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Country Reports on Terrorism 2011 - Philippines

Overview: The Philippines maintained its strong counterterrorism cooperation with the United States. The ability of terrorist groups, including the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), Jemaah Islamiya (JI), and the Communist People's Party/New People's Army (CPP/NPA), to conduct terrorist activities inside the Philippines remained constrained. Terrorist groups' acts were generally limited to criminal activities designed to generate revenue for self-sustainment, such as kidnapping or extortion. Nonetheless, members of these groups were suspected to have carried out bombings against government, public, and private facilities, primarily in the central and western areas of Mindanao; others were linked to extortion operations in other parts of the country.

In January, the Aquino administration began implementation of its 2011-2016 Internal Peace and Security Plan (IPSP). The IPSP recognizes that achieving lasting peace, security, and economic development requires a "whole of nation" approach, including increasingly transferring internal security functions from the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to the Philippine National Police (PNP). Joint military/police task forces and interagency operations cells were created in the southern Philippines in Zamboanga, Sulu, and Basilan, and an anti-kidnapping-for-ransom group was created in Marawi with military and police participation. The PNP also established a national Crisis Action Force that combined ground, air, and marine units into a unified terrorist/crisis first response unit. The increasing role of the police in maintaining internal security in conflict-affected areas will permit the AFP to shift its focus to enhancing the country's maritime security and territorial defense capabilities.

2011 Terrorist Incidents: High profile terrorist incidents included:

- On January 25, five passengers were killed and a dozen injured when a bomb detonated inside a commuter bus on a major highway in Makati, the business center of Manila. No group claimed responsibility and no suspects were arrested although President Aquino announced a reward of one million Philippine pesos (approximately U.S. \$23,500).
- On July 12, U.S. citizen Gerfa Yeatts Lunsman, her U.S. citizen son, and Filipino nephew were abducted by more than a dozen armed men who raided Tigtabon Island, Zamboanga City. According to media reports, involvement by the ASG was suspected. Mrs. Yeatts Lunsman was freed on October 3, and both her nephew (around November 13) and son (December 10) escaped.
- On October 3, 200 members of the CPP/NPA attacked three mines in Surigao del Norte, Mindanao, and destroyed trucks, heavy equipment, barges, and offices. The CPP/NPA's political arm, the National Democratic Front (NDF), asserted that the attacks were aimed at mining companies that did not adequately protect the environment and workers. The Chamber of Mines of the Philippines accused the NDF of using environmental concern as an excuse to extort money from large-scale mining operations in the country.

Legislation and Law Enforcement: In August, Filipino witnesses traveled to the United States to provide testimony in support of U.S. charges related to the 2009 ASG-supported bombing at Kagay, Jolo, which resulted in the death of two U.S. servicemen and one Filipino Marine.

On September 11, President Aquino signed an executive order creating the Coast Watch System to coordinate maritime security operations and help the country protect its maritime boundary against transit by violent extremists.

On November 29, the PNP's Special Action Force group arrested Hussein Ahaddin, a suspect in the bombing three days earlier of a hotel in Zamboanga City that killed three people and injured 27. In 2009, Ahaddin had been arrested for his alleged involvement in a 2002 bombing that killed a U.S. Special Forces counterterrorism advisor and two Filipino civilians, but he was later released. Ahaddin was implicated by the government as being a member of the ASG.

The extradition case continued against Abdul Baser Latip, an ASG leader wanted in the United States to stand trial on criminal hostage-taking charges in the 1993 kidnapping of U.S. national Charles Walton. At year's end, the parties were awaiting a decision by the Regional Trial Court in Manila.

The petition filed in 2010 by the Philippine Department of Justice with the Regional Trial Court in Basilan for the proscription of the ASG as a terrorist group and 202 identified associates as terrorists was pending action at year's end.

The Philippines remained a critical partner nation in the Department of State's Antiterrorism Assistance program, which provided tactical and investigative training to support the transition in the southern Philippines from military to civilian counterterrorism authority in Mindanao.

Countering Terrorist Finance: The Philippines is a member of the Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering (APG), a Financial Action Task Force-style regional body. Legislation to criminalize terrorist finance as a stand-alone offense was pending in the Philippines Congress at year's end. President Aquino formally declared the counterterrorist finance legislation "urgent" under the Philippine Constitution to expedite the legislative process. The Philippines Financial Intelligence Unit must obtain a court order to freeze assets, including those of terrorists and terrorist organizations placed on the United Nations Security Council 1267/1989 and 1988 Sanctions Committee's consolidated lists. The APG noted this requirement is inconsistent with international standards, which call for the preventive freezing of terrorist assets "without delay" from the time of designation. Legislation to address this issue was pending in the Philippine Congress. For further information on money laundering and financial crimes, we refer you to the *2011 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR), Volume 2, Money Laundering and Financial Crimes*: <http://www.state.gov/j/inl/rls/nrcrpt/index.htm>.

Regional and International Cooperation: The Philippines participated in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Defense Ministers' Meeting Plus and supported the establishment of an Experts' Working Group to facilitate counterterrorism cooperation. Through U.S.-sponsored antiterrorism training, the PNP developed contacts with law enforcement agencies in Indonesia and Malaysia.

Countering Radicalization and Violent Extremism: The Philippine government continued its counter-radicalization program: Payapa at Masaganang Pamayanan or PAMANA (Resilient Communities in Conflict Affected Communities). This program, spearheaded by the Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process, was formally launched in Mindanao during the summer to bring peace and development to conflict-affected areas. Additionally, the Philippine government implemented the Bayanihan Leaders Program. This program uses the Philippines' Internal Peace and Security Plan model to identify key stakeholders from the community (including members of the AFP, PNP, Department of Education, Department of Social Welfare and Development, local government, religious community, and youth) as speakers and

mentors for Filipino youth. The Bayanihan Leaders Program seeks to educate audiences about the dangers of recruitment into extremist organizations, create interfaith dialogue, and form lasting mentor relationships with successful individuals in communities.