Government in support of the contingency operation through either joint or individual audits, inspections, and evaluations.
- Report quarterly to Congress and the public on the contingency operation and activities of the Lead IG agencies.

### **METHODOLOGY**

To produce this quarterly report, the Lead IG agencies submit requests for information to the DoD, DoS, and USAID about OPE-P and related programs. The Lead IG agencies also gather data and information from open sources, including congressional testimony, policy research organizations, press conferences, think tanks, and media reports.

Due to the limited publicly releasable information on terrorist activity that U.S. Indo-Pacific Command provided to the DoD OIG this quarter, this report references primarily open-source media reports on violent extremist groups in the Philippines.

The sources of information contained in this report are listed in endnotes or notes to tables and figures. Except in the case of formal audits, inspections, or evaluations referenced in this report, the Lead IG agencies have not verified or audited the data and information provided by the agencies. For further details on the methodology for this report, see Appendix B.

### **CLASSIFIED APPENDIX**

This report includes an appendix containing classified information about the U.S. counterterrorism mission in the Philippines. The Lead IG provides the classified appendix separately to relevant agencies and congressional committees.

# FOREWORD

We are pleased to submit this Lead Inspector General quarterly report on Operation Pacific Eagle-Philippines (OPE-P). This report discharges our individual and collective agency oversight responsibilities pursuant to the Inspector General Act.

The U.S. Government launched OPE-P in 2017 to support the Philippine government in its efforts to counter Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) affiliates and other violent extremist organizations in the Philippines. In coordination with other U.S. Government agencies, the DoD conducts counterterrorism operations under the auspices of OPE-P by, with, and through its Philippine partners.

In 2014, many local jihadist groups with long histories of violence in the Philippines declared allegiance to ISIS. ISIS-East Asia (ISIS-EA) gained international recognition by seizing and holding a major city for approximately 5 months in 2017. After losing most of its fighters and senior leaders in the ensuing battle with Philippine forces, ISIS-EA has become decentralized, operating as an insurgent group across the southern Philippines. Most members of ISIS-EA also belong to one of the Philippine's preexisting Islamist separatist organizations, such as the Abu Sayyaf Group or the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters. These groups exist outside and opposed to an ongoing peace process between the Philippine government and former rebels in the Muslim-majority provinces of the country's south.

This report's Quarter in Review section includes an overview of the major developments in OPE-P, including the status of the conflict and strength of violent extremist organizations, U.S. capacity building support for Philippine security forces, diplomatic and political developments, and humanitarian assistance for internally displaced persons and other civilians impacted by the conflict.

The report also discusses the planned, ongoing, and completed oversight work conducted by the Lead IG agencies and our partner oversight agencies during the period from July 1, 2019, through September 30, 2019.

Working in close collaboration, we remain committed to providing comprehensive oversight and timely reporting on this contingency operation.



The handwritten signature of Glenn A. Fine.

**Glenn A. Fine**  
Principal Deputy Inspector General  
Performing the Duties  
of the Inspector General  
U.S. Department of Defense



The handwritten signature of Steve A. Linick.

**Steve A. Linick**  
Inspector General  
U.S. Department of State  
and the  
U.S. Agency for Global Media



The handwritten signature of Ann Calvaresi Barr.

**Ann Calvaresi Barr**  
Inspector General  
U.S. Agency for International  
Development



#### **On the Cover**

(Top row): U.S. and Philippine Marines inspect the tracks of an amphibious assault vehicle during a training exercise in Subic Bay (U.S. Marine Corps photo); a U.S. Marine ties a bowline knot with members of the Philippine National Police Maritime Group and Philippine Coast Guard (U.S. Marine Corps photo). (Bottom row): Philippine Coast Guardsmen sweep the deck of a vessel during a practical exercise (U.S. Navy photo).

## MESSAGE FROM THE LEAD INSPECTOR GENERAL



**Glenn A. Fine**

This is the 8th Lead IG quarterly report on Operation Pacific Eagle-Philippines (OPE-P), summarizing this quarter's events and describing Lead IG and partner agency oversight work relating to OPE-P. It also includes a classified appendix that is made available to the relevant congressional committees and government agencies.

This quarter, Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) affiliates in the Philippines continued their gradual trend of increased suicide bombing. In September, a suicide bomber detonated outside a Philippine military base but failed to harm anyone but herself. While the southern Philippines has a long history of terrorist violence, it has not historically included suicide bombings. As of September 30, at least five individuals have carried out or attempted three suicide attacks in 2019.

Philippine defense officials stated this quarter that they were reevaluating security protocols in light of this relatively new threat. However, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command told the DoD OIG that it did not view the current level of suicide attacks as a major change in tactics by Philippine extremists.

U.S. military advisors engaged with their Philippine military partners this quarter in a series of capacity building exercises, both within and separate from the OPE-P mission. These activities focused on building Philippine special operations capacity, improving the counterterrorism capabilities of the Philippine police, and developing the Philippine national security institutions. U.S. and Philippine senior military leaders also conducted their annual planning meeting, which resulted in an agreement for an increase in bilateral training for FY 2020.

The Philippine city of Marawi, which was devastated in the 2017 siege by ISIS affiliates, remained largely in ruin this quarter. Unexploded ordnance and disputes over property rights continued to delay reconstruction efforts, leaving approximately 70,000 residents displaced for an indefinite period of time.

Finally, my Lead IG colleagues and I remain committed to conducting oversight and providing reports on activities related to OPE-P. We thank the dedicated employees of each Lead IG agency who conduct this important work, both in the United States and abroad.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Glenn A. Fine".

**Glenn A. Fine**

Principal Deputy Inspector General  
Performing the Duties of the Inspector General  
U.S. Department of Defense





Philippine Coast Guardsmen sweep the deck of a vessel during a practical exercise as part of Southeast Asia Cooperation and Training 2019.  
(U.S. Navy photo)

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This quarter there was little change in the size, strength, capabilities, or activities of ISIS-East Asia (ISIS-EA). According to available unclassified information, ISIS-EA has approximately 500 members. However, most of these individuals are members of other long-standing Philippine militant groups that have adopted the ISIS “brand” and, to varying degrees, its ideology.<sup>1</sup>

**U.S. and Philippine Marines inspect the tracks of an amphibious assault vehicle during a training exercise in Subic Bay. (U.S. Marine Corps photo)**

According to U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM), ISIS-EA is currently only capable of conducting small-scale or suicide attacks on Jolo, Sulu, and Mindanao islands in the southern Philippines. USINDOPACOM assessed that ISIS-EA’s lack of network cohesion, support from the international leadership of ISIS (ISIS-Core), strong internal leadership, or adequate financing are factors that have impeded ISIS-EA’s ability to conduct activity outside its base of operations or carry out large scale attacks.<sup>2</sup>

On September 7, an improvised explosive device detonated at a public market, wounding at least seven people. Media sources reported that a faction of ISIS-EA claimed responsibility for the bombing. According to the Philippine military, this was the fourth bombing in the Sultan Kudarat area of the southern Philippines in 13 months.<sup>3</sup>

A Philippine terrorism expert told reporters this quarter that the new generation of militants in the Philippines is more extreme and ideologically driven than its predecessors.

According to the Philippine military, on September 8, a female suicide bomber detonated her suicide vest near an Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) checkpoint in Indanan, Sulu. The blast did not cause any serious injuries or death to anyone other than the attacker, whom the AFP believes was associated with a faction of ISIS-EA.<sup>4</sup>

As discussed in last quarter's Lead IG report on OPE-P, Philippine insurgent groups have not historically used suicide attacks, but this appears to be changing. A Philippine terrorism expert told reporters this quarter that the new generation of militants in the Philippines is more extreme and ideologically driven than its predecessors. Philippine officials also stated this quarter that they will need to examine their protocols and operations to address this apparent shift in tactics by ISIS-EA.<sup>5</sup>

This quarter, U.S. Special Operations Command-Pacific (SOCOPAC) told the DoD OIG that, under the auspices of OPE-P, it conducted four counterterrorism advise and assist operations with the AFP, five civic engagement activities, and one combined forces training exercise with the Special Action Force, the special operations component of the Philippine National Police (PNP).<sup>6</sup>

In addition to this activity carried out under the OPE-P mission, the U.S. Departments of Defense and State provided other training and capacity building activities, which included counterterrorism training. According to USINDOPACOM, U.S. advisors provided training to the AFP on tactical equipment, including night vision goggles; small intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) unmanned aircraft systems; and remotely operated video devices.<sup>7</sup> USINDOPACOM stated the AFP has requested additional U.S. training on the use of ISR assets and intelligence processing systems to track ISIS-EA members.<sup>8</sup>

From July 15 to 25, U.S. Marines and their AFP partners participated in a semiannual U.S.-Philippine Marine Aviation Support Activity, which focused on mutual defense, counterterrorism, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief. According to USINDOPACOM, this training aimed to build interoperability and enhancing the aviation capabilities of both U.S. and Philippine forces.<sup>9</sup>

On September 6, U.S. Ambassador to the Philippines Sung Kim participated in the National Convention of Counterterrorism Prosecutors in Manila, which included 70 prosecutors from across the Philippines, 44 of whom came from Mindanao. According to a U.S. Embassy Manila press release, U.S. Department of Justice personnel partnered with their Philippine counterparts to promote best practices in investigating and prosecuting terrorism cases.<sup>10</sup>

According to the DoS, the U.S. and Philippine governments signed a memorandum of understanding this quarter that will allow construction to begin on a Regional Counterterrorism Training Center.<sup>11</sup> The DoS reported that the PNP requested the center to provide counterterrorism training for law enforcement units and personnel from the Philippines and regional partner nations.<sup>12</sup>

The number of internally displaced persons (IDP) resulting from the 2017 Marawi siege has remained constant at approximately 66,000, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).<sup>13</sup> The majority of the Marawi IDPs are former residents from areas of the city that are no longer habitable due to the intensive bombing that took place in 2017, according to USAID.<sup>14</sup>

This quarter, 29,000 additional civilians were displaced in other parts of Mindanao due to armed conflict between the AFP and militants, clan feuds, and natural disasters, according to OCHA.<sup>15</sup> In addition, conflict between Philippine government forces and various rebel groups continues to cause displacement outside Marawi, according to OCHA.<sup>16</sup>

In Marawi, unexploded ordnance remains a primary barrier to building and home reconstruction and the return of IDPs. Due to property ownership questions and difficulties in hiring contractors, the explosives remediation process has taken longer than initial estimates.<sup>17</sup> A Philippine government official stated this quarter that the search for unexploded ordnance and demolition of the ruined buildings should be completed by early November, which would allow reconstruction to commence in December.<sup>18</sup>

USAID reported that during the quarter, the Philippine government made incremental progress toward its goal of creating 6,400 transitional shelters for Marawi IDPs.<sup>19</sup> The new shelters are designed to replace tent campsites currently housing IDPs.<sup>20</sup>

However, USAID stated that government-built transitional settlements are at risk of becoming permanent if the Philippine government does not release resources for a comprehensive rehabilitation and reconstruction plan to rebuild Marawi.<sup>21</sup> USAID stated that, with no government compensation for property owners to rebuild, it was unclear if property owners will have sufficient resources to fund reconstruction of private buildings.<sup>22</sup>

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## ABOUT OPERATION PACIFIC EAGLE-PHILIPPINES

### MISSION

On September 1, 2017, the Secretary of Defense designated Operation Pacific Eagle–Philippines (OPE-P) an overseas contingency operation. OPE-P is a counterterrorism campaign conducted by USINDOPACOM, in coordination with other U.S. Government agencies, to support the Philippine government and its military forces in their efforts to counter Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) affiliates and other priority violent extremist organizations in the Philippines.

### HISTORY

The Philippines, an island nation with a predominantly Roman Catholic population, has struggled for decades with violent extremist separatist groups in the Muslim-populated regions of the country's south. Many of these extremist groups, operating in the most impoverished parts of the country, are affiliated with international terrorist organizations.

The U.S. military conducted counterterrorism operations in the Philippines under Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines from 2002 until that operation concluded in 2015. In 2014, many of the Philippines'

local jihadist groups declared allegiance to ISIS. The international leadership of ISIS supported its Philippine branch with financing, media, foreign fighters, and recognition of its leader, Isnilon Hapilon, as the "emir" of ISIS in the Philippines. In May 2017, a force of approximately 1,000 ISIS-affiliated militants led by Hapilon seized the city of Marawi, a provincial capital with 200,000 residents, and held it for 5 months.

Philippine forces liberated Marawi in October 2017 with U.S. assistance but suffered heavy casualties, including more than 160 dead. The fighting devastated the city's infrastructure and displaced 353,000 residents of the city and surrounding area. Most of the ISIS-aligned fighters in the city, including Hapilon and his top lieutenants, were killed in the fighting.

Since then, ISIS affiliates in the Philippines have lacked a single leader. These groups now operate primarily along the lines of their constituent jihadist organizations, and ties with international ISIS leadership have been seriously weakened. However, these groups continue to commit acts of violence to undermine peace and reconciliation in the southern Philippines.

# THE QUARTER IN REVIEW

## STATUS OF THE CONFLICT

### ISIS-EA Remains a Persistent Threat in the Philippines but Lacks Capacity for Large-Scale Attacks

USINDOPACOM reported to the DoD OIG that it observed little change in the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria-East Asia's (ISIS-EA) size, strength, capabilities, or tactics this quarter.<sup>23</sup> Instead, USINDOPACOM cited the Armed Forces of the Philippines' (AFP) estimate that approximately 500 individuals constitute ISIS-EA. According to the AFP, ISIS-EA members are drawn from other Philippine militant groups, including approximately 300 from ISIS-aligned Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) elements, 85 from the Toraype faction of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), 50 from the Maute Group, and 6 from Ansar Khalifah Philippines.<sup>24</sup> As in previous quarters, USINDOPACOM did not provide the DoD OIG with its own unclassified estimate of ISIS-EA's strength. USINDOPACOM stated to the

Philippine Navy sailors search a training vessel during a drill.  
(U.S. Navy photo)



DoD OIG that it views the AFP's numbers as its best source of unclassified information on terrorist groups in the Philippines.<sup>25</sup>

ISIS-EA has been without a leader confirmed by the international leadership of ISIS (ISIS-Core) since the death of Isnilon Hapilon in the Marawi siege of 2017.<sup>26</sup> Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan, the leader of a large faction of the ASG, has declared himself "emir" of ISIS in the Philippines, but ISIS-Core has not publicly recognized him as it did Hapilon, according to USINDOPACOM.<sup>27</sup> On September 10, 2019, the Department of State (DoS) designated Sawadjaan as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist, which subjects him to financial and other sanctions.<sup>28</sup>

USINDOPACOM stated to the DoD OIG that it did not observe any changes to ISIS-EA's internal command and control functions or its external funding sources this quarter.<sup>29</sup> ISIS-Core continued to support ISIS-EA through its media network, but this support was less than what ISIS-Core provided to other ISIS branches and networks operating worldwide.<sup>30</sup> USINDOPACOM reported that ISIS-EA's areas of operation remained static this quarter; ISIS-EA neither gained nor lost territory and continued to operate on Mindanao and in the Sulu Archipelago.<sup>31</sup>

USINDOPACOM stated to the DoD OIG that ISIS-EA has the capability to conduct small-scale and suicide attacks on Jolo island and small-scale attacks in the Sulu archipelago and western Mindanao, which it has done consistently over the last 2 years. However, ISIS-EA's lack of network cohesion, limited support from ISIS-Core, weak internal leadership, and inadequate financing are factors that have impeded ISIS-EA's ability to conduct activity outside its base of operations or carry out large-scale attacks.<sup>32</sup> USINDOPACOM previously defined "large-scale" attacks as having a casualty toll of more than 100 and cited the 2002 Bali, Indonesia, bombings as an example.<sup>33</sup>

## **ISIS-EA Conducts Minor Attacks, Including a Failed Suicide Bombing**

Due to the limited publicly releasable information on terrorist operations that the DoD OIG has received from USINDOPACOM, this report presents information on terrorist activity drawn primarily from open-source media reports.

On September 7, a BIFF faction of ISIS-EA claimed responsibility for an improvised explosive device detonated at a public market in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat, which wounded at least seven people, according to media sources. An AFP spokesperson told reporters this was the fourth bombing in the area in 13 months. Sultan Kudarat is a predominantly Christian province located just south of the new Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.<sup>34</sup>

On September 8, a female suicide bomber detonated her explosives, killing only herself, in an attempted attack on an AFP checkpoint in Indanan, Sulu. According to the AFP, military personnel involved in the incident employed lessons learned from previous suicide bombings and jumped behind a blast-proof barricade when they ascertained that the woman was a threat. The blast damaged the gate and barricade but did not cause any serious injuries or death to anyone other than the attacker. While the bomber's nationality had not been identified, media reports described her as "Caucasian-looking."<sup>35</sup>

**ISIS-Core continued to support ISIS-EA through media channels, but this support was less than what ISIS-Core provided to other ISIS branches and networks operating worldwide.**

An AFP spokesperson told reporters that the assailant was likely affiliated with Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan's faction of ASG because Sawadjaan is the only terrorist leader in the area who employs suicide bombers. According to the AFP spokesperson, there are internal power struggles between Sawadjaan, a senior ASG member and self-proclaimed emir of ISIS-EA, and Radullan Sahiron, the overall head of the ASG. Lieutenant General Cirilito Sobejana, Chief of the AFP's Western Mindanao Command, stated that while Sawadjaan is "ISIS-inclined," Sahiron has been a counter-balancing force who does not want the ASG organization to be completely subsumed by ISIS.<sup>36</sup> While ISIS terrorists have employed suicide attacks around the world, Philippine jihadists have historically not embraced this tactic.<sup>37</sup>

On August 12 in Sulu province, an ASG attack killed two AFP soldiers and a 2-year old child and wounded an 11-year old. According to media reports, AFP troops were ambushed and shot by ASG fighters in an attack that an AFP spokesperson said was designed to incite fear among the local population.<sup>38</sup>

### **Suicide Bombings Prompt Reevaluation of Security Protocols**

According to a media report, a spokesperson for the Philippine Department of National Defense stated this quarter that the country's officials were reviewing security protocols in light of a recent string of suicide bombings.<sup>39</sup> A Philippine terrorism expert also told reporters that the new generation of militants in that country was more extreme and ideologically driven than its predecessors. He said that younger militants "are influenced by a lot of indoctrination via social media. Their level of frustration is much higher compared to the old ones."<sup>40</sup>

Terrorists in the Philippines have historically not conducted suicide bombings. According to a Philippine government spokesperson, the apparent shift in tactics by ISIS-EA will require the Philippine intelligence community to update its operational procedures and the AFP to reconsider how it locates military camps in the southern Philippines.<sup>41</sup> Philippine officials have also stated that future counterterrorism efforts will need to include "improved information sharing" across Philippine national security elements to deny militants access to financing and freedom of movement across the region.<sup>42</sup>

An AFP spokesperson told reporters that the Philippines may seek to change its laws to facilitate the arrest and prosecution of suspected terrorists.<sup>43</sup> This change may include tightening border security and immigration policy because many of these suicide bombings have been carried out by foreign nationals, including a Moroccan car bomber in July 2018 and an Indonesian couple's suicide bombing of a church in January 2019. A suicide bombing of an AFP base in June 2019 was carried out by a Moroccan and a Filipino. Media reports also described the arrest of suspected terrorists from Pakistan, Kenya, Sweden, and Jordan in the Philippines this quarter.<sup>44</sup>

USINDOPACOM stated to the DoD OIG that most suicide attacks in the Philippines have been conducted by foreign nationals who attempted and failed to travel to the conflict zone in Syria and Iraq, and they were likely radicalized prior to their travel to the Philippines. USINDOPACOM also stated that ISIS ideology and its emphasis on suicide attacks has not resonated broadly among the Philippine population but added that it has permeated some ISIS-EA factions, particularly in the Sulu archipelago.<sup>45</sup>

**Most suicide attacks in the Philippines have been conducted by foreign nationals who attempted and failed to travel to the conflict zone in Syria and Iraq, and they were likely radicalized prior to their travel to the Philippines.**

USINDOPACOM reported to the DoD OIG that, from an intelligence perspective, it was not making any specific changes to its analytical conclusions related to ISIS-EA, despite the increase in suicide tactics.<sup>46</sup> USINDOPACOM stated to the DoD OIG that it observed no changes in ISIS-EA's tactics or capabilities this quarter, adding that ISIS-EA factions still relied on local knowledge to construct improvised explosive devices for terrorist attacks.<sup>47</sup>

### **Arrests this Quarter Include Foreign Nationals**

On August 1, Philippine officials announced the arrest in southwestern Mindanao of Mahmoud Afif Abdeljalil, a Jordanian al Qaeda financier and associate of the bin Laden family. The chief of the Philippines' Bureau of Immigration told reporters that Abdeljalil entered the country using fraudulent documents with an assumed name, and the government planned to deport him. Abdeljalil was previously arrested and deported from the Philippines in 2003.<sup>48</sup>

On September 24, Philippine military officials announced the arrest of a suspected Swedish male militant of Turkish descent, along with two local female Muslim militants. According to the AFP, the suspects were planning bombing attacks in Sultan Kudarat province and were apprehended with firearms, explosives, and an ISIS-style flag.<sup>49</sup> An AFP general told reporters that the Swedish national was a member of an ISIS-affiliated organization in Sweden and has been linked to an August 2018 bombing in the Philippines. AFP officials stated his female accomplices were linked to the motorcycle bombing in Isulan earlier this quarter.<sup>50</sup>

Additionally, on September 26, the Malaysian government announced the arrest of 15 people, mostly Indonesian nationals, on suspicion of having ties to ISIS-affiliated militant groups. According to media reports, the suspects were arrested in a series of raids across Malaysia between July and September. A Malaysian counterterrorism police spokesperson stated that police believe one of the suspects acted as a facilitator for the suicide bombing of a cathedral in Jolo, Philippines, by ISIS-affiliated ASG members in December 2018. The spokesperson added that the suspect had also allegedly channeled funds to the ISIS-affiliated Maute Group.<sup>51</sup>

### **Regional ISIS Affiliates Renew Allegiance to al Baghdadi Prior to his Death**

In July, Voice of America reported that ISIS-Core media operatives released a series of eight videos attempting to counter the message that the territorial defeat of ISIS in Iraq and Syria marked the end of the terrorist organization. These videos featured ISIS leaders and fighters from around the world, including the Philippines, pledging allegiance or renewing their pledges to then-ISIS leader Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, who died in a raid conducted by U.S. forces in Syria on October 26, 2019.<sup>52</sup>

While some of these videos featured large groups of fighters, others showed just a few members. According to terrorist experts interviewed by Voice of America, the videos showed the global organization's transition to an insurgent group, which may not be capable of fielding large forces but can nonetheless carry out sporadic acts of violence. The experts said that while the ISIS threat in remote areas, such as the Philippines, may not be large, it remains persistent. The experts also stated that it was significant that ISIS-Core would

**Videos featured ISIS leaders and fighters from around the world, including the Philippines, pledging allegiance or renewing their pledges to then-ISIS leader Abu Bakr al Baghdadi.**

**Experts said that while the ISIS threat in remote areas, such as the Philippines, may not be large, it remains persistent.**

publicly accept the pledges of allegiance from these local affiliates, as it suggests that the recognized affiliates have surpassed a common minimum benchmark of organizational requirements.<sup>53</sup> ISIS-Core regularly claims credit for attacks carried out by its global affiliates, including ISIS-EA, or by unconnected lone wolf actors, despite the lack of strong organizational or financial ties.<sup>54</sup>

More information about ISIS-EA factions and strength is contained in the classified appendix.

## CAPACITY BUILDING AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE

### U.S. Special Operations Forces Support the AFP with ISR and Casualty Evacuation

The AFP's Western Mindanao Command prioritized offensive operations on Sulu island this quarter with the goal of reducing the ASG's influence there, according to USINDOPACOM. U.S. special operations forces supported this effort by providing military and technical advice and assistance to the Philippine forces. USINDOPACOM told the DoD OIG that its Philippine partners were proficient in planning, integrating, and acting on intelligence provided by U.S. ISR assets concerning known and suspected enemy locations. Special Operations Command–Pacific (SOCPAC) provides imagery to the AFP task forces to facilitate planning and target development.<sup>55</sup>

USINDOPACOM also stated that U.S. special operations forces provided instruction and training to the AFP on the Palantir Lapis system, an intelligence reporting and processing tool, with the goal of developing the AFP's ability to gather, analyze, and disseminate intelligence across elements of the force.<sup>56</sup> According to USINDOPACOM, the AFP has used this program in the past, and USINDOPACOM will report on the AFP's progress in employing Palantir Lapis in intelligence operations in its annual assessment of OPE-P.<sup>57</sup>

This quarter, SOCPAC also told the DoD OIG that U.S. forces provided casualty evacuation support to an AFP soldier who was wounded by an improvised explosive device on Sulu island while AFP units were conducting routine security patrols.<sup>58</sup>

### U.S. Forces Train the Philippine Military and Police

SOCPAC told the DoD OIG that, under the auspices of OPE-P this quarter, it conducted four counterterrorism advise and assist operations with the AFP, five civic engagement activities, and a combined forces training exercise with the PNP Special Action Force, the special operations component of the PNP. U.S. forces also routinely performed activities to build Philippine partner capacity outside of the OPE-P mission.<sup>59</sup> In response to a DoD OIG inquiry about metrics of success for these activities, USINDOPACOM stated that lasting results of skills retained by the AFP and lasting results of the activities themselves will take months to evaluate, and USINDOPACOM will report on this in its annual assessment of OPE-P.

USINDOPACOM reported to the DoD OIG that its civic engagements this quarter included humanitarian assistance projects in communities affected by the 2017 Marawi siege, school repair projects, and symposiums to help teachers identify warning signs of radicalization.<sup>60</sup>

A U.S. Marine ties a bowline knot with members of the Philippine National Police Maritime Group and Philippine Coast Guard. (U.S. Marine Corps photo)



According to USINDOPACOM, such activity is coordinated with USAID to avoid overlap and duplication of effort.<sup>61</sup> USINDOPACOM stated that information derived from separate third-party surveys indicated the civil affairs activities received “positive responses” from both the Philippine military and civilians. USINDOPACOM stated that advise and assist activities were helping the Philippine security forces keep pressure on ISIS-EA and other terrorist organizations, making it difficult for them to gain momentum. USINDOPACOM did not provide details explaining how this impact was achieved or measured.<sup>62</sup>

Outside the auspices of OPE-P, U.S. military advisors and interagency partners provided training to Philippine military and police forces in competencies related to counterterrorism, as discussed in the following sections.

### **STRATEGIC CAPACITY BUILDING FOCUSES ON JOINT AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION**

The AFP established a joint Special Operations Command in April 2018, based on a model similar to its U.S. counterpart, with the goal of improving interoperability between special operations components. This joint command replaced the AFP’s previous model, which only included Army units and omitted key special operations partners, such as the Philippine Navy SEALs.<sup>63</sup>

USINDOPACOM stated that the DoD’s Institute for Security Governance continued its work with AFP’s Special Operations Command headquarters to identify institutional difficulties that may be impeding the development of a fully functional joint headquarters for AFP special operations.<sup>64</sup> According to USINDOPACOM, the AFP’s Special Operations Command’s two greatest challenges are its lack of dedicated funding and community relations. Unlike U.S. Special Operations Command, its Philippine counterpart relies on funding from the country’s military Services and does not maintain operational command of the forces assigned to it.<sup>65</sup>

According to a U.S. Embassy Manila press release, the DoD's Defense Threat Reduction Agency conducted a chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear threat exercise from July 24 to 27 aimed at refining the Philippine government's interagency response to a simulated chemical incident in Manila, such as a potential terrorist attack. According to the release, more than 20 Philippine government agencies practiced responding to a simulated disaster, including setting up an incident command post, providing initial treatment and transfer of victims to the hospital, and identifying the chemical agents involved by hospital staff using equipment provided by the DoD. The embassy stated that follow-on exercises would take place in Cebu and Davao, the Philippines' second- and third-largest urban areas after Manila.<sup>66</sup>

### TACTICAL TRAINING FOCUSES ON COUNTERTERRORISM CAPABILITIES

This quarter, according to USINDOPACOM, U.S. advisors trained their AFP partners on equipment provided last quarter, including night vision goggles, small ISR unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), and remotely operated video devices. Enhanced training was provided to certain AFP special operations forces, including the Light Reaction Regiment and the Joint Special Operations Group. Personnel from these units traveled to the United States in September to attend courses on intelligence fusion and UAS planning and operations at the Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School, U.S. Special Operations Command's training facility for partner nation forces.<sup>67</sup>

From July 15 to 25, U.S. Marines and their AFP partners participated in a semiannual U.S.-Philippine Marine Aviation Support Activity, which focused on mutual defense, counterterrorism, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief. According to USINDOPACOM, this training focused on building interoperability and enhancing the aviation capabilities of both U.S. and Philippine forces.<sup>68</sup>

**U.S. Marines set up communications equipment in preparation for exercise Kamandag at Subic Bay, Philippines. (U.S. Marine Corps photo)**



On September 6, U.S. Marines conducted an amphibious assault vehicle subject matter expert exchange with the Philippine Marine Corps and Navy to prepare for the annual bilateral military exercise Kamandag, which took place in October, after the quarter ended. According to USINDOPACOM, this exercise was the first time the Philippine Marine Corps launched its amphibious assault vehicles from a Philippine Navy ship and landed ashore. USINDOPACOM stated that U.S. and Philippine Marines have been working together on integration of amphibious operations for the past 8 years.<sup>69</sup>

From September 19 to 25, U.S. and Philippine soldiers conducted bilateral, tactical-level airborne training operations. According to a U.S. Army spokesperson, exercises such as this support the AFP's brigade modernization efforts and allow U.S. troops to practice responding to future contingency operations, security challenges, and natural disasters in the Philippines.<sup>70</sup>

### **The DoD and DoS Provide Counterterrorism Training to Philippine Law Enforcement**

According to a U.S. Embassy Manila press release, 50 personnel from the PNP and their U.S. counterparts participated in combined training from August 26 through September 20. This training focused on enhancing functional disciplines such as human rights, law of armed conflict, combat casualty care, combat and sniper marksmanship, and rural and urban reconnaissance in the PNP special operations forces through both classroom and practical exercises.<sup>71</sup>

On September 6, U.S. Ambassador Sung Kim participated in the National Convention of Counterterrorism Prosecutors in Manila, which included 70 prosecutors from across the Philippines, including 44 from Mindanao. According to a U.S. Embassy Manila press release, U.S. Department of Justice personnel partnered with their Philippine counterparts to promote best practices in investigating and prosecuting terrorism cases. The convention featured workshops on investigative techniques, such as wiretapping and consensual recordings, cyber-terrorism investigations, utilizing international cooperation and legal assistance, and proscription of terrorist groups.<sup>72</sup>

From September 10 to 12, U.S. military personnel and PNP officers participated in a Women in Law Enforcement Symposium in Zamboanga city, according to a U.S. Embassy Manila press release. More than 25 female PNP officers and their U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps counterparts participated in the 3-day professional development event, which included discussions on combating violence against women and children, preventing extremist recruitment of women on social media, and countering human trafficking.<sup>73</sup> According to USINDOPACOM, this engagement sought to enable the Philippine government to better ensure protection of women's and girls' human rights, access to aid, and safety from violence, abuse, and exploitation, particularly during times of crisis, through the promotion of the substantial participation by women in the security sector.<sup>74</sup>

Last quarter, the DoS reported that it planned to build a Regional Counterterrorism Training Center, designed to provide anti-terrorism training to law enforcement units from the Philippines and other regional partner nations. The DoS stated to the DoS OIG that on August 15, the U.S. and Philippine governments signed a memorandum of understanding, which will allow construction of the training center to begin.<sup>75</sup> According to a U.S. Embassy Manila press release, the new \$10 million training center will be located on the grounds of the PNP Academy

in Silang, Cavite, several miles south of Manila, and operated jointly by both countries. According to the DoS, the PNP requested the center to provide counterterrorism training for law enforcement units and personnel from the Philippines and regional partner nations.<sup>76</sup> The DoS stated that it operates similar training centers in Jordan and Senegal, which train local first responders in domestic counterterrorism capacities, such as quick-reaction force tactics, protection of national leadership, special weapons, crisis response, emergency medicine, and bomb response.<sup>77</sup>

### **AFP Seeks More Lethal Weaponry and ISR Capability**

On July 17, the U.S. Government delivered ten M-107 .50 caliber sniper rifles purchased by the AFP as part of a series of Foreign Military Sales designed to enhance the AFP's lethal capability. According to a U.S. Embassy Manila press release, previous equipment transfers have included radios, battle management systems, UAS, night vision devices, and training to operate the equipment provided.<sup>78</sup>

In July, Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin stated on social media that he told U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs David Stilwell that the Philippine government desired to purchase 74,000 new M-16 rifles and associated equipment, with which President "Duterte will finish all security threats to our democracy." According to a news report, as of the end of the quarter, the DoS had not responded to this informal request.<sup>79</sup>

According to USINDOPACOM, the AFP has requested, through formal channels, additional U.S. training on the use of ISR assets and intelligence processing systems to track ISIS-EA members.<sup>80</sup>

### **Mutual Defense Board Increases Bilateral Training Plans for 2020**

On September 13, U.S. Admiral Philip Davidson, Commander of USINDOPACOM, and Philippine General Benjamin Madrigal Jr., Chief of Staff of the AFP, led the 2019 Mutual Defense Board and Security Engagement Board in Quezon City, Philippines. This annual meeting between U.S. and Philippine 4-star military leaders coordinates the framework for defense and security cooperation between the U.S. and Philippine armed forces for the coming year. Agreed-upon activities are then executed through the Joint U.S. Military Assistance Group, the DoD security cooperation office at U.S. Embassy Manila.<sup>81</sup>

For FY 2020, U.S. and Philippine forces agreed to more than 300 planned security cooperation activities, which is an increase from the 281 conducted in FY 2019, according to a U.S. Embassy Manila press release. These activities will focus on enhancing cooperation in areas such as counterterrorism, maritime security, cyber security, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief.<sup>82</sup>

USINDOPACOM stated to the DoD OIG that the increase in activities is a result of both the bilateral planning process and engagement from the Hawaiian and Guamanian state and territorial governments, which requested to support USINDOPACOM engagement with the Philippines. USINDOPACOM also stated that a high number of bilateral engagements helps secure a physical presence for U.S. military assets in the region.<sup>83</sup>

**According to USINDOPACOM, the AFP has requested, through formal channels, additional U.S. training on the use of ISR assets and intelligence processing systems to track ISIS-EA members.**

**Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte views decommissioned firearms from former combatants of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. (Philippines Presidential Communications photo)**



In July, Philippine Ambassador to the United States Jose Manuel Romualdez stated that the Mutual Defense Board would serve “to strengthen our relationship about our defense treaty.”<sup>84</sup> This appears to represent a shift in attitude toward the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty from January 2019, when the Philippine government indicated that it would consider a review of this treaty, which serves as the foundation for all security cooperation between the United States and the Philippines, including OPE-P.<sup>85</sup>

In January, senior Philippine government officials, including Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, expressed doubts about the U.S. Government’s commitment to defend Philippine territorial claims against aggression from China in the disputed waters of the South China Sea.<sup>86</sup> Senior U.S. officials, including Secretary of State Michael Pompeo, have since stated publicly that it is the position of the U.S. Government that any attack on Philippine interests in the South China Sea would trigger the mutual defense provisions of the treaty.<sup>87</sup>

More information about U.S. training and assistance to the AFP is contained in the classified appendix.

## DIPLOMACY AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

### Former Militants to Train as First Responders

This quarter, Philippine regional officials continued efforts to establish the recently approved Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) as a functional governing entity. The creation of this semi-autonomous region was the product of a peace agreement between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) ratified in January 2019.<sup>88</sup>

One of the key challenges to the Bangsamoro peace process will be integrating 40,000 MILF fighters into civilian life. According to a DoS cable, the BARMM government initiated a program on July 29 aimed at transitioning former MILF combatants into jobs as first

responders to assist in natural disasters. According to BARMM minister Naguib Sinarimbo, a former attorney for the MILF, this program intends to employ thousands of former rebels to respond to both manmade and natural disasters. While the terms of the peace deal prohibit the BARMM from establishing local security forces, this program seeks to employ these individuals to aid some of the 36,955 people displaced by flooding due to heavy rains in Maguindanao and the 5,700 displaced by violence in Pikit, according to the DoS cable.<sup>89</sup>

More information on MILF reintegration efforts is contained in the classified appendix to this report.

## HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND RECOVERY

### **Armed Conflict, Clan Feuds, and Natural Disasters Create Additional IDPs on Mindanao**

The number of internally displaced persons (IDP) resulting from the 2017 Marawi siege reached a peak of 353,000 in December 2017. The number of IDPs decreased until about July 2018, when most residents who were able to do so had returned home.<sup>90</sup> From July 2018 through the end of September 2019, the number of IDPs resulting from the siege remained stable at approximately 66,000, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).<sup>91</sup> The majority of the remaining IDPs are former residents of areas of the city that are no longer habitable due to the intensive bombing that took place in 2017, according to USAID.<sup>92</sup>

This quarter, 29,000 additional civilians were displaced in other parts of Mindanao due to armed conflict between the AFP and militants, clan feuds, and natural disasters, according to OCHA.<sup>93</sup> In September, a clan feud that required deployment of police and military personnel displaced approximately 1,000 people in the Cotabato province.<sup>94</sup> Tropical Depression Marilyn also displaced approximately 6,850 people in September in several provinces across Mindanao.<sup>95</sup>

Conflict between government forces and various rebel groups continued to displace people outside Marawi, according to OCHA. More than 8,500 people were displaced in the Maguindanao province during the quarter due to armed conflict between the AFP and the BIFF.<sup>96</sup> Additionally, more than 11,000 people remained displaced in Sulu province because of fighting between the ASG and Philippine forces. Unrelated to ISIS-EA, more than 2,000 people were displaced in the Agusan del Sur and Compostela Valley provinces in northeastern Mindanao because of violence involving the communist New People's Army group.<sup>97</sup>

### **Unexploded Ordnance, Property Ownership, and Contractor Disputes Delay Marawi Reconstruction**

In August, Philippine Housing Secretary Eduardo del Rosario announced that reconstruction of Marawi would be delayed until December. Del Rosario, who also chairs the Task Force Bangon Marawi, which oversees the city's rehabilitation and reconstruction, said the delay was partially due to remaining unexploded ordnance in the area.<sup>98</sup>

**This quarter, 29,000 additional civilians were displaced in other parts of Mindanao due to armed conflict between the AFP and militants, clan feuds, and natural disasters, according to OCHA.**

An August DoS cable stated that 10 months after the Philippine government turned the search for unexploded ordnance in Marawi over to a group of private contractors, only a small portion of the city had been deemed safe for reconstruction work to begin. Homeowners representing 700 displaced families were permitted to visit Marawi's 2 most northwestern neighborhoods from July 22 to July 24 to authorize demolition of their battle-damaged homes, in anticipation of being allowed to apply for permits to rebuild.<sup>99</sup>

On September 28, the AFP detonated several munitions recovered underneath the rubble of Marawi, according to media reports. An AFP spokesperson stated that this included an airdropped 110-pound bomb, hundreds of small munitions like M-203 grenades, and two improvised explosive devices manufactured by ISIS-EA.<sup>100</sup> However, 48 of the 70 500-pound unguided bombs dropped by the AFP in Marawi remained buried under debris this quarter, according to a DoS cable.<sup>101</sup>

Of Marawi's 6,861 damaged buildings, 610 have been approved for demolition by their owners, and 133 of those 610 have approved demolition permits, according to a DoS cable. Thirty-eight of these buildings are in the area believed to contain the most unexploded ordnance.<sup>102</sup>

Reconstruction of Marawi has been plagued with delays since shortly after the fighting ended. Following months of negotiations with the Philippine government, two Chinese construction consortia withdrew from the bidding process for rebuilding contracts in April 2019. According to media reporting, local residents expressed concerns about the consequences of Chinese investment and voiced opposition to Chinese firms' plans to bring in their own laborers rather than hire unemployed local residents. Limited debris removal started in late March for families who consented to have their property cleared, according to USAID.<sup>103</sup>

Del Rosario stated that he expects the Philippine government's search for unexploded ordnance and demolition of the ruined buildings to be completed by early November and the construction of new houses and buildings to commence by December. However, the Task Force Bangon Marawi's previous estimates of when IDPs could return to Marawi have proven overly optimistic on several occasions. In March 2019, del Rosario stated that IDPs could return to their homes by July. The task force later moved this estimate to September.<sup>104</sup>

More information about delays in removing unexploded ordnance in Marawi is contained in the classified appendix.

**An August DoS cable stated that 10 months after the Philippine government turned the search for unexploded ordnance in Marawi over to a group of private contractors, only a small portion of the city has been deemed safe for reconstruction work to begin.**

## Temporary Housing Increases, Long-Term Solution Needed

This quarter, the Philippine government made incremental progress toward its goal of creating 6,400 transitional shelters for Marawi IDPs, according to USAID.<sup>105</sup> As new transitional shelter units are completed, the number of IDPs in tent camps decreases, resulting in the closure of tent campsites.<sup>106</sup> USAID stated that it expects transitional shelters built by the Philippine government and a USAID implementing partner to last more than 10 years.<sup>107</sup>

However, USAID stated that government-built transitional settlements are at risk of becoming permanent if the Philippine government does not release resources for a comprehensive rehabilitation and reconstruction plan to rebuild Marawi.<sup>108</sup> USAID stated that with no government compensation for property owners to rebuild, it was unclear if property owners will have sufficient resources to fund reconstruction of private buildings.<sup>109</sup>

USAID reported that, in September, it transferred more than 80 transitional shelters and a public marketplace facility, and made 4 grants for infrastructure and livelihood support to communities displaced by the 2017 Marawi siege. The marketplace is the first of four trading centers planned by USAID with the goal of spurring economic activity in the region. According to the U.S. Embassy in Manila, assistance provided by USAID has also included training, equipment, and commodities to entrepreneurs previously trading in the most affected area of Marawi to restart their businesses.<sup>110</sup>

USAID reported that, this quarter, it obligated more than \$4.5 million for humanitarian assistance.<sup>111</sup> This funding aims to support transitional shelters, economic development, security, and water, sanitation, and hygiene for 50,000 IDPs in Marawi and 9,000 IDPs in Maguindanao for another year.<sup>112</sup> This additional obligation brought the total U.S. Government in FY 2019 funding for humanitarian and recovery work in and around Marawi to more than \$63.6 million.<sup>113</sup>

### **Water Needs in Transitional Shelters Decreased, but Access to Water for Other IDPs Remains a Concern**

USAID reported to USAID OIG that, during this quarter, there had been improvements in long-term recovery assistance, including shelter, food security, and water access for IDPs.<sup>114</sup> USAID reported that access to clean water improved overall, as needs decreased in transitional shelters and inside Marawi city as permanent water sources were rehabilitated and new wells were drilled.<sup>115</sup> USAID reported that its funding increased access to water for 2,400 people through a rehabilitated spring gravity flow system, and another implementer reported that USAID funding increased access to potable water for 12,000 people.<sup>116</sup> IDPs were consolidated from several tent camps into a new transitional shelter in Boganga by the Philippines government, resulting in a 70 percent reduction in truck deliveries of water per day by mid-August.<sup>117</sup>

USAID reported to USAID OIG that its programs seek to improve clean water access, water infrastructure, and livelihoods assistance for IDPs.<sup>118</sup> For instance, USAID said the Strengthening Urban Resilience for Growth with Equity program is engaging with local governments to improve water testing and plans to conduct targeted communications designed to improve sanitation and hygiene practices. The program also aims to improve the extent to which people understand the local water authority's process of collecting fees.<sup>119</sup>

However, despite improvements, USAID reported to USAID OIG that access to water remains a concern, especially in certain areas of Marawi that are not connected to the city water supply. Vulnerable populations along Lake Lanao use it as a primary water source for bathing, cooking, and washing, while purchasing drinking water from privately run water

treatment centers. Planned repairs of the Marawi water network to provide water for more than 25,000 people will be completed and functional by the end of September, according to USAID. Plans were underway with FY 2019 funding and coordination with the Asian Development Bank to expand this effort in other parts of Marawi, including a planned \$25 million water supply rehabilitation project.<sup>120</sup>

## BUDGET EXECUTION

USINDOPACOM reported to the DoD OIG that as of September 11, 2019, it had committed \$107.7 million, obligated \$81.4 million, and liquidated \$20.1 million out of the \$108.2 million budgeted for OPE-P for FY 2019. The largest items in OPE-P FY 2019 budget included \$41.8 million for contracted ISR support (\$41.3 million obligated), \$24.8 million for casualty evacuation and personnel recovery (\$558 thousand obligated), and \$10.8 million for U.S. Army Gray Eagle ISR support (\$10.8 million obligated). USINDOPACOM stated that it expected all ISR and casualty evacuation funds to be obligated before the end of FY 2019, with some disbursements following in FY 2020 due to contract award dates.<sup>121</sup>

In March 2019, USINDOPACOM reported to the DoD OIG that the DoD's budget request for FY 2020 included \$82.3 million to support OPE-P, which was a decrease from the \$108.2 million budgeted for FY 2019 and the \$99.4 million obligated for OPE-P in FY 2018. Contracted ISR support continued to be the largest portion of the OPE-P budget for FY 2020, with \$42.6 million requested for contractor-owned and -operated manned ISR support. The second largest line item was \$24.8 million for contracted casualty evacuation and personnel recovery services. The request also included \$4.9 million for base operating support.<sup>122</sup>

At the time of publication of this report, USINDOPACOM stated to the DoD OIG that the FY 2020 budget request for OPE-P is \$72.3 million. No additional information was provided.<sup>123</sup>



# OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

This section of the report provides information on Lead IG and partner agencies' strategic planning efforts; their ongoing audits, inspections, evaluations, and investigations; and hotline activities from July 1 through September 30, 2019, related to OPE-P.

## STRATEGIC PLANNING

Pursuant to Section 8L of the Inspector General Act, the Lead IG develops and implements a joint strategic plan to guide comprehensive oversight of programs and operations for each overseas contingency operation. This effort includes reviewing and analyzing completed oversight, management, and other relevant reports to identify systemic problems, trends, lessons learned, and best practices to inform future oversight projects. The Lead IG agencies issue an annual joint strategic plan for each operation.

### FY 2020 Joint Strategic Oversight Plan Activities

The updated annual plan describing oversight activities for OPE-P, the *FY 2020 Joint Strategic Oversight Plan for Operation Pacific Eagle-Philippines*, was issued on October 1, 2019.

The plan organized oversight projects related to OPE-P into three strategic oversight areas: 1) Military Operations and Security Cooperation; 2) Governance, Humanitarian Assistance, and Development; and 3) Support to Mission. The joint strategic oversight plan was included in the *FY 2020 Comprehensive Oversight Plan for Overseas Contingency Operations* and will be updated annually for as long as OPE-P is subject to Lead IG oversight and reporting.

## AUDIT, INSPECTION, AND EVALUATION ACTIVITY

The Lead IG agencies use permanent and temporary employees, and USAID additionally uses contractors, to conduct oversight projects, investigate fraud and corruption, and provide strategic planning and reporting. Oversight teams travel to the Philippines and other locations in the region to conduct fieldwork for their oversight projects. In addition, the USAID OIG has a field office in Manila that covers USAID's operations in Philippines and other countries in the region, enabling it to monitor events on the ground.



**FY 2020  
Comprehensive  
Oversight Plan  
for Overseas  
Contingency  
Operations**

This quarter, the Lead IG agencies completed two reports related to DoS-administered foreign assistance programs to the Philippines and award oversight of humanitarian assistance programs.

As of September 30, 2019, seven oversight projects related to the Philippines were ongoing, and eight were planned. Project titles and objectives for the ongoing and planned oversight projects can be found in Appendix C.

## FY 2020 Lead IG Strategic Oversight Areas

### MILITARY OPERATIONS AND SECURITY COOPERATION

*Military Operations and Security Cooperation* focuses on determining the degree to which the contingency operation is accomplishing its security mission. Activities that fall under this strategic oversight area include:

- Conducting unilateral and partnered counterterrorism operations
- Providing security assistance
- Training and equipping partner security forces
- Advising, assisting, and enabling partner security forces
- Advising and assisting ministry-level security officials

### GOVERNANCE, HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE, AND DEVELOPMENT

*Governance, Humanitarian Assistance, and Development* focuses on some of the root causes of violent extremism. Activities that fall under this strategic oversight area include:

- Countering and reducing corruption, social inequality, and extremism
- Promoting inclusive and effective democracy, civil participation, and empowerment of women
- Promoting reconciliation, peaceful conflict resolution, demobilization and reintegration of armed forces, and other rule of law efforts
- Providing food, water, medical care, emergency relief, and shelter to people affected by crisis
- Assisting and protecting internally displaced persons and refugees
- Building or enhancing host-nation governance capacity
- Supporting sustainable and appropriate recovery and reconstruction activities, repairing infrastructure, removing explosive remnants of war, and reestablishing utilities and other public services
- Countering trafficking in persons and preventing sexual exploitation and abuse

### SUPPORT TO MISSION

*Support to Mission* focuses on U.S. administrative, logistical, and management efforts that enable military operations and non-military programs. Activities that fall under this strategic oversight area include:

- Ensuring the security of U.S. personnel and property
- Providing for the occupational health and safety of personnel
- Administering U.S. Government programs
- Managing U.S. Government grants and contracts
- Inventorying and accounting for equipment

## FINAL REPORTS

### DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

#### ***Audit of Monitoring and Evaluating Department of State Foreign Assistance in the Philippines***

AUD-MERO-19-39; September 20, 2019

The DoS OIG conducted this audit to determine whether DoS-funded foreign assistance programs executed in the Philippines were monitored and evaluated in accordance with Federal and DoS requirements.

From FY 2015 through FY 2018, the DoS allocated approximately \$41 million in foreign assistance funding for the Philippines through the DoS Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism, the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, and the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons.

The DoS OIG identified several shortcomings with the three offices' monitoring and oversight of their foreign assistance grants in the Philippines. With respect to monitoring of grantee performance in conducting relevant activities required under the grant agreement, the DoS OIG found that the Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism did not systematically monitor performance to inform its monitoring efforts, the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs did not document its reviews of grantee performance, and the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons did not have monitoring plans that complied with relevant DoS requirements.

With respect to financial monitoring, the DoS OIG found that the Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism did not require the DoS Bureau of Diplomatic Security to submit financial reports for grants with which Diplomatic Security was involved, the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs did not review financial reports quarterly as required, and the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons allowed grant funds to be used to pay for salaries of personnel who were not actively working on grants sponsored by the office. Moreover, all three bureaus did not comply with the DoS guidelines when defining the programs subject to evaluation. Finally, based on a limited-scope review of two awards, the DoS OIG found that the Department of Justice, while implementing one of the Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism's grants, did not accurately charge personnel hours to the grant.

The DoS OIG made 28 recommendations intended to improve the monitoring and evaluating of foreign assistance in the Philippines. Based on the responses received, the DoS OIG considered 4 recommendations unresolved, 23 recommendations resolved pending further action, and 1 recommendation closed at the time the report was issued.

### U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

#### ***USAID's Award Oversight Is Insufficient to Hold Implementers Accountable for Achieving Results***

9-000-19-006-P; September 25, 2019

USAID OIG conducted this audit to determine whether implementers are delivering results as initially intended, and to assess USAID's awards management process. USAID OIG determined

that USAID's award oversight process is insufficient to hold implementers accountable for achieving results for programs, including in the Philippines. For example, almost half of awards ending in FY 2014, FY 2015, and FY 2016 did not achieve expected results, but implementers were generally paid full amounts, even on underperforming awards. This occurred because execution of the award management process lacks the rigor needed to ensure results are achieved. Specifically, USAID OIG found pervasive problems in selection, monitoring, and assessment of implementers; competing award management roles and responsibilities; and poor recordkeeping practices.

USAID OIG made 10 recommendations to strengthen the award management process and enforce accountability of those charged with award oversight. Based on information provided to USAID OIG in response to the draft report, six recommendations are closed, and four are resolved but open pending completion of planned activities.

On September 30, the USAID Administrator issued an agency-wide notice detailing the audit report and its recommendations, adding that the audit offers an opportunity to assess and improve USAID policies, procedures, and programs.

## **INVESTIGATIONS AND HOTLINE ACTIVITY**

### **Investigations**

The investigative components of the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies continued to conduct investigative activity related to OPE-P during the quarter, with USAID OIG investigators located in Manila.

The Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies coordinate their investigative efforts through the Fraud and Corruption Investigative Working Group, which consists of representatives from the Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS, the DoD OIG's criminal investigative division), the DoS OIG, the USAID OIG, the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command, the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, and the Air Force Office of Special Investigations.

During this quarter, investigative branches of the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies coordinated on three open investigations, including one new case. The open investigations involve procurement fraud. This quarter, the Fraud and Corruption Investigative Working Group conducted 6 fraud awareness briefings for 37 participants.

### **Hotline**

Each Lead IG agency maintains its own hotline to receive complaints and contacts specific to its agency. The hotlines provide a confidential, reliable means for individuals to report violations of law, rule, or regulation; mismanagement; gross waste of funds; and abuse of authority. A DoD OIG investigator coordinates the hotline contacts among the Lead IG agencies and others, as appropriate. This quarter, the investigator did not receive any complaints related to OPE-P.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A Classified Appendix to this Report

This unclassified report includes a classified appendix that provides additional information on Operation Pacific Eagle-Philippines (OPE-P), as noted in several sections of this report. The appendix will be delivered to appropriate government agencies and congressional committees.

## APPENDIX B Methodology for Preparing this Lead IG Quarterly Report

This report complies with sections 2, 4, and 8L of the Inspector General Act of 1978, which requires that the designated Lead Inspector General (IG) provide a quarterly report, available to the public, on an overseas contingency operation. The Department of Defense (DoD) IG is the designated Lead IG for OPE-P. The Department of State (DoS) IG is the Associate Lead IG for the operation.

This report contains information from the three Lead IG agencies—DoD Office of Inspector General (OIG), DoS OIG, and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) OIG—as well as from partner oversight agencies. This report covers the period from July 1 through September 30, 2019.



A member of the Philippine National Police Maritime Group on the bow of a boarding vessel during an opposed-boarding drill. (U.S. Marine Corps photo)

To fulfill its congressional mandate to produce a quarterly report on OPE-P, the Lead IG gathers data and information from Federal agencies and open sources. The sources of information contained in this report are listed in endnotes or notes to tables and figures. Except in the case of formal audits, inspections, or evaluations referenced in this report, the Lead IG agencies have not verified or audited the information collected through open-source research or requests for information to Federal agencies.

### **INFORMATION COLLECTION**

Each quarter, the Lead IG agencies direct a series of questions, or data calls, to agencies about their programs and operations related to OPE-P. The Lead IG agencies use the information provided by their respective agencies for quarterly reporting and oversight planning.

Various DoD, DoS, and USAID offices participated in information collection for OPE-P this quarter.

### **OPEN-SOURCE RESEARCH**

This report also draws on the most current, publicly available information from reputable sources. Sources used in this report include the following:

- Congressional testimony
- Press conferences, official U.S. Government briefings
- United Nations reports
- Reports issued by nongovernmental organizations and think tanks
- Media reports

Materials collected through open-source research provide information to describe the status of the operation and help the Lead IG agencies assess information provided in their agency information collection process.

### **REPORT PRODUCTION**

The DoD OIG, as the Lead IG, is responsible for assembling and producing this report. The DoD OIG, DoS OIG, and USAID OIG draft the sections of the report related to the activities of their agencies. The Lead IG agencies then provide those offices that provided information with opportunities to verify and comment on the content of the report.

Each OIG coordinates the review process with its own agency. During the first review, the Lead IG agencies ask their agencies to correct inaccuracies and provide additional documentation. The Lead IG agencies incorporate agency comments, where appropriate, and sends the report back to the agencies for a second review. Each Lead IG agency participates in reviewing and editing the entire quarterly report.

## APPENDIX C

# Ongoing and Planned Oversight Projects

Table 1 lists the title and objective for Lead IG and partner agencies ongoing oversight projects. Table 2 lists the title and objective for Lead IG and partner agencies planned oversight projects.

Table 1.

### **Ongoing Oversight Projects by Lead IG and Partner Agencies, as of September 30, 2019**

#### **DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL**

##### ***Evaluation of Security Controls for Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Supply Chains***

To evaluate security controls for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance asset supply chains.

##### ***Audit of Readiness of Mobile Medical Teams Supporting Contingency Operations in the U.S. Africa Command and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Area of Responsibility***

To determine whether the Defense Health Agency and the Military Services are providing effective training to mobile medical teams prior to deploying to U.S. Africa Command and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command areas of responsibility in order to improve trauma care.

##### ***Evaluation of Counterintelligence Mission Programs (Activities) in the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Area of Responsibility***

To determine whether the Defense Intelligence Agency and Military Services counterintelligence program support U.S. Indo-Pacific Command mission requirements in its area of responsibility.

#### **DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL**

##### ***Inspection of United States Mission to the UN and Other International Organizations in Geneva***

To evaluate the programs and operations of the U.S. Mission to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva.

##### ***Follow-up Audit of the Department of State Efforts to Measure, Evaluate, and Sustain Antiterrorism Assistance Program Objectives in the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs***

To determine whether the Bureau of Diplomatic Security and the Bureau of Counterterrorism have implemented corrective actions to address DoS OIG's previous recommendations and whether those actions have improved the DoS's efforts to measure, evaluate, and sustain the Anti-Terrorism Assistance program objectives within the East Asian and Pacific Affairs region.

#### **U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL**

##### ***Audit of USAID's Self-Reliance Initiative***

To determine to what extent are USAID's self-reliance metrics incorporated into its development programming strategy; and the challenges USAID faces in implementing development activities as envisioned under the Journey to Self-Reliance Initiative.

#### **GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE**

##### ***Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreements***

To review various aspects of DoD use of acquisition and cross-servicing agreements, including 1) a list of current agreements signed by the United States; 2) the criteria and processes used to determine the need for acquisition and cross-servicing agreements; 3) the DoD's accounting of support provided under these agreements and receipt of reciprocal support or reimbursements from partner nations; 4) notifications to Congress of the DoD's intent to sign an acquisition and cross-servicing agreements with a non-NATO member country; and 5) the use of these agreements as mechanisms for transfers of logistics support, supplies, and services to third-party countries for which there is no current agreement.

Table 2.

**Planned Oversight Projects by Lead IG and Partner Agencies, as of September 30, 2019**

<b>DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL</b>
<b><i>Classified Evaluation of an Operation Pacific Eagle-Philippines Intelligence Program</i></b> To determine if the intelligence information sharing requirements of the U.S. forces, Armed Forces of the Philippines, and other regional partners in OPE-P are being satisfied by current policies, procedures, and supporting data architecture.
<b><i>Evaluation of Tactical Signals Intelligence Processing</i></b> To determine whether Theater Support Activity's tactical signals intelligence processing is sufficient to satisfy priority intelligence requirements.
<b><i>Evaluation of DoD Counter Threat Finance Activities in Support of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, U.S. Africa Command, U.S. Central Command, and U.S. European Command Priorities</i></b> To determine whether U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, U.S. Africa Command, U.S. Central Command, and U.S. European Command have established the capabilities to conduct Counter Threat Finance to deny, disrupt, or defeat and degrade adversaries' ability to use global financial networks.
<b><i>Evaluation of U.S. Special Operations Command Joint Military Information Support Operations Web Operations Center</i></b> To determine whether U.S. Special Operations Command's Joint Military Information Support Operations Web Operations Center provides U.S. combatant commanders the increased capability to conduct Internet-based information operations globally.
<b><i>Evaluation of the Combatant Commands' Intelligence Interrogation Approaches and Techniques</i></b> To determine whether U.S. Africa Command's and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command's oversight of intelligence interrogations adheres to applicable DoD policies and regulations, and the overall effect of these policies and regulations on the interrogation process.
<b>DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL</b>
<b><i>Audit of DoS Management of Awards to International Organizations</i></b> To determine whether the DoS's effort to identify, assess, and manage risks before awarding funds to international organizations are effective; and assess whether the DoS's policies, processes, and guidance for monitoring awards to international organizations are effective in ensuring that funds are managed and spent to further U.S. goals and objectives.
<b><i>Inspection of the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, Office of Training, Office of Antiterrorism Assistance</i></b> To evaluate the programs and operations of the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, Office of Training, Office of Antiterrorism Assistance.
<b><i>Audit of DoS Implementation of National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security</i></b> To determine whether the DoS Office of Global Women's Issues has tailored applicable DoS engagements and program to help women be more prepared for, and able to participate in, decision-making processes related to conflict and crisis; established metric and targets to evaluate, measure, and report DoS performance; and created a process to modify or redirect program resources on the basis of performance that informs resource allocation and planning.

## ACRONYMS

Acronym		Acronym	
AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines	Lead IG agencies	DoD OIG, DoS OIG, and USAID OIG
ASG	Abu Sayyaf Group	Lead IG	Lead Inspector General
BARMM	Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao	MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
BIFF	Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters	OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
DoD	Department of Defense	OCO	overseas contingency operation
DoS	Department of State	OFDA	USAID Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance
FY	fiscal year	OIG	Office of Inspector General
IDP	internally displaced person	OPE-P	Operation Pacific Eagle-Philippines
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria	PNP	Philippine National Police
ISIS-Core	The core ISIS organization in Iraq and Syria	UAS	unmanned aircraft system
ISIS-EA	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria–East Asia, formerly referred to as ISIS-Philippines (ISIS-P)	UN	United Nations
ISR	intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
		USINDOPACOM	U.S. Indo-Pacific Command





## ENDNOTES

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**U.S. Marines prepare their assault amphibious vehicles for exercise Kamandag. (U.S. Navy photo)**





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