

# CITIZENS PEACE WATCH

REPORT OF THE FACT-FINDING MISSION TO ZAMBOANGA CITY AND SULU  
FEBRUARY 2008

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Citizens' Peace Watch fact-finding mission to Zamboanga City and Sulu from February 18-21 found proof reinforcing concerns that

- the US has established military basing in the Philippines
- the US is involved in actual combat operations in the country
- the US military has, in complicity with the Philippine military, committed human rights violations in the Philippines
- the US is conducting operations outside the control of the Philippine government and military
- the US military's so-called humanitarian projects are mere cover for military operations that do not benefit the local population
- US basing and intervention in the country is contributing to insecurity and leading to an escalation in conflict

In light of the constitutional violations and actual danger to lives and human rights, the Citizens' Peace Watch

- challenges our elected representatives to take the initiative to demand and conduct Congressional and Senate inquiries into the issue
- demands the suspension of US military deployment to the Philippines, specifically the stationing of the Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines as well as the military exercises, pending fair and independent review of and investigations on their presence and intervention

21 February 2008

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## INTRODUCTION

In February 2008, it was announced that around 6,000 US troops were again coming to the Philippines to take part in the annual Balikatan joint military exercises with Filipino troops. This exercise was but the latest in the continuing, expanding, and deepening US military presence and intervention in the Philippines. Since 2001, an increasing number of such exercises have been held year-round in venues throughout the country from Batanes to Tawi-Tawi. Since 2002, a unit of US Special Operations Forces has been stationed continuously and indefinitely in various camps throughout Mindanao. An increasing number of US warships have been entering and visiting various ports throughout the country. It has become clear that the Philippines now hosts a new, more sophisticated form of US basing.<sup>1</sup> (See map on page 2)

Though less visible than the large bases that the US used to maintain in the Philippines until 1991, this basing's impact is no less direct, its implications on peace and people's security no less threatening. And yet, much of the US military's actions in the Philippines have been concealed from the public, with both the US and Philippine government deliberately attempting to package and project their presence in ways that directly contradict available information. Six years since the first deployment of troops to Mindanao, unanswered questions about their intentions and their actual conduct, as well as their alleged involvement in direct combat actions and their construction of permanent military structures, have been mounting.

Concerned about these developments, social movements and civil society organizations and networks came together to form the Citizens' Peace Watch. An independent initiative of concerned citizens brought together to continuously report on US military presence and intervention in the country, the Citizens' Peace Watch embarked on plans to conduct fact-finding missions, consistent monitoring efforts, research, reporting, lobbying and information campaigns to contribute to the public discussion on the issue.

The Citizens' Peace Watch's first activity was a fact-finding mission to Zamboanga City and Sulu from February 18 to 21, 2008. Zamboanga City is known to host the headquarters of the US Special Forces unit that has been deployed to the Philippines since 2002; some members of this unit have been sent in small groups to Sulu -- site of ongoing military offensives ostensibly targeting the Abu Sayyaf Group.

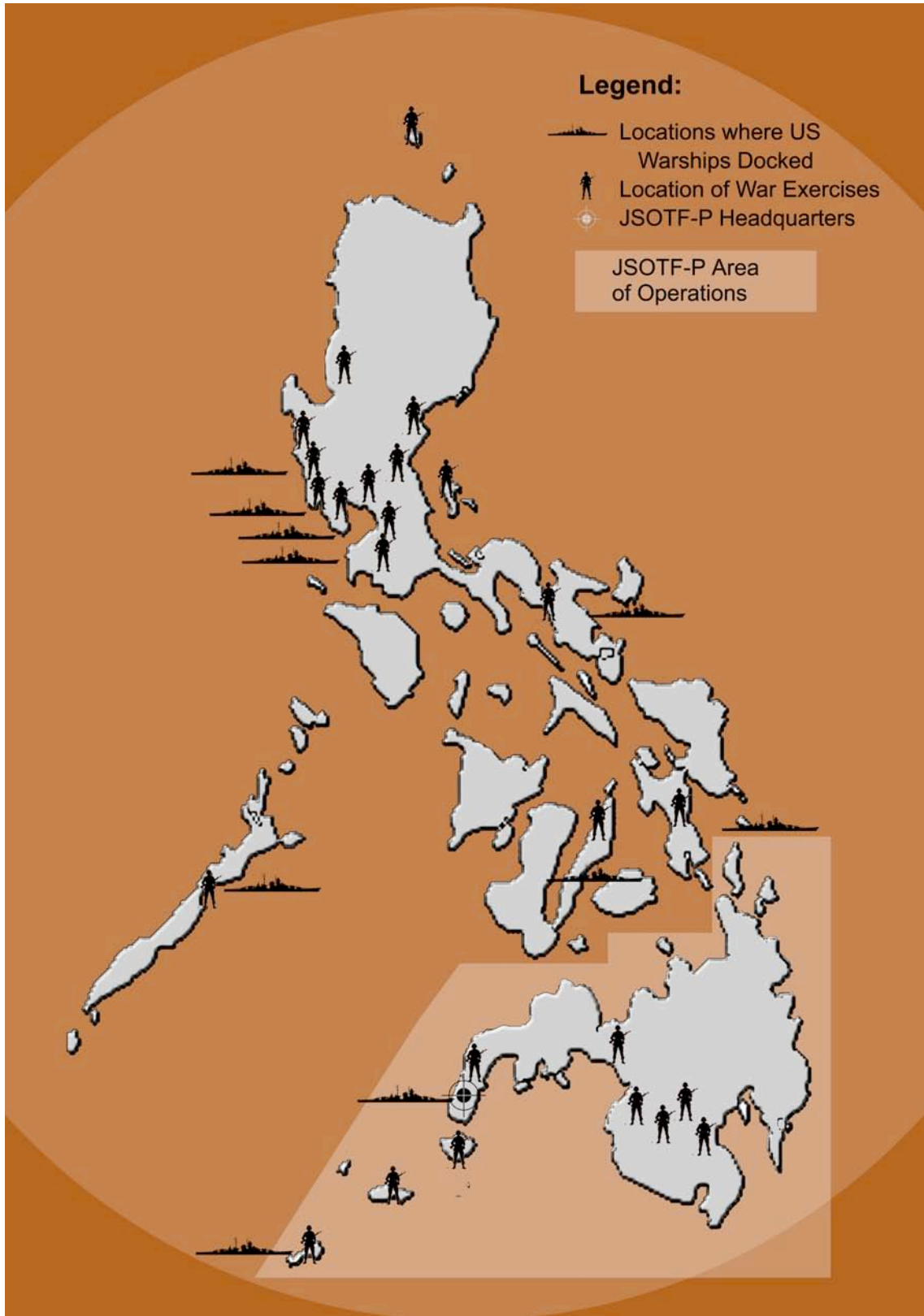
### Objectives

The fact-finding mission's specific objectives were:

- to investigate veracity of reports that US military has established military basing/ presence in the Philippines and to look into the forms such basing or presence have taken
- to investigate role of US military in the operations and to determine accuracy of reports that US troops are involved in combat
- to evaluate the impact of US intervention on the conflict between the Philippine government and Moro movements
- to propose appropriate policy recommendations

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<sup>1</sup> For more details, see Focus on the Global South, *At the Door of All the East: The Philippines in United States Military Strategy* (Quezon City, 2007), <http://www.focusweb.org/docman/at-the-door-of-all-the-east/download.html?Itemid=99999999>;



*US Military Activities in the Philippines, 1992-2007*

## FINDINGS

Beginning in 2007, reports that the US military has been building military facilities in Mindanao and is engaging in actual combat operations in the region have been accumulating. The US and Philippine governments, however, have consistently denied such reports, despite documentary evidence, eyewitness testimonies, as well as admissions by certain US officials and soldiers that contradict the official line.<sup>2</sup>

Dismayed by the government's lack of transparency on the issue, the Citizens' Peace Watch (CPW) conducted a fact-finding mission to Zamboanga and Sulu to directly investigate the matter in the hope of establishing the veracity of the reports, contributing to public discussion on the issue, and raising concrete policy recommendations.

The CPW has learned that the US military unit called the Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines (JSOTF-P) has its headquarters inside the Armed Forces of the Philippines' (AFP) Camp Navarro in Zamboanga City and has its troops deployed in small teams all over Mindanao.<sup>3</sup> The US and Philippine governments have also admitted that the unit is constructing allegedly temporary military facilities – but supposedly not “bases” – in Mindanao.<sup>4</sup> In light of this, the group hoped to find out whether the facilities that have been constructed or that are being constructed constitute military basing which is prohibited under the Philippine constitution. The CPW had also heard of frequent allegations that US troops have been sighted in the vicinity of actual combat operations.

With these in mind, the CPW sought to further probe such allegations to determine whether US actions violate the constitutional prohibition against their involvement in actual combat. Noting that US troops are deploying to an area where active separatist movements operate, the CPW also aimed to evaluate the impact of their intervention on the conflict.

To conduct its mission, the CPW planned to meet with military officials, government officials, local civil society groups and local residents in the two provinces, to inspect the alleged US military facilities, and to speak with US and Filipino troops directly involved in operations.

Asserting their right to information as citizens, the CPW sent official letters to various

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<sup>2</sup> For example, the US Overseas Basing Commission, an official US government body, published a report listing the Philippines as among those countries where the US has been developing a category of US military bases. Various US officials have also confirmed the presence in Zamboanga City of US military facilities that serve as the headquarters of the US Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines. Despite this, the US embassy in Manila maintains that no such bases exist, contradicting the US Overseas Basing Commission and the US troops. See Overseas Basing Commission, *Report to the President and Congress*, Arlington, Virginia, August 15, 2005, p. H11, <http://www.fas.org/irp/agency/dod/obc.pdf> [Accessed August 25, 2007] (See **Annex 1**); Francis Earl A. Cueto, “US won't build bases in RP – Kenney,” *Manila Times*, November 23, 2007; Julie Alipala, “US envoy: We're not building bases in RP; we don't need any,” *Inquirer*, November 23, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Col. Gregory Wilson, “Anatomy of a Successful COIN Operation: OEF-Philippines and the Indirect Approach,” *Military Review*, November to December 2006; Robert Kaplan, *Imperial Grunts: On the Ground with the American Military from Mongolia to the Philippines to Iraq and Beyond*, New York: Vintage Books 2006, p.147; Robert D. Kaplan, *Hog Pilots, Blue Water Grunts: The American Military in the Air, at Sea, and on the Ground* (New York: Random House, 2007), p. 319; T.D. Flack, “Special Operations Force Aiding an Important Ally,” *Stars and Stripes*, March 11, 2007; T.D. Flack, “Special Operations Force Aiding an Important Ally,” *Stars and Stripes*, March 11, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> In August 2007, it was revealed that the US Department of Defense, via a US military construction unit, had granted a contract to a company providing “base operations support” for the JSOTF-P. While denying that the US was constructing bases, the US embassy admitted that US was setting up allegedly “temporary” structures for “medical, logistical, administrative services” and facilities for “for them to eat, sleep and work.” The Philippine's own Visiting Forces Commission also confirmed that the US maintains “living quarters” and stocks supplies inside Philippine military camps. (“Contracts, June 6, 2007,” US Department of Defense, [www.defenselink.mil/contracts/contract.aspx?contractid=3532](http://www.defenselink.mil/contracts/contract.aspx?contractid=3532); “US denies building bases in Mindanao,” *GMANews.TV*, August 27, 2007; Veronica Uy, “VFACom Chief Denies US bases in Mindanao,” *Inquirer.net*, August 24, 2007)



*The Armed Forces of the Philippines' Western Mindanao Command military base in Zamboanga City*

government offices, including the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), the Department of Defense, the Department of Foreign Affairs, and the Visiting Forces Commission as well as the United States Embassy requesting for appointments and for permission to inspect the facilities in question prior to the mission.<sup>5</sup> The CPW successfully got in touch with members of the AFP as well as the JSOTF-P, the US military unit headquartered in Zamboanga City. In response, the AFP officers told the CPW that its requests had been relayed to the concerned officials and that a decision was forthcoming. The AFP even sent agents to go to the CPW secretariat's office and interview the staff of one of the CPW's participating organizations to verify whether said organization actually existed.

In the end, however, the CPW was informed by Captain Vicente Enriquez of the AFP's Western Mindanao Command based in Zamboanga City that the AFP's response to the requests may come "anytime from three months to 2013."<sup>6</sup> Subsequently, the JSOTF-P subsequently sent a formal notice to the CPW saying it had no authority to act on the request and that the CPW should instead seek permission from the AFP.<sup>7</sup> This, in turn, contradicted Capt. Enriquez's statement that the AFP has no power to decide on such requests and that the CPW should instead directly ask for an appointment from the JSOTF-P. In short, the mission was given the run-around; its requests effectively rebuffed.

Despite this, the CPW believes that what it has gathered in its mission - through its meetings with various local residents and civil society groups who directly bear the impact of and witness the actions of the US military in their localities - has deepened its concern that:

<sup>5</sup> See copy of letter in **Annex 2**.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Capt. Vicente Enriquez, February 18, 2008

<sup>7</sup> See copy of letter in **Annex 3**.



*The military base of the US Joint Special Operations Task Force - Philippines (JSOTF-P) inside Camp Navarro in Zamboanga City.*

■ the US has established military basing in the Philippines

Members of the CPW saw with their own eyes the US military base inside the Armed Forces of the Philippines' Camp Navarro in Zamboanga City. It is a base within a base - off-limits to Filipino citizens like us and restricted even to Filipino troops - but a US military base by any definition. It was established that the base belongs to the US JSOTF-P, a US military unit that has been stationed in the country continuously since 2002. This unit is composed mostly of US Special Forces troops with teams deployed in small groups to various Philippine military camps and embedded within Philippine military battalions throughout Mindanao so as not to become conspicuous. In Sulu, locals the CPW spoke with claim that US troops have constructed training camps and have installed themselves inside camps formerly occupied by the Moro National Liberation Front.<sup>8</sup>

That members of the Philippine military are unaware of US troops' actions inside their own base was also confirmed by Capt. Enriquez, who claimed he has no idea about what goes on inside the US military compound in Camp Navarro because they are not allowed to enter it. Capt Enriquez also stated that he does not know how many US troops are staying inside their camp. When asked about control over the US troops, Capt. Enriquez said that the US troops have their own commanding officer and that Filipino troops have no say over the actions of US troops inside the Philippine military camp.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Interviews with Sulu residents, February 19-20, 2008.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Capt. Vicente Enriquez, February 18, 2008



*Members of the Citizens Peace Watch meeting with local residents in Sulu.*

The CPW notes that the presence of the base in Zamboanga City directly violates the 1987 Constitution which expressly prohibits foreign military bases in the country and reverses the Filipino people's decision to end US military presence in the Philippines in 1991.

- the US is involved in actual combat operations in the country

The CPW went to Barangay Ipil, Maimbung, Sulu, site of a military operation that resulted in the death of innocent civilians and in which the US military was involved, as indicated by witnesses' testimonies and a Filipino general's direct admission.

Members of the mission spoke directly with witnesses, neighbors, and some of the relatives of the nine people killed in this operation on February 4, 2008.<sup>10</sup> Among the victims were a pregnant woman, a four-year old child and a nine-year-old child. The killings have been described as "wanton carnage" and "absolute mayhem" by the Philippine government's own Commission on Human Rights (CHR) and denounced even by the provincial governor.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Eight were initially killed but a ninth casualty later died.

<sup>11</sup> See complete report of the Philippine Commission on Human Rights Region IX office, docketed as CHR-IX-2008-2221 and approved by Atty. Jose Manuel S. Mamauag MNSA (See **Annex 4**); Sulu Media Desk, "Sulu Government Condemns Killing Of Civilians," February 5, 2008 (**Annex 5**).



*The father-in-law of one of the victims re-enacting what happened during the military operation in Barangay Ipil, Maimbung, Sulu.*

In Barangay Ipil, the CPW heard testimonies challenging the military's claims that the attack was aimed at the Abu Sayyaf and that the victims were Abu Sayyaf members. The residents the CPW spoke with claim that it was the soldiers that first opened fire on the people, that the residents were not able to fire back, that they repeatedly told the soldiers they are civilians, and that the military summarily executed the victims. The children were killed, according to their father, while fleeing on a boat. All these corroborated affidavits earlier executed by other witnesses and relatives.<sup>12</sup>

Various testimonies point to US military involvement in the killings. Gen. Ruben Rafael, commander of Philippine troops in Sulu himself subsequently categorically admitted in an interview with the *Los Angeles Times* that the crew of a U.S. military spy plane provided the intelligence that led to the killing.<sup>13</sup> At least one person, Rowina Wahid, the widow of one of the victims and who directly witnessed the massacre, has gone on record to claim that she saw four US troops in the Navy boat where the body of her dead husband was taken right after the killings. The American soldiers were "in camouflage uniform in good mood and happy," Wahid stated in her affidavit.<sup>14</sup> Her statement was corroborated by vendors along the wharf of the Jolo port, who claimed to have seen the US soldiers disembark from

<sup>12</sup> Affidavits of Rudy Failan and Saida Failan, Kasra Ibla, Kassi Agas, Satra Lahim, Myrna Lahim, Imam Gabir Tanjilul, Rowina Wahid (**Annexes 6 to 12 respectively**); Sinumpaang Salaysay ni Shatra Lahim, Odab Lahim, Abdul Lahim (**Annexes 13 to 15 respectively**)

<sup>13</sup> Paul Watson, "U.S. role in Philippine raid questioned," *Los Angeles Times*, March 9, 2008 (See as **Annex 16**)

<sup>14</sup> Affidavit of Rowina Wahid (See **Annex 12**); Julie Alipala, "Sulu 'massacre' survivor claims seeing US soldiers," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, February 7, 2008



*Burnt houses in Barangay Ipil, Maimbung, Sulu*

the Navy boat with Wahid.<sup>15</sup>

All these are consistent with previous testimonies and admissions indicating that US troops are not just “training” or “advising” Filipino troops without participating in the fighting. US troops have been authorized to accompany Filipino troops when they move around and to fire back in case they get shot at. In fact, in at least one known incident, they have actually engaged in a firefight with hostile forces.<sup>16</sup> Apart from the people in Barangay Ipil, the CPW also spoke with a number of other residents who also claimed to have seen US troops in the vicinity of the fighting in other operations in other parts of Sulu, including the one in Indanan in November 2005.<sup>17</sup>

The CPW rejects the false dichotomy being set by the US and Philippine governments between indirect and direct combat. The CPW stresses that US troops themselves describe their mission in Sulu as “unconventional warfare” and “counter-insurgency” – and not just as humanitarian missions or as training exercises. The CPW notes that US troops themselves are known to collect “actionable intelligence,” operate spy planes, remove landmines, transport casualties, and undertake other actions as part of joint US-Philippine military operations.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Statement of Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society, “A Cry for Justice, a Cry for Peace,” February 9, 2008 (**Annex 17**)

<sup>16</sup> John Hendren, “Rebels shoot at US troops in the Philippines,” Los Angeles Times, June 18, 2002; Army Magazine, “News Call,” August 1, 2002.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Sulu residents, February 19-20, 2008; See also Focus on the Global South, *Unconventional Warfare: Are US Special Forces Engaged in an ‘Offensive War’ in the Philippines?* (Quezon City, 2007), [http://www.focusweb.org/index.php?option=com\\_remository&Itemid=105&func=fileinfo&id=23](http://www.focusweb.org/index.php?option=com_remository&Itemid=105&func=fileinfo&id=23)

<sup>18</sup> *Unconventional Warfare*

The CPW maintains that all these constitute involvement in “actual combat” – something barred by the Philippine Constitution, as affirmed by the Supreme Court.<sup>19</sup>

■ the US military has, in complicity with the Philippine military, committed human rights violations in the Philippines

People in Sulu recounted many cases of serious but unresolved human rights violations allegedly committed by the Philippine military, including summary executions, disappearances, and the killing of civilians. In various incidents in the past, the Philippine military claimed to have killed Abu Sayyaf members only to be disputed by members of the community who claim that those killed were not members of the Abu Sayyaf but of the MNLF or else, were civilians. None of these cases have been resolved in court. In the heavily militarized province, many witnesses fear for their lives and refuse to testify. Despite the Commission on Human Rights recommendation to prosecute those involved in the Maimbung incident for murder, for example, the military absolved its members of any wrongdoing.<sup>20</sup>

Since US and Filipino troops undertake operations jointly and since US troops provide the intelligence and the training for the Filipino troops to be able to operate, the actions of US troops cannot be separated from the actions of Filipino troops. The massacre in Maimbung, for example, was perpetrated by the very unit, the Light Reaction Company of the AFP, that was specifically trained by the US Special Forces; moreover, as stated earlier, it was a US military spy plane that provided the information that was used in the killing of civilians.

In taking part in “actual combat”, US troops should also be investigated and held accountable for various human rights violations blamed on the Philippine military by local residents, including specifically the latest massacre of civilians in Maimbung, with fatalities including the four-year-old Marissa Faylan, whose frail body was peppered with gunshots; a nine-year-old Resme Lahim, who was shot at the back of the head while trying to flee towards a boat for safety; a three-month pregnant Narsiya Akub and Jamira Kirah Lahim, who, out of fear and extreme danger, jumped off from the boat to evade the gunshots being fired at the boat they were riding; Arnalyn Lahim, Eldisin Lahim and Sulayman Akub and Ibon Wahid.<sup>21</sup>

■ the US is conducting operations outside the control of the Philippine government and military

The CPW spoke directly with Dr. Silak Lakkian, director of the Panamao District Hospital, who recounted how US troops ordered the closure of the hospital for a month starting on November 30, 2007 and threatened to shoot anyone who defies their order -- without the consent or knowledge of the Philippine government and military.<sup>22</sup>

The CPW notes that Dr. Lakkian, a respected doctor who herself admits to have cooperated with the US military in their medical missions in the province, has no reason to make things up and finds her allegation beyond reproach. This incident has revealed that the US military is conducting operations unilaterally outside the control of the Philippine government. It further undermines the claim that the US

<sup>19</sup> Text of Philippine Supreme Court decision, April 11, 2002.

<sup>20</sup> “RP Military Absolves Troops In Sulu Massacre,” *Mindanao Examiner*, February 27, 2008

<sup>21</sup> Affidavits of Rudy Failan and Saida Failan, Kasra Ibla, Kassi Agas, Satra Lahim, Myrna Lahim, Imam Gabir Tanjilul, Rowina Wahid (**Annexes 6 to 12 respectively**); Sinumpaang Salaysay ni Shatra Lahim, Odab Lahim, Abdul Lahim (**Annexes 13 to 15 respectively**). See also the Report/Findings of Commission on Human Rights Region IX Investigating Team (**Annex 4**).

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Dr. Silak Lakkian, February 19, 2008; See also Letter of Dr. Silak Lakkian to Sulu Provincial Governor Abdusakur M. Tan, December 28, 2007 (**Annex 18**).

troops are merely training or conducting humanitarian missions in the country for if they were, then they would not be ordering the closure of any hospital.

This, and other incidents, also raise questions about the relationship between the US and Philippine military, as to who is superior and who is subordinate. Capt. Enriquez, the AFP official who was tasked to receive and send away the CPW at the Western Mindanao Command, said - when pressed by the CPW - that he disapproves of the practice of higher-ranking Filipino officers saluting lower ranking US troops or acting as "bodyguards" for them, effectively implying that such a practice indeed happens. Capt. Enriquez also expressed his disagreement with the notion that US troops are training Filipino soldiers because Filipino soldiers, according to him, are much more knowledgeable in their particular missions than US troops.<sup>23</sup>

■ the US military's so-called humanitarian projects are mere cover for military operations that do not benefit the local population

The US troops' order to close the Panamao District Hospital and deprive a town of about 40,000 people of medical care every night for about a month has undermined the US military's so-called humanitarian concern for the people of Sulu. This is blatant violation of the people's basic human right to health services.

Apart from this incident, various other cases raise questions about the sincerity and effectiveness of the US military's "humanitarian missions." The CPW was informed that in one incident, US troops handed out expired medicines to locals. According to locals the CPW interviewed, many of the promised projects have yet to materialize. Of those that have been finished, they appear to be intended more for the US military than for the local population: Various wharves constructed in Sulu, for example, are too large for locals' small pumpboats and fishing vessels and are more suited for larger ships - indicating that they were constructed more for the US military in mind than for the locals'. In fact, a US-constructed road in Bato-bato was at one point restricted from being used by locals. Local residents also repeatedly asked the question: Why do soldiers - and not civilian engineers or doctors - have to conduct the "humanitarian" missions?<sup>24</sup>

The CPW notes that the US' so-called humanitarian and engineering projects have military aims for "winning hearts and minds" and are considered by the US military as integral to "counter-insurgency."<sup>25</sup> The CPW is concerned that such projects are effectively bribes to lure an impoverished people - deprived essential services and infrastructure by the Philippine government - to support US military objectives in their desperation.

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with Capt. Vicente Enriquez, February 18, 2008

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Sulu residents, February 19-20, 2008.

<sup>25</sup> US Army Field Manual No. 3.05.20; See *Unconventional Warfare*.



*Members of the Citizens Peace Watch meeting with Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) officials and members.*

■ US basing and intervention in the country is contributing to insecurity and leading to an escalation in conflict

With around 13,000 Philippine Marines said to be deployed to the province, the small island of Sulu is arguably the most militarized area in the Philippines today. Local residents interviewed by the CPW said that the presence of fully armed US troops going around in public has further increased people's anxieties and deepened their sense of insecurity.

The CPW spoke with officials and members of the Moro National Liberation Front, whose fragile peace agreement with the government has been continuously undermined in the last few years. They told the CPW, in no uncertain terms, that they now see the US military – because of their obvious support for the Philippine military in their operations against them and against the Moro people – as enemies.<sup>26</sup> The CPW notes how, in fact, in various incidents, Philippine military offensives that were claimed by Filipino officials as being aimed against the so-called Abu Sayyaf group turned out to be aimed against MNLF fighters or civilians.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Moro National Liberation Front leaders and members, February 20, 2008

The CPW also notes how, elsewhere in Mindanao, US military presence has been viewed with trepidation and outright opposition by locals.<sup>27</sup> These fears have grown in light of the impasse in the negotiations between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). In Midsayap, Cotabato, for instance, the areas where US troops will reportedly go to for their missions are the same areas identified to be controlled by the MILF. The CPW is concerned that US military support for the Philippine military in their operations against Moros further undermines the peace agreement and the peace negotiations.

By supporting one side in the conflict, the US draws the parties away from a just and lasting resolution to the war and could even potentially trigger an escalation. If US forces are seen as enemies and are targeted as such, and the US finds the justification to retaliate, the conditions are ripe for a wider, more destructive war.

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<sup>27</sup> This has been observed in the past. See for example Mindanao People's Peace Mission to Sulu, "Summary Report and Recommendations," December 19-26, 2005

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Now that the truth about US military basing and intervention in the Philippines is emerging, and its dangerous implications on us becoming clearer, it is time to act. With the US expanding its presence beyond Sulu to more areas in Mindanao, acting becomes even more urgent.

The CPW challenges our elected representatives to take the initiative to demand and conduct Congressional and Senate inquiries into the issue.

Meanwhile, the CPW demands the suspension of US military deployment to the Philippines, specifically the stationing of the Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines as well as the military exercises, pending fair and independent review of and investigations on their presence and intervention.

The CPW resolves to step up our efforts to understand, monitor, and scrutinize US military presence and intervention in the country.

The CPW calls on concerned Filipinos, civil society groups, and social movements to join us in our quest for transparency, and for peace. The truth about US military basing and intervention in the Philippines will not come from governments determined to conceal it; we citizens will have to pursue it ourselves.

21 February 2008

## **MEMBERS OF THE MISSION**

The members of the fact-finding mission came from or represented the following organizations and formations:

Akbayan! Party-list  
Alyansa ng Kabataan sa Mindanao para sa Kapayapaan  
Anak Mindanao Party List  
Balay Rehabilitation Center  
Bangsamoro Women's Foundation  
Citizen's Coalition for Human Rights  
Focus on the Global South  
KaisaKa  
Kilusan para sa Pambansang Demokrasya  
Lanao Alliance of Human Rights Advocates  
Mindanao Peoples Caucus  
Mindanao Peoples Peace Movement  
Mindanao Tri-People Women Forum  
Moro Human Rights Center  
Muslim Women's Organization  
Peace Women Partners  
Peacebuilders Community  
Pinay Kilos  
Resource Center for People's Development  
STOP the War Coalition Philippines  
Sumpay Mindanao  
Task Force Detainees of the Philippines  
Tulong Lupah Sug, Inc

## ANNEX 1 – US Overseas Basing Commission Report to the President and Congress, p. H.11

CURRENT BASING POSTURE: PACIFIC COMMAND

in Iwakuni on the main islands. This force of approximately 20,000 is made up of a combined arms task force and supporting elements. As part of the adjusted footprint, most of the headquarters elements may move, reducing Marine presence on Okinawa by up to 8000 personnel.

The Navy maintains the 7th Fleet Headquarters at Yokosuka as well as the Kitty Hawk Carrier Strike Group. The Navy elements of an Expeditionary Strike Group are homeported at Sasebo. The Air Force maintains 4 fighter squadrons and 6 support squadrons in Japan.<sup>14</sup>

### SINGAPORE

Singapore supports the only Forward Operating Site (FOS) in the PACOM region. The facilities host a Navy and Air Force logistics support contingent and may in the future host a SOF element. A combined command center is being developed by the Singapore government that can be used for maritime command and control.

### CSL

A series of CSLs are being developed in India, Thailand, Philippines, and Australia that will be able to provide logistics arrangements for support throughout the region. Many of these will simply be fueling arrangements and perhaps some pre-positioned stocks. Australia will also host the Joint/Combined Training Capability connecting their range system to the U.S. Joint National Training Center.

### GUAM

There is potential for III MEF HQs relocation from Okinawa to Guam. This will necessitate significant infrastructure development of up to \$2.9 billion. Anderson AFB will be developed as a Strike/ISR hub with up to two squadrons of tactical aviation, rotational bomber presence, and a Global Hawk detachment. The Navy will continue the use of Guam as a submarine base with facilities for support for the SSGN. Guam is also a potential site for a Carrier Strike Group.

### HAWAII

Hawaii will play a significant role in PACOM transformation with the establishment of a Stryker Brigade with attendant C-17 lift at Hickham AFB. Oahu is also another potential site for Carrier Strike Group homeporting. As part of Air Force transformation, an Air Force Warfighting Headquarters will be established at Hickham.

<sup>14</sup> GlobalSecurity.org website<< [www.globalsecurity.org](http://www.globalsecurity.org)>>

**ANNEX 2 - Letter of CPW to US JSOTF-P**

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CITIZENS' PEACE WATCH

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American Embassy Manila

Col. David Maxwell  
Commander,  
Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines

FEB 14 2008

Dear Col. Maxwell:

Received by: Manuel P. Manalaysay  
Mail Screener/IM Distribution

Greetings of peace.

The Citizens' Peace Watch is an independent initiative of concerned citizens brought together by various non-government organizations and other civil society groups to continuously and consistently monitor the peace and security situation in the country in order to contribute to well-informed public debates and policy discussions.

The Balikatan 2008, which is scheduled to be held this February to March, along with the continuing presence of US Special Forces troops in Mindanao, is an issue that has deep implications on peace and human rights.

In our effort to understand these implications, we are organizing an exploratory trip to Mindanao in order to hear first-hand from the various actors involved.

In line with this, we would like to request for a meeting with your office on February 18, 2008.

In the interest of transparency and the public's right to information, we would also like to request to be able to visit and inspect the places where the US military are staying and working. We are aware that the headquarters of the Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines is located inside Camp Navarro in Zamboanga City, and that some of the troops belonging to this unit are embedded inside Philippine military camps in Sulu, such as in the camp of the 104<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade and the Marines.

We believe that these meetings and visits will go a long way to help us understand the issue, clarify questions, and appreciate the complexities of the issues at hand.

We look forward to your positive response. We hope to follow up with your office and we can be reached at 02-927-6309; 0922-884-1247; 0917-887-1153.

Respectfully yours,



**ATTY. CORAZON FABROS**  
Citizens' Peace Watch

CC:

Secretary Gilbert Teodoro, Department of Defense  
Secretary Alberto Romulo, Department of Foreign Affairs  
Gen. Hermogenes Esperon, Chief of Staff, Armed Forces of the Philippines  
Gen. Edilberto Adan, Executive Director, Visiting Forces Commission  
Ambassador Kristie Kenney, Embassy of the United States of America  
Senator Miriam Defensor-Santiago, chair, Legislative Oversight Committee on the VFA

**ANNEX 3 – Letter of US JSOTF-P to CPW**

FROM : JSOTFP\_FWD

PHX NO. : 2453764

Feb. 18 2008 07:57PM P1



**OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM – PHILIPPINES**  
**JOINT SPECIAL OPERATIONS TASK FORCE – PHILIPPINES**  
**CAMP NAVARRO, ZAMBOANGA CITY**  
**REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES**  
**APO AP 96401**



Commander, JSOTF-P

17 February 2008

Dear Atty. Fabros,

I am in receipt of your letter dated February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2008 from the CITIZENS' PEACE WATCH.

I regret that I will be unable to meet with you on February 18<sup>th</sup> as you had requested. I will not be in the local area.

I have forwarded your letter to the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) at Camp Navarro, Western Mindanao Command.

The Joint Special Operations Task Force is a guest of the Government of the Philippines and the AFP. I would refer you to this office to coordinate, as we do not have the authority to grant such requests.

Thank you and best wishes in this New Year.

Very Respectfully,

WILLIAM J. COULTRUP  
Colonel, U.S. Army  
Commanding

**ANNEX 4 – Commission on Human Rights Report on Maimbung**

Republic of the Philippines  
**COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS – IX**  
 Zamboanga City

In Re: CHR-IX-2008-2221  
 (Attacked on Sleeping Residents of Barangay Ipil, Maimbung, Sulu)

The Facts:

On February 4, 2008, at around 2:30 in the morning, while the rest of the Filipinos were asleep, a group of Philippine Navy's SWAG & Philippine Army's Light Reaction Company swooped down on the coastal barangay of Ipil, in the town of Maimbung, Sulu, and without warning started firing with guns and rifle grenades. The hapless civilians, numbering around 20 families, whose main source of living is small time fishing and 'agar-agar farming', were awakened from their sleep and started to go down from their stilt houses and scampered to safety. After the indiscriminate attack, eight (8) civilians lay dead.

One witness, who happened to become an instant widow, narrated she was with her Army Integree husband, *Corporal Ibon Wahid*, at the time of the attack, where at her mother's house, when suddenly soldiers barged into the house, while her husband was shouting "Papa Alpha! Papa Alpha!" (meaning Philippine Army), to identify himself as an Armyman, where all the rest of the family members raised their hands up. Ignored and in confusion, the raiding soldiers started to hogtie the hands of the victim behind his back, tortured him and hit him with their guns, backstroked and brought downstairs below the house.

While downstairs, the soldiers' firearms were pointed at the back of the head of the MNLF Integree, as then wife-witness begged to spare her husband from death, even to the extent of showing items to identify her husband, like photos of his in military uniform, his military camouflage and identification card, to no avail. The soldiers shot her husband in cold-blood, who was in half-kneeling position, at the back of his head. His dead body was first brought inside the house and then carried away into the naval patrol boat.

The witness-wife was also arrested and brought to the navy boat where she saw 4 American soldiers, smiling and in jovial mood. She saw also some goats, generators (including theirs) and some personal belongings being put on board. The issued long firearm & the armyman's short firearm were also taken by the government soldiers. Arriving at Jolo Army Brigade camp, she saw the cadaver of her husband brought inside a mosque while she was detained inside the barracks, left alone & no subsequent investigation on her took place. She was released late that afternoon and went home to nearby Barangay Bualo, where they actually resides and then again saw her husband's body. They buried her husband after the Muslim rites were officiated.

Other witnesses testified that on the same initial attacked early that dawn, hearing heavy gun fires & rifle grenade explosions, they immediately scampered below their adjacent houses and went down towards 2 wooden boats (banas) to escape towards a nearby mangrove area. There were 17 persons among them, mostly women, children & elderly. While fleeing, one banca was fired upon and was hit thus making it immobile. Not far from the attack, they figured for a while that they were safe only to be fired at again by the same attacking soldiers from a

different direction. With lighted flares above, they saw soldiers directly firing at them. Instantly, 4 of their companions died, namely; *19 year-old Arnalyn Lahim; 4 years old Marissa Faylan; 9 years-old Resmi Lahim & 24 year-old Sulayman Akub*. This banca however, managed to escape into a nearby Talipao town, in barangay Lumapid. Back at the mangrove area, another banca was in serious trouble and while being fired upon, they were shouting "Tama na! Mga civilian lang kami!" ("Stop firing! We are civilians!"), but the firing did not stop at all. In haste, 2 other companions of theirs were either hit or went overboard, and hours later, their 2 bodies were recovered, with gunshot wounds on them, they are *35 year-old Jamiri Kira Lahim*, the father of Arnalyn, & a *3-month pregnant Narsiya Akub*, wife of casualty Sulayman.

Another set of witnesses accounted that immediately after the first burst of gun fires, they went downstairs and sought cover thereat as flares were fired above. Still the firing continued as these witnesses saw the soldiers in military uniform, identifying them in their patches as 'special forces'. With bullets grazing over their heads, the unarmed civilians kept shouting "Mga civilian kami!" ("We are civilians!") repeatedly. Their not being able to run for safety was good enough for them as no one from their group died. Located by the soldiers, they were then surrounded and herded together, with guns pointed at them. The soldiers got the residents' gasoline and poured it into their houses and started to burn their houses. A woman resident angrily asked one soldier why do they have to burn their houses, the soldier just merely looked at her and spat to the ground. A total of 3 houses were deliberately set on fire. Before the conflagration, some of their personal belongings and 2 pump boats (motorized) were taken by the soldiers.

Another victim, *34-year old barangay kagawad Ardisin Lahim* was recovered near his house, very much close to the house of the dead armyman.

All 7 civilian victims were buried at nearby Barangay Kandang, also in Maimbung town, prepared and solemnized by Imam Gabir Tanjilul, on the same date of the attack, while the other victim, armyman Wahid was buried in his native Barangay Bualo at the same town.

Only one was reported wounded, Myrna Lahim, mother of casualty Arnalyn and wife of another casualty Jamiri Lahim above. She is now recuperating from her wounds but not from the grief due to the loss of her loved ones.

The military soldiers stayed at Barangay Ipil until daybreak doing clearing operations, taking some of the residents' personal belongings, a number of livestock and together brought the 4 dead bodies of the victims onboard the navy patrol boat. The boat thereafter proceeded to the 104<sup>th</sup> Army brigade.

While most of the barangay residents not directly affected have returned to the area, most of those residing in stilt houses where the actual incident occurred have not returned as of now, while those whose houses were deliberately burned by the soldiers are now staying with relatives elsewhere.

On the day the CHR probers arrived in Jolo to conduct independent investigation, a marine senior officer courteously invited them to meet the Sulu military commander at the Army camp, where the marine officer informed that even if the place of incident falls under his (marines) area of responsibility, he voluntarily informed that his marine unit was not involved in it. After having an audience with the Army general in the camp, the latter also provided the CHR probers the following: that it was a legitimate encounter – due to the fact that 2 government

soldiers died & score others were wounded during the encounter; that there were only 4 civilian casualties in the firefight – due to crossfires; that they were able to recover firearms at the are of operation; that there was one among the dead identified as member of the Abu Sayyaf Group – which turned out to be barangay kagawad Ardisin Lahim – such information is not true, according to the residents thereat.

The incident shows the following:

1. There was neither the presence nor involvement of the dreaded Abu Sayyaf bandits. There was no proof that prior information of the presence of the ASG were sighted or culled in the area, before, during or after the attack.
2. There was no presence of the previous kidnap victim in another kidnapping case, in the area, before, during or after the attack.
3. The issue of family feud as the main cause of the attack is baseless, considering that the involved feuding families were also victims of the incident.
4. The first volume of opening fires that may have closely emanated from the Wahid house, and it may or may not have caused the instant death & wounding of the military attackers as Wahid may have mistakenly took the soldiers as marauders, and in self-defense, could have fired the same – However, as the sequence of events followed, the armyman was shouting to advance recognition as a government soldier “Papa Alpha! Papa Alpha!” (meaning PA), just as the events unfolded – he was maltreated, tortured, hogtied and eventually shot to death on cold blood – from behind & in the presence of his wife, who was also begging to spare his life by presenting army ID & military clothing as proof of service – but to no avail. The armyman’s torture and shooting to death is not an isolated case that transpired after the opening shots were fired that immediately hit 2 soldiers dead & scores wounded – as the military authorities declared.
5. The operational tactic of engulfing the area in question may or may have caused the unnecessary deaths and wounding others on the government troops – all coming in rapid succession – bullets from friendly forces, i.e. the possibility of one direction of troop deployment miscalculated the presence of another direction of troops, albeit, friendly, may have caused those government casualties.
6. The issue of legitimate encounter – coupled with the consequent death of government soldiers – cannot hold water, in view of the witness’ separate accounts that the civilians were directly fired at and pursued without let-up, however halted when scores of unarmed residents died as a result – more so, while at it (firing directly at the fleeing civilians) – all were shouting at the top of their lungs – “Tama na! Mga civilian Lang kami!” (“Stop firing! We are civilians!”).

The Issues:

Under AFP’s Internal Security Operations (Part A) Teaching File, it states “In general, firearms should not be used except when a suspected offender offers armed resistance or

otherwise jeopardizes the lives of others, and less extreme measures are not sufficient to restrain or apprehend the suspected offender.”

In the same breath it states “ensure that firearms are used only in appropriate circumstances and in a manner likely to decrease the risk of unnecessary harm. Prohibit the use of firearms and ammunition that caused unwarranted injury or present an unwarranted risk.

In the instant incident, was there such protective measure carried out or accorded to the non-combatants or civilians thereat – begs the question to it as the resulting foray only killed unarmed civilians. Those civilians within the civilian population, like barangay Ipil, are the largest group of protected individuals, whether in internal security operations or internal armed conflict. That civilians are considered not military targets is a basic rule in such a situation.

The presence of individuals, who are not civilians, does not deprive the civilian population of its civilian character.

Was the military aggression used during such attack justified? With eight (8) civilians killed in the aftermath, such use of degree of force by the SWAG & LRC was not necessary to achieve the objective of the mission (whatever it may be) as heavy losses of human lives, especially that of civilians as “incident damage” cannot justify the attack.

The fact that the February 4, 2008 attack, based on a military objective caused the death of civilians does make it illegal because the incidental damage (civilians killed) is excessive in relation to the concrete & direct military advantage as anticipated.

The attack cannot be considered an accomplished military objective but a deliberate collateral damage, if not, absolute mayhem.

The law of applicability in any given situation, either in the course of internal security operations or that of internal armed conflict is domestic law, specifically the domestic penal code which would certainly fits into the facts as occurring to that of the elements of the offense or crime, as the case may be.

Deliberate killings of non-combatants as may be gleaned from the facts above is prohibited murder under the penal law of the land, where such victims, as their very nature so suggest - that being marginalized and defenseless – makes the offense aggravating – tantamount to state murder.

The 2 important rights that should always be upheld and ensured during internal security operations belongs to the right to life and the right to be free from torture – were such rights can never be derogated even in times of specific public emergency or in internal armed conflict situation. Violations of these 2 primacy rights are attendant to the incident at hand.

On Command Responsibility: Under the February 4, 2007 directive of AFP Chief of Staff, General Hermogenes C. Esperon Jr. to the different AFP commanders on “Strict adherence to the doctrine of command responsibility” specifically:

x x x x x

3. Command responsibility refers to the "accountability or responsibility or answerability of the commander of a Military Force or Unit for the acts of his men, inclusive of the authority to order, to direct, to prevent or control the acts of his men.

4. It should be stressed that a commander is duty-bound to closely monitor, supervise, direct, coordinate, and control the overall activities of his subordinates within his area of operations, and can and shall be held administratively accountable for neglect of duty in taking appropriate action to discipline his men.

x x x

6. Neglect of Duty Under the Doctrine of "Command Responsibility" – Any AFP Officer shall be held accountable for neglect of duty under the doctrine of command responsibility if he has knowledge that a crime or offense shall be committed, is being committed, or has been committed by his subordinates, or by others within his area of responsibility and, despite such knowledge, he did not take preventive or corrective action either before, during, or immediately after its commission.

7. Presumption of Knowledge – A Commanding Office is presumed to have knowledge of the commission of irregularities or criminal offenses within his area of responsibility in any of the following circumstances:

- a) When the irregularities or illegal acts are widespread within his area of jurisdiction.
- b) When the irregularities or illegal acts have been repeatedly or regularly committed within his area of responsibility; or
- c) When members of his immediate staff or office personnel are involved.

The Recommendations:

From all indications, the February 4, 2008 Barangay Ipil incident is a clear case of grave breaches of human rights of the victims – a violation of human rights. It is therefore, recommended that:

- Criminal & administrative prosecution be charged against members & officers of the Philippine Navy Special Warfare Group & those from Philippine Army's special Light Reaction Company involved directly or indirectly, in the mission, planning, operation, intelligence gathering, command & control of the incident, for the deaths of the victims, under the principles of direct participation and command responsibility;
- Concerned national government agencies & local government units to extend all possible assistance, compensation, material or otherwise, rehabilitation, psychological & traumatic therapy, stress-debriefing, counseling, or any assistance to recoup and repatriate the lives of the survivors;

- Right to Reparation, as the duty of government to protect its own citizens were not observed but violated. It is not the victims' own doing that triggered the incident;
- Re-orient the agents of the government, especially the AFP, on its paramount responsibilities on the rights of citizens and state obligations and cultural sensibility and non-discrimination; and;
- For the CHRP – to immediately extend financial assistance to the victims as may be provided for by law through Survivors Benefits, Medical Assistance and Community Assistance, respectively.

The investigative expedition from CHR9 has reached the very site of the incident and managed to document, picture and illustrate the tragic consequences of the wanton carnage which occurred on that fateful dawn of February 4, 2008. True enough, the pictures that were secured may not be describable through mere rhetorics and poetic articulation as they blatantly speak for themselves. Separate witness accounts have also allowed our team to piece together a more vivid perspective of the community, the site of its residents and that of the government troops' tactical position.


We have seen on the faces of the surviving villagers the gloomy future ahead of them. Traumatized and scared is an understatement. The incident may not be the last of the Mohicans, as others may believe; it is merely a cycle of violence & sufferings. Woe, to the believers.

The victim's anger and their hunger for justice shall be the only possible means to recuperate from their seemingly longest nightmare in life.

Submitted by:

Reynaldo L. Ituralde  
Brendo D. Morales  
Raul S. Quibuyen  
Joey S. Ling  
*CHR9 Investigating Team*

Approved by:

  
ATTY. JOSE MANUEL S. MAMAUAG MNSA  
Regional HR Director - IX

**ANNEX 5 – Sulu Media Desk press release****PRESS RELEASE:**

**SULU, Philippines** (February 05, 2008) – Sulu Governor Sakur Tan on Tuesday condemned the killings of innocent civilians by government troops on a coastal village in Maimbung town.

Tan said seven villagers and a soldier who was on a break, were killed, including two children and two teenagers, in the town during a military operation early Monday. "Innocent civilians were killed. The children were shot in the head," he said.

Tan led provincial government officials on Tuesday in condemning the killings and he said they will file criminal charges against those involved in the raid. The Provincial Legislative Council also passed a resolution condemning the killings.

"We condemned the killings and those soldiers involved in the murder of innocent people must be charged in court and pay for their crimes," Tan said.

The Philippine flags were flown at half-mast in Sulu province on Tuesday to mourn the death of the civilians.

The military ordered an investigation into the killings, but it was unknown whether those involved in the raid had been taken into custody or not.

Security officials said troops, tracking down a kidnapped trader Rosalie Lao, clashed at dawn Monday with Abu Sayyaf and Jemaah Islamiya militants in the village of Ipil in Maimbung town where the eight bodies had been found later in the day.

But a village leader Rahsi Agas accused troops of killing the civilians. "They were just seaweed farmers and not members of the Abu Sayyaf," he told reporters.

He said some of those killed were shot at sea while escaping the fighting on boat. Those killed were identified as Marisa Payian, 4; Wedme Lahim, 9; Alnaly Lahim, 15; Sulayman Hakob, 17; Kirah Lahim, 45; Eldisim Lahim, 43; Narcia Abon, 24, all civilians and Pfc. Ibnul Wahid, of the Army's 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. **(Sulu Media Desk)**

**ANNEX 6 – Affidavit of Rudy Failan and Saida Failan**

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)  
Province of Sulu ..... ) S.S.  
Municipality of Maimbung ..... )  
X-----/

JOINT AFFIDAVIT

WE, Spouses RUDY FAILAN Y ABDU and SAIDA FAILAN Y ABON, both of legal age, married, and residence of Barangay Kandang, Maimbung, Sulu, after having been duly sworn to an oath hereby depose and state:

That we are "agar-agar" farmers by occupation, having an "agar-agar" farm in Barangay Ipil, Maimbung, Sulu;

That we used to go to Barangay Ipil to attend to our farm and used to stay in the house of our aunt, MYRNA LAHIM Y ABON;

That at about 2:30 in the morning of February 4, 2008, while we were sleeping in the house of our aunt, we were awoken by the rapid burst of gun fires, apparently towards the direction of the house of IBNON J. WAHID, which is just about twenty (20) meters away. We immediately went out of the house and boarded our boat (banca) which was just floating below our house. All in all there were 17 persons in the house of my aunt;

That the firing ceased prompting us to drive our banca towards a nearby mangrove to avoid being hit. However, while we were already in that place, the firing continued and this time, it was directed at us prompting us and our companions to shout this wise, "TAMA NA MGA CIVILIAN LANG KAMI" but the firing continued. We noticed that the group who were firing at us were just about five (5) meters away but we were not able to identify them as it was too dark;

That four (4) persons were hit among our group and died on the spot, namely; ARNALYN LAHIM, 19 years old, MARISSA FAILAN, our 4 year old daughter, RESME LAHIM, 9 years old and SULAYMAN AKUB, 24 years old;

That despite the heavy firing, we continued to drive our banca manually as its engine was damaged by the firing and we proceeded to Barangay Lumapid, Talipao, Sulu;

That during the escape, two of our relatives jumped from the banca and their dead bodies were recovered in the afternoon of the same date. They were, NARSIYA AKUB, 24 years old and a 3 month pregnant and KIRA LAHIM, 38 years old;

That at about 7:00 o'clock in the morning of the same date, we brought the four dead bodies of our companions to Barangay Kandang, Maimbung, Sulu where they were buried according to Muslim rite;

That while it was too dark at that time, we were able to identified the group of those who fired at us as army soldiers as they were illuminated by flash fire by

That during the firing, military helicopters continued to fly over us leading us to believe that the persons firing at us were government soldiers;

That until now we did not returned to Barangay Ipil, Maimbung, Sulu because of fear;

That we are executing this instrument to attest to the truthfulness of the foregoing statements and to request the government to give justice to what happened to us.

IN WITNESS HEREOF, we have hereunto set our hand this 6<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2008, at Barangay Kandang, Maimbung, Sulu.

(Original copy signed):

RUDY A. FAILAN  
(Affiant)

SAIDA A. FAILAN  
(Affiant)

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN to before me this 6<sup>th</sup> day of February 2008 at Kandang, Maimbung, Sulu, Philippines.

(SGD.)

RAUL S. QUIBOYEN  
Attorney III  
Commission on Human Rights  
Zamboanga City

**ANNEX 7 – Affidavit of Kasra Ibla**

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)  
 Province of Sulu ..... ) S.S.  
 Municipality of Maimbung ..... )  
 X\_\_\_\_\_ /

**AFFIDAVIT**

I, Kasra Ibla Y Kasim, 30 years old, married, Filipino, presently residing at brgy. Ipil, Maimbung, Sulu, under oath do hereby depose and state:

That on February 4, 2008, about 2:30 in the morning, while we were sleeping in our house in brgy. Ipil, Maimbung, Sulu, we were awoken of a loud sound apparently of M-79. we went below our house for safety. A flare was fired and I saw the presence of several soldiers fired their firearms towards our direction. We shouted that we are civilians and we are not involved. Then we were surrounded by soldiers and ordered us to pull in in front our house.

Thereafter, I noticed several soldiers poured a flammable liquid into our house and ignited it. That I immediately inquired one of them (soldiers) why they burned my house. Instead of replying my query he only spit in front of me. Then they took my goat and they placed it on their rubber boat. While my two pumpboats were also taken by them.

That about 9:00 o'clock in the morning of same date we were informed by the soldiers that we will be bombed. Then afterwards they fired us. That the damaged they cost to my property is more or less one hundred thousand pesos (P100,000.00).

That because of fear and tragic incident we experienced we decided to stay with my elder brother Andak Kasim in Poblacion, Maimbung, Sulu.

That I am executing this affidavit to file appropriate charges against those abusive military personnel responsible in causing damaged on my property and to seek any assistance from the Commission on Human Rights.

Affiant sayeth naught

In witness whereof, I have hereto affixed my hand this 6<sup>th</sup> day of February 2008 in the municipality of Maimbung, Sulu.

(Original copy signed)

Kasra K. Ibla  
 Affiant

Subscribed and Sworn to before me this 6<sup>th</sup> day of February 2008 at the municipality of Maimbung, Sulu Philippines.

(SGD.)

Joey S. Ling  
 Special Investigator I  
 Commission on Human Rights  
 Regional Office No. IX  
 Zamboanga City

**ANNEX 8 – Affidavit of Kassi Agas**

Republic of the Philippines }  
Province of Sulu . . . . . } s.s.  
Municipality of Maimbung }  
x-----x

**AFFIDAVIT**

I, **KASSI M. AGAS**, of legal age, Filipino, married and a resident of Barangay Kandang, Maimbung, Sulu, after having been duly sworn to according to law hereby depose and state:

That I am the incumbent barangay chairman of Barangay Kandang, Maimbung, Sulu;

That on February 4, 2008, around six (6) in the morning I was informed by one of the residents of Barangay Ipil, Maimbung that there was a military encounter that had transpired at dawn at Barangay Ipil, Maimbung, Sulu;

That the military was allegedly guided by one of the members of the Ibla family of barangay Ipil, a family who has a long feud with the Lahim family of the same barangay;

That around seven (7) o'clock in the morning of even date, four dead human bodies were brought to my barangay, these were the dead bodies of ARNALYN LAHIM, RESMIN LAHIM, MARISSA PAYLAN, and SULAYMAN AKUB;

That about four (4) o'clock again of the same date another three (3) cadavers were brought to our barangay and these were the dead bodies of Kira Lahim, Eldisin Lahim and Narsiya Abon;

That on the same day those seven (7) dead bodies were buried under muslim rites, and the burial was initiated by IMAM GABIR TANJILUL;

AFFIANT FURTHER SAYETH NAUGHT.

That I am executing this instrument to attest to the truthfulness of the foregoing statements.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto affixed my signature this 6<sup>th</sup> day of February of 2008, at Barangay Kandang, Maimbung, Sulu, Philippines.

(Original Copy Signed)

KASSI M. AGAS  
Affiant

Subscribed and Sworn to before me this 6<sup>th</sup> day of February 2008 at Barangay Kandang, Maimbung, Sulu, Philippines.

(SGD.)

BRENDO D. MORALES  
Special Investigator III

**ANNEX 9 - Affidavit of Satra Lahim**

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)  
Province of Sulu ..... ) S.S.  
Municipality of Maimbung ..... )  
X-----/

AFFIDAVIT

I, Satra Lahim Y Lahim, 30 years old, married, Filipino, presently residing at brgy. Ipil, Sulu, under oath do hereby depose and state:

That I am the mother of Resmi Lahim, 9 years old who died during the military operation at brgy. Ipil, Maimbung, Sulu, last February 4, 2008.

That on February 4, 2008, about 2:30 in the morning, while we were sleeping in our house in brgy. Ipil, we were awoken of several gun fire. I together with my family went down from our house and boarded our boat (banca) purposely to look for safer place.

That while we were getting away from said place, I noticed by son Resmi was not with us. Then we happened to pass along the mangrove area and suddenly we were fired upon. Thereafter a flare was fired which illuminated the area and I saw uniformed armed men continued firing upon us and their firearm were equipped with flashlight. We sought cover from the mangroves until the gun fire had stopped. Later, we went back to brgy. Ipil and I saw some of my neighbors house were burned.

That about 9:00 o'clock in the morning of same day our neighbor Ullao informed me, that my son Resmi Lahim was dead and was brought to brgy. Lumapid in Tallpao, Sulu.

That I immediately proceeded to the said brgy. but there (brgy. Lumapid) I was informed that the lifeless body of my son Resmi was taken by the brgy. chairman of Kandang, Maimbung, Sulu. Then I proceeded to brgy. Kandang to check the lifeless body of my son Resmi Lahim.

Thereat (brgy. kandang) I saw the lifeless body of my son Resmi Lahim at the mosque.

That on same day the lifeless body of my son Resmi Lahim was buried at brgy Kandang in the municipality of Maimbung, Sulu

That I am executing this affidavit to file appropriate charges against those responsible in the death of my son Resmi Lahim and to seek any assistance from the Commission on Human Rights.

Affiant sayeth naught

In witness whereof, I hereto affixed my hand this 6<sup>th</sup> day of February 2008 in the municipality of Maimbung, Sulu.

(Original copy thumb marked)

Satra L. Lahim  
Affiant

Subscribed and Sworn to before me this 6<sup>th</sup> day of February 2008 at barangay, Kandang maimbung. Sulu Philippines.

**ANNEX 10 – Affidavit of Myrna Lahim**

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)  
Province of Sulu ..... ) S.S.  
Municipality of Maimbung ..... )  
X-----/

A F F I D A V I T

I, Myrna Lahim Y Abon, 30 years old, widow, Filipino and presently residing at brgy. Ipil, Maimbung, Sulu, under oath do hereby depose and state:

That on February 4, 2008, about 2:30 in the morning, while we were sleeping together with the family of my nephew Rudy Failan at brgy. Ipil, Maimbung, Sulu, we were awoken by several gun fire.

That immediately, we went down from our house and boarded our boat (banca) and look for a safer place. Along our way passing the mangrove area, we were fired upon, we shouted that we are civilians but they (armed group) continued on firing at us. I noticed the armed group were just about five meters. At this instance, my daughter Arnalyn Lahim 19 yrs old and three (3) of my relatives; Marissa Failan, 4 yrs old Resmi, 9 yrs old and Sulayman Akul, 24 yrs old were hit and died on the spot.

That we continued to get away from said and the armed group continued firing upon us. I saw my husband Jamiri Kirah Lahim and my relative Narsiya Akub, 24 yrs old and three (3) months pregnant jumped off from the boat (banca). During that time, the left portion of my neck was hit. A flare was fired that illuminated the area and I saw gov't soldiers firing at us and their firearms were equipped with flashlight. We continued getting away from said place until we reached brgy. Lumapid in Talipao, Sulu were local residents assisted us. Then later in the afternoon of same date, I was informed that the lifeless bodies of my husband Jamiri Kirah Lahim and Narsiya Akub were recovered along the shore and were brought to the brigade in Jolo, Sulu.

That even date, the dead bodies of my husband Jamiri Kirah Lahim, my daughter Arnalyn Lahim and my relatives who died during the military operation were buried at brgy. Kandang, Maimbung, Sulu.

That I am executing this affidavit to file appropriate charges against those person responsible in the death of my family and to seek any assistance from the Commission on Human Rights.

Affiant sayeth naught

In witness whereof, I hereto affixed my hand this 6<sup>th</sup> day of February 2008 in the municipality of Maimbung, Sulu, Philippines.

(Original copy thumb marked)

Myrna A. Lahim  
Affiant

Subscribed and Sworn to before me this 6<sup>th</sup> day of February 2008 at barangay, Kandang, maimbung, Sulu, Philippines.

(SGD.)

**ANNEX 11 – Affidavit of Imam Gabir Tanjilul**

Republic of the Philippines }  
Province of Sulu . . . . . } s.s.  
Municipality of Maimbung }  
x-----x

**A F F I D A V I T**

I, **IMAM GABIR TANJILUL**, of legal age, married, Filipino, and a resident of Barangay Gulangan, Maimbung, Sulu, after having been duly sworn to according to law hereby depose and state:

That about nine (9) o'clock in the morning of February 4, 2008, **ALMUDZNI AMIL** a resident of Barangay Kandang, Maimbung came into our residence at Barangay Gulangan, Maimbung, Sulu and requested my assistance to conduct the burial preparation of the four (4) cadavers who were allegedly killed at Barangay Ipil, Maimbung, Sulu;

That immediately, I proceeded to Barangay Kandang, the place where the alleged four (4) cadavers were brought;

That at the said Barangay I immediately initiated the burial preparation under Moslem rites on those cadavers and thereafter buried them in the said barangay;

That after the cadavers were buried I immediately went home at Barangay Gulangan, Maimbung, Sulu;

That on the same date, around seven (7) o'clock in the evening, again **Almudzni Amil** requested for my assistance for accordingly there were another cadavers of three (3) persons were brought to Barangay Ipil, Maimbung, Sulu;

That again under Moslem rites, I initiated the burial preparation of the said cadavers and thereafter buried them in the said barangay (Barangay Kandang);

That I personally cannot identify the identities of those seven cadavers since they were residence of Barangay Ipil, Maimbung, Sulu;

**AFFIANT FURTHER SAYETH NAUGHT.**

That I am executing this instrument to attest to the veracity of the foregoing statements;

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I HAVE hereunto affix my signature this 6<sup>th</sup> day of February of 2008 at Maimbung, Sulu, Philippines.

(Original Copy Signed)  
**IMAM GABIR TANJILUL**  
AFFIANT

Subscribed and Sworn to before me this 6<sup>th</sup> day of February 2008 at Maimbung, Sulu, Philippines.

(SGD.)

**BRENDO D. MORALES**

**ANNEX 12 – Affidavit of Rowina Wahid**

Republic of the Philippines }  
Province of Sulu . . . . . } s.s.  
Municipality of Maimbung }  
x-----x

**A F F I D A V I T**

I, **ROWINA WAHID y SABTANI**, 24 years old, widow, Filipino, housewife and a resident of Barangay Bualo Batang, Maimbung, Sulu, after having been duly sworn to an oath according with law do hereby depose and state:

That on February 1, 2008, I and my husband, Cpl. Ibrnon J. Wahid visited my mother, Andiāng Lahim in Barangay Ipil, Maimbung, Sulu. While there, we decided to stay/spend some days there;

That on February 4, 2008, about 2:30 in the morning, we were awakened by gunfire coming near the left side of the house where we were sleeping;

That immediately, we sought for cover and after few minutes, soldiers appeared and ordered us to go out. That while we were already outside, we were hogtied and there I was able to identify the group as belonging to the Special Forces-Airborne;

That while we were hogtied, my husband was maltreated and shot to death by the soldiers in our presence even though we begged for his life and told them that he is also a member of the Philippine Army;

That after my husband was shot, the soldiers fired their guns and flares and I suspected their acts as a signal on these location to the helicopter flying during that time;

That the firing lasted for about half an hour but I did not notice any enemy during that time. They were the only ones who were firing their guns;

That about 6:30 in the morning of same day, my dead husband was taken to a Navy boat by the soldiers and I accompanied them leaving my parents and my nephew behind still hogtied;

That while at the Navy boat, I noticed several other dead persons together with my husband in a canoe. That I also noticed on board the Navy boat four American soldiers in camouflage uniform in good mood and happy. That I also noticed goats, chickens, chainsaw, two generators and one of it belongs to us and several other personal properties being loaded in the Naval boat; Few minutes thereafter, I was blindfolded by the soldiers and when I asked them why they told me that for whatever they did I could not see;

That thereafter, we were taken to Jolo wharf and while there they took off my blindfold and ordered to embark a vehicle; Then we were taken to the 104<sup>th</sup> Brigade in Jolo, Sulu. Then my husband was brought inside a mosque. Then they detained me inside a barracks;

**ANNEX 13 - Sinumpaang Salaysay ni Shatra Lahim**

REPUBLIKA NG PILIPINAS )  
 \_\_\_\_\_ ) S.S.

## SINUMPAANG SALAYSAY

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AKO, **SHATRA LAHIM**, may sapat na gulang, pagkatapos makapanumpa sang-ayon sa batas ay buong katotohanang nagsasalaysay. Na-

1. Ako ay isang Tausug na nakatira sa Brgy. Ipil, Mambing Sulu.
2. Ang aming baranggay ay isang maliit at patag na isla. Kaming mga naninirahan dito ay hindi lalampas sa bilang na 100 na katao at ang bilang ng mga bahay dito ay humigit kumulang sa 30.
  - A. Kaming mga nakatira dito ay pinaghalong TAUSUG at BADJAO.
  - B. Ang aming mga tahanan ay yari sa kahoy at kawayan at maituturing na tipikal na bahay ng tausug at badjao.
3. Tulad ng halos lahat ng naninirahan dito sa baranggay Ipil, ako at ang aking asawa--ang aming pinagkikitaan ay ang pagpapalaki ng seaweed.
  - A. Sa ganitong trabaho at dahil na rin sa ang aming baranggay ay isang maliit na isla, ang “bangka” ay maitututuring naming pinakaimportante naming ari-arian. Kung wala ang bangka ay di kami makakapaghanapbuhay at di rin kami makaka-alis ng isla.
4. Simple at matahimik ang aming pamumuhay hanggang sa dumating ang ika-4 ng Pebrero 2008.
  - A. Humigit kumulang mga bandang alas 2:30 ng madaling araw nang ginulantang ako at ang aking pamilya ng mga “putok” ng baril, marami, malalaki at mabibigat na yabag at naglipanang mga “helicopter (s)”
  - B. Sa aking pagsilip sa labas ay nakta ko ang pagkarami-raming sundalo na nagsulputan mula sa apat na direksyon.
  - C. Nakita ko rin ang iba kong mga kapitbahay na naglabasan na wari’y naghahanap ng matataguan o mapupuntahan.
  - D. Lahat kami ay takot na takot dahil sa sunod-sunod na putok na aming naririnig at para kaming mga hayop na nagpulasan.
  - E. At ang higit na nakakatakot ay hindi namin alam kung ano ang nangyayari o ano ang dahilan sa biglang pagsulpot ng napakaraming sundalo.
  - F. Sa sobrang kaguluhan di ko namalayan na wala na sa aking tabi at paningin ang aking anak na si Reshume (Rismin) Lahim na 9 na taong

gulang. Hindi ko na rin alam kung saan napatakbo ang aking asawa. Nagkahiwa-hiwalay na kami ng direksyon sa pagtakbo dahil sa sobrang takot at para lamang makapagtago at manatiling buhay.

- G. Nakita ko ang ang mga sundalo na sinunog ang aming dalawang bangka.
  - H. Nanatili ang mga sundalo sa aming lugar hanggang mga bandang alas 6:00 ng umaga.
5. Nang maka-alis na ang mga sundalo, agad akong bumalik sa aking bahay at tiningnan ko agad ang pinaglalagyan ng maliit naming ipon na pera ngunit wala na duon ang P30,000.00 na perang matagal naming inipon at iningatan at pinaikot-ikot na puhunan para sa "seaweeds" na aming tanging pinagkukuhanan ng ikabubuhay.
- A. Nang hanapin ko ang aking anak ay nalaman ko sa aking mga kapitbahay na patay na ang aking anak na si Reshume (Rasmin) dahil napasama ito sa mga sumakay ng Bangka para tumakas mula sa mga sundalong walang habas sa pamamarily;
  - B. Ngunit sa kasawiang palad, nakasalubong din nila ang bangkang sinasakyan ng mga sundalo at kasama and aking anak ay pinaulanan sila ng bala;
  - C. Napag-laman ko na ang bangkay ng aking anak, sampu ng iba pang mga bangkay ay dinala sa katabing baranggay, kayat ako ay nagounta sa karatig na baranggay.
6. Sa Brgy. Lumapid, Talipao ko na nakita ang bangkay ng aking anak, kasama ng iba pang mga kapitbahay kong pinatay ng mga sundalo..
- A. Nadatnan kong nakahandusay sa buhanginan ang aking anak at nang sipatin ko ito ay nakita ko na butas ang ulo sanhi ng tama ng baril sa bandang likod ng ulo.
  - B. Kasama rin sa nakita kong bangkay ay ang anak ni Rudy \_\_\_\_\_ na talong taong (3) gulang pa lamang.
  - C. Dahil sa walang bangka na magagamit para maibalik ang aking anak sa aming lugar at dahil na rin sa kawalan ng pera at matinding takot na rin ng mga tao sa Brgy. Lumapid, Talipao ay napagdesisyunan ko na duon na ilibing ang akng anak--- sa lugar kung saan sya itinapon ng mga sundalo—sa Baranggay Lumapid, Talipao..
  - K. Sa tulong ng mga tao sa Brgy. Lumapid, Talipao ay nailibing ang aking anak, pati na ang iba pang bangkay ng aming mga kasamahan na itinapon sa Brgy. Lumapid, Talipao.
7. Masakit na masakit ang aking kalooban sa di-makataong pagtrato sa amin at sa malahayop na pagpatay sa aking anak.
8. Hindi lang ang aking anak ang nawala sa aming pamilya.. Maliban sa aking anak, tatlo (3) pang mga kamag-anakan ng aking asawa ang

namatay : sina Arnalyn Lahim (15 taong gulang), Kirah Lahim (35 taong gulang) at Edisim Lahim na isang Brgy. Councilor.

9. Hanggang sa ngayon ay di namin maintindihan at wala akong makitang dahilan sa marahas na pagtrato sa amin lalo na sa di-makataong pagpatay sa aking anak, sampu ng aking mga kapitbahay.

Ginawa ko ang salaysay na ito upang patunayan ang mga nakasaad sa itaas at upang bigyang-linaw ang mga pangyayari kaugnay ng marahas at di-makataong pagtrato, patayan na nangyari sa aming barangay Ipil, Maimbung, Sulu noong ika-4 ng Pebrero 2008.

**SHATRA LAHIM**

**ANNEX 14 - Sinumpaang Salaysay ni Odab Lahim**

REPUBLIKA NG PILIPINAS )  
 \_\_\_\_\_ ) S.S.

**SINUMPAANG SALAYSAY**

AKO, **ODAB LAHIM**, may sapat na gulang, pagkatapos makapanumpa sang-ayon sa batas ay buong katotohanang nagsasalaysay. Na-

3. Ako ay isang Tausug na nakatira sa Brgy. Ipil, Mambing Sulu.
4. Ang aming baranggay ay isang maliit at patag na isla. Kaming mga naninirahan dito ay hindi lalampas sa bilang na 100 na katao at ang bilang ng mga bahay dito ay humigit kumulang sa 30.
  - A. Kaming mga nakatira dito ay pinaghalong TAUSUG at BADJAO.
  - B. Ang aming mga tahanan ay yari sa kahoy at kawayan at maituturing na tipikal na bahay ng tausug at badjao.
6. Simple at matahimik ang aming pamumuhay hanggang sa dumating ang ika-4 ng Pebrero 2008.
  - A. Humigit kumulang mga bandang alas 2:30 ng madaling araw nang ginulantang ang aming baranggay ng mga maalalakas na “putok” ng baril, marami, malalaki at mabibigat na yabag at naglipanang mga “helicopter (s)”
  - B. Sa aking paglabas ay nakita ko ang pagkarami-raming sundalo na nagsulputan mula sa apat na direksyon. Sa aking pagtanya, ang bilang ng mga sundalo ay higit sa limampu (50) pero di naman aabot ng isangdaan (100).
  - C. Bigla na lamang, ako at ang lima (5) ko pang mga kasama ay napaligiran na ng mga armadong sundalo. Mga naglalakihan at naghahabaan ang kanilang mga dalang armas o baril. Nakita ko rin ang iba kong mga kapitbahay na nagtatakbuhanag naglabasan na wari’y naghahanap ng matataguan o mapupuntahan.
7. Lahat kami ay takot na takot dahil sa sunod-sunod na putok na aming naririnig sa paligid. Wala silang sabi-sabing nagpapatok. At di rin naman sila nagpaliwanay ng akanilang mga pakay. Paminsan-minsan ay naririnig namin silang nagsasalita, subalit, di rin namin maintindihan dahil tagalong at ingles ang kanilang mga salita at hindi salita ngaming mga tausug.
8. Ako at ang aking asawa na si Andiang Sabtang Lahim na pitongpung taon (70) din na gaya ko , pati na ang aking apo na si Nojemil Lahim; ang aking anak na si Rawina Wahid at ang kanyang asawa na si Ibonon Wahid at ang aking nakatatandang kapatid na si Hasim Amil--- anim kaming itinali ng “nylon cord” ang aming mga kamay at kaming mga lalaki ay pinadapa samantalang ang mga babae ay pinaupo.
9. Narinig kong sumisigaw ang aking manugang na si Ibonon Wahid ng “Philippine Alpha” bilang pagpapakillala na sya ay miyembro ng Philippine Army.

- A. Si Ibnon Wahid ay isang "integree", Myembro sya ng Class 03A-98, 62<sup>nd</sup> Division Training Unit, 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Brigade at nakatapos ng "training" sa Camp Paulino Santos, Alamuada, Cotabato.
10. Sa kabila ng pagpapakilala ng aking manugang, sya pa ay pinag-aapakan sa likod. Nagmamaka-awa ang aking anak na si Rawina Wahid habang sinasabi nya na **"tigilan nyo yan, wag nyo syang saktan, sundalo rin syang tulad nyo"**.
  11. Subalit sa kabila ng pagsusumamo ng aking manugang at anak, walang pakundangan tinutukan ng malapitan ang aking manugang at sunod-sunod na pinaputukan.
  12. Lalo kaming natakot. Hindi namin alam kung ano ang nangyayari o ano ang dahilan sa biglang pagsulpot ng napakaraming sundalo. Lalong di namin alam at maintindihan kung bakit kailangang pa nilang pahirapan at patayin din naman sa pamamagitan ng ng pagbaril dito ng malapitan at papatukan ng paulit-ulit.
  13. Habang kami ay nakadapa ay naririnig ko ang sigaw at iyak at pagmamaka-awa ng aking mga kapitbahay dahil sa panununog ng bahay at bangka. Naglabas –masok din ang mga sundalo sa aming mga kabahayan at bitbit ang ilang mga hayop. Habang walang tigil ang paghinagpis ng aking anak an si Rawina Wahid sa sinapit ng kanyang asawa na si Ibnon Wahid.
  14. Ang buong akala ko ay papatayin na kaming lahat
  15. Halos nasa pagitan na nga alas- 6:00 at alas-7:00 ng umaga ng umalis ang mga sundalo. Kasama din nilang binitbit ang aking anak na si Rawina Wahid at ganun din ang bangkay ni Ibnon Wahid.
    - A. Pagka-alis ng mga sundalo ay agad kaming nagsisiyasat sa paligid at nakita ko na tatlong (3) bahay ang kanilang sinunog at maraming mga Bangka. May kasamahan akong nawalan ng chain saw, generator at marami ang nawalan ng mga alagang hayop tulad ng kambing at manok; at pera na matagal nilang inipon. Pati na ang aming mga damit ay nangawala.
  16. Hanggang sa ngayon ay di namin maintindihan at wala akong makitang dahilan sa marahas na pagtrato sa amin lalo na sa di-makataong pagpatay sa aking anak, sampu ng aking mga kapitbahay.

Ginawa ko ang salaysay na ito upang patunayan ang mga nakasaad sa itaas at upang bigyang-linaw ang mga pangyayari kaugnay ng marahas at di-makataong pagtrato, patayan na nangyari sa aming barangay Ipil, Maimbung, Sulu noong ika-4 ng Pebrero 2008.

**ODAB LAHIM**

**ANNEX 15 - Sinumpaang Salaysay ni Abdul Lahim**

REPUBLIKA NG PILIPINAS )  
 \_\_\_\_\_ ) S.S.

## SINUMPAANG SALAYSAY

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AKO, **ABDUL LAHIM**, may sapat na gulang, pagkatapos makapanumpa sang-ayon sa batas ay buong katotohanang nagsasalaysay. Na-

5. Ako ay isang Tausug na nakatira sa Brgy. Ipil, Mambing Sulu.
6. Ang aming baranggay ay isang maliit at patag na isla. Kaming mga naninirahan dito ay hindi lalampas sa bilang na 100 na katao at ang bilang ng mga bahay dito ay humigit kumulang sa 30.
  - A. Kaming mga nakatira dito ay pinaghalong TAUSUG at BADJAO.
  - B. Ang aming mga tahanan ay yari sa kahoy at kawayan at maituturing na tipikal na bahay ng tausug at badjao.
17. Tulad ng halos lahat ng naninirahan dito sa baranggay Ipil, ang aking pinagkikitaan ay ang pagpapalaki ng seaweed.
  - A. Sa ganitong trabaho at dahil na rin sa ang aming baranggay ay isang maliit na isla, ang “bangka” ay maitututuring naming pinakaimportante naming ari-arian. Kung wala ang bangka ay di kami makakapaghanapbuhay at di rin kami makaka-alis ng isla.
18. Simple at matahimik ang aming pamumuhay hanggang sa dumating ang ika-4 ng Pebrero 2008.
  - A. Humigit kumulang mga bandang alas 2:30 ng madaling araw nang ginulantang ako at ang aking pamilya ng mga “putok” ng baril, marami, malalaki at mabibigat na yabag at naglipanang mga “helicopter (s)”
  - B. Sa aking pagsilip sa labas ay nakta ko ang pagkarami-raming sundalo na nagsulputan mula sa apat na direksyon.
  - K. Nakita ko rin ang iba kong mga kapitbahay na naglabasan na wari’y naghahanap ng matataguan o mapupuntahan.
  - D. Lahat kami ay takot na takot dahil sa sunod-sunod na putok na aming naririnig at para kaming mga hayop na nagpulasan.
  - E. At ang higit na nakakatakot ay hindi namin alam kung ano ang nangyayari o ano ang dahilan sa biglang pagsulput ng napakaraming sundalo.

- G. Sa sobrang kaguluhan di ko namalayan na wala na sa aking tabi at paningin ang aking anak na si Reshume (Rismin) Lahim na 9 na taong gulang.
  - H. Nakita ko ang ang mga sundalo na sinunog ang aking dalawang bangka.
  - I. Nanatili ang mga sundalo sa aming lugar hanggang mga bandang alas 6:00 ng umaga.
  - L. Mula sa aking pinagtaguan ay hindi pa rin ako lumabas dahil sa sobrang takot.
5. Halos hapon na nang ako ay bumalik sa aming bahay; akala nga ng mga kapitbahay ay "patay rin ako".
- D. Sa aking pagbalik sa aking bahay ay tiningnan ko agad ang pinaglalagyan ng maliit naming ipon na pera ngunit wala na duon ang P30,000.00 na perang matagal naming inipon at iningatan at pinaikot-ikot na puhunan para sa "seaweeds" na aming tanging pinagkukuhanan ng ikabubuhay.
  - E. Nang hanapin ko ang aking asawa at anak ay nalaman ko sa aking mga kapit-bahay na patay na ang aking anak na si Reshume (Rasmin), at ang bangkay nito, sampu ng iba pang mga bangkay ay dinala sa katabing baranggay, at ang aking asawa ay umalis para hanapin ang bangkay ng aming anak.
6. Pagdating ng aking asawa na si Shatra Lahim ay napag-alaman ko sa kanya na ang bangkay ng aking anak sampu ng lima pang bangkay ay itinapon sa Brgy. Lumapid, Talipao.
- D. Sinabi sa akin ng aking asawa asawa na nakahandusay sa buhanginan ang aming anak at nang sipatin nya ito ay nakita nya na butas ang ulo ng amng anak sanhi ng tama ng baril sa bandang likod ng ulo.
  - E. Dahil sa walang bangka na magagamit para maibalik ang aming anak sa aming lugar at dahil na rin sa kawalan ng pera at matinding takot na rin ng mga tao sa Brgy. Lumapid, Talipao ay napagdesisyunan ng aking asawa na duon na ilibing ang aming anak--- sa lugar kung saan sya itinapon ng mga sundalo—sa Baranggay Lumapid, Talipao..
  - L. Sa tulong ng mga tao sa Brgy. Lumapid, Talipao ay nailibing ang aking anak, pati na ang iba pang bangkay ng aming mga kasamahan na itinapon sa Brgy. Lumapid, Talipao.
7. Masakit na masakit ang aking kalooban sa di-makataong pagtrato sa amin at sa malahayop na pagpatay sa aking anak.
- B. Hindi naging madali ang pagtanggap ko sa katotohanang patay na ang anak ko at sa malagim na nangyari sa aming lugar. Bagamat noon pang ika-4 ng Pebrero 2008 nangyari ang lahat, nito lamang ika-19 ng Pebrero ko nagawang puntahan ang puntod ng aking anak.

8. Hindi lang ang aking anak ang nawala sa aming angkan. Maliban sa aking anak, tatlo (3) ko pang mga kamag-anakan ang namatay : sina Arnalyn Lahim (15 taong gulang), Kirah Lahim (35 taong gulang) at Edisim Lahim na isang Brgy. Councilor.
9. Hanggang sa ngayon ay di namin maintindihan at wala akong makitang dahilan sa marahas na pagtrato sa amin lalo na sa di-makataong pagpatay sa aking anak, sampu ng aking mga kapitbahay.

Ginawa ko ang salaysay na ito upang patunayan ang mga nakasaad sa itaas at upang bigyang-linaw ang mga pangyayari kaugnay ng marahas at di-makataong pagtrato, patayan na nangyari sa aming barangay Ipil, Maimbung, Sulu noong ika-4 ng Pebrero 2008.

**ABDUL LAHIM**

**ANNEX 16 - Los Angeles Times report on Maimbung****Los Angeles Times**

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-deaths9mar09,0,2926498.story>

U.S. role in Philippine raid questioned

A Philippine general says American intelligence guided his troops in a hunt for militants, but eight villagers were slain.

By Paul Watson  
Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

March 9, 2008

**IPIL, PHILIPPINES** — In a hut on stilts with paper-thin walls of bamboo strips, an off-duty Philippine soldier was asleep alongside four members of his family when the crackle of assault rifle fire and shudder of grenade blasts awakened them early last month.

Within minutes, Cpl. Ibnun Wahid, 35, was dead, along with seven other villagers, including two children, age 4 and 9, two teenagers and two women, one of them pregnant. All were shot at close range, witnesses said in interviews and sworn affidavits gathered by the provincial governor's staff to support expected criminal charges.

Like many on Sulu island, provincial Gov. Abdusakur Tan believes the dead were victims of coldblooded killings by government troops. The independent Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines has called for charges to be filed against troops and officers involved in gathering intelligence for and planning the operation, as well those directly responsible for the deaths.

Gen. Ruben Rafael, commander of Philippine troops on the island, also known as Jolo, said in an interview that a U.S. military spy plane circling high above this seaside village provided the intelligence that led to the Feb. 4 assault. He said the crew of the P-3 Orion turboprop, loaded with a sophisticated array of surveillance equipment, pinpointed the village as a stronghold and arms depot for the radical Islamist Abu Sayyaf movement. Government soldiers were ambushed in the area in August, Rafael said.

"The intelligence was very excellent because they have identified the houses, the men with the guns and all the armed men who were occupying these houses," the general said. Rafael said the U.S. military also warned his troops during a firefight that dozens of militants were approaching to counterattack — information he said was also gathered from the spy plane.

"Because of that, we had to fly our choppers and they were able to prevent these people from reinforcing" insurgents already in the village, the general said. "So that was very crucial support given to us by the U.S."

Maj. Eric Walker, commander of U.S. forces on the island, declined an interview request, and the U.S. military spokesman for the region referred questions to the U.S. Embassy in Manila.

Without specifically confirming any flights over Ipil, U.S. Embassy spokeswoman Karen Schinnerer said that "an aerial reconnaissance vehicle" gathered intelligence over Sulu "at the request of, and in coordination with," Philippine forces.

No witnesses have said there were U.S. forces on the ground when the killings occurred, and Schinnerer said that none were. She also said that intelligence gathering does not violate a prohibition against U.S. forces engaging in combat here.

The human rights commission report recommending criminal and administrative proceedings against troops and officers involved in the operation was written before a Times reporter informed the panel of Rafael's account of U.S. surveillance. The commission gets its mandate from the Philippine Constitution.

Asked whether the U.S. military would assist Philippine authorities in any prosecution arising from the assault, Schinnerer said, "It would be inappropriate to speculate on what remains a hypothetical situation." But, she added, "as a general rule, the U.S. would provide such support to the [Philippine government] if asked."

Under the Philippine Constitution, the hundreds of U.S. military advisors in the southern Philippines are not allowed to engage in combat while helping train local forces in the hunt for militants with Abu Sayyaf and the Indonesia-based Jemaah Islamiah. Both groups are allied with Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda network.

The guerrilla force that Rafael said the Orion spotted would have been unusually large for Sulu. No insurgents were captured, wounded or killed approaching the village, according to the military's accounts. A small arms cache, including a .45-caliber handgun, an M-16 assault rifle and some rifle grenades were seized in the raid, Rafael said.

Two soldiers were killed and five wounded in the Ipil operation, statistics the army cites as proof of a battle with militants. Villagers contend that the soldiers were killed in their own crossfire. Commission investigators found that was a possibility, but suggested Wahid may have opened fire on the troops as they swarmed around his house.

The Philippine military said an internal investigation had cleared its troops of any wrongdoing, which many here see as a whitewash.

While condemning the findings, attorney Jose Manuel Mamauag, regional director of the Commission on Human Rights, said he was glad the military had issued its conclusions, allowing the commission to take the next step.

"Definitely, we will file charges against the soldiers," Mamauag said.

Sulu Gov. Tan, taking a rare stand against the powerful military, has directed provincial officials and police to build a separate criminal case against as yet unidentified soldiers and commanders involved in the Ipil assault.

Counterinsurgency missions on Sulu have been held up as a model in the battle against militants because a combination of aid programs and military force has brought relative peace to the island. But insurgents are staging a comeback, and clashes have escalated over the last year.

With kidnappings and decapitations fairly common, tourists rarely risk coming anymore. Yet anger and suspicion toward Philippine forces and U.S. advisors also run deep here, even though, Rafael said, U.S. aid for projects including new schools, roads and drainage is expected to total more than \$12 million over the next 18 months.

Ipil is a small village on Sulu's southern shore, accessible only by water. Most of its people earn a meager living farming seaweed that yields agar, used as a laxative as well as a gelatin substitute and thickener for soups, desserts and pharmaceuticals.

The Philippine military says a dense network of seaside mangroves here are prime Abu Sayyaf turf and that the assault, which included U.S.-trained Special Forces, was an effort to rout them. Since the troops didn't identify themselves, Wahid, a former rebel who joined the army as part of a 1996 peace pact, feared they were bandits or insurgents, relatives said.

He drew his licensed .45-caliber handgun from its holster and went out on the rickety bamboo porch, ready to defend his family, which insists he did not fire it. When he saw fellow soldiers, he put the gun down, raised his hands and shouted, "Papa Alpha, Papa Alpha," signaling he was in the Philippine army, said his wife, Rawina Lahim Wahid, 24.

Within minutes, Wahid, his wife and parents, and 9-year-old nephew, Nurjimer Lahim, were ordered to lie face-down on the white sand, according to his widow and parents, Udam Lahim, 70, and Andiyang Lahing, 65.

Soldiers tied Wahid's hands behind his back. Then one leveled an assault rifle at his head, and pulled the trigger, his widow said. The weapon jammed. The soldier recocked the M-16 and fired a bullet into Wahid's head, said family members, who were later released.

On the other side of the small, southern Philippine village, 17 members of three families were fleeing the gunfire in a long canoe. They headed straight toward a blocking unit of Philippine soldiers on the edge of a thick mangrove swamp.

From a few yards away, the soldiers opened fire, and kept shooting, ignoring the screaming villagers' pleas, witnesses said.

"It was not an accident," said Saida Failan, 21, whose 4-year-old daughter, Marisa, was shot dead. "We were shouting, 'Stop firing, we are civilians!' and children were crying."

When the shooting stopped, six people in the boat were dead. Villagers also found the body of a local councilor, Eldisim Lahim, shot dead outside his home.

Soon after sunrise, Philippine troops prepared to move the bodies by boat, but Rawina Wahid refused to let them take her husband's corpse without her. "I was afraid they were going to throw him in the ocean, so there would be no evidence," she said.

She said she joined them and was taken to a naval vessel offshore, which she was unable to identify. Rafael said it was a Philippine military "support ship."

As she stepped onto the boat, she said, she saw four foreign men in American camouflage fatigues, each armed with an assault rifle, standing next to a second deck railing.

"They were smiling," she said. "They were happy."

She said she had no way of knowing what the men, who she assumed were Americans, were doing on the ship, or whether they were aware of the horrors she and her neighbors had suffered.

"That's not important, as long as justice is done," she said.

[paul.watson@latimes.com](mailto:paul.watson@latimes.com)

## ANNEX 17 – Statement of Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society



### CONSORTIUM OF BANGSAMORO CIVIL SOCIETY, INC.

KFI Compound, Doña Pilar St., Poblacion IV, Cotabato City

S.E.C. Reg. No. 2002 – 61624

Telefax: 064-421-5420

Website: [www.cbcsi.com](http://www.cbcsi.com)

Email: [cbcs\\_04@yahoo.com](mailto:cbcs_04@yahoo.com)

### A CRY FOR JUSTICE, A CRY FOR PEACE

#### SOLIDARITY STATEMENT OF THE CBCS ON THE MASSACRE OF INNOCENT CIVILIANS IN BGY. IPIL, MAIMBUNG, SULU BY MEMBERS OF THE SWAG OF THE PHILIPPINE NAVY AND LRC OF THE PHILIPPINE ARMY IN THE PRESENCE OF U.S. TROOPS FROM THE BALIKATAN EXERCISES

The massacre perpetrated against innocent civilians in Brgy. Ipil, Maimbung, Sulu on February 4, 2008 by members of the Special Warfare Group of the Philippine Navy and Light Reaction Company of the Philippine Army, in the company of US soldiers who are part of the Balikatan Exercises under the Visiting Forces Agreement, is viewed by the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society as a truly barbaric and gang-like act that is unworthy of the assertions of the Philippine Military Institution that it is the protector of the people. It is indicative of inhuman behavior and is a clear culpable violation of what the Philippine Government and the Armed Forces of the Philippines has sworn to uphold. It is also a gross infringement of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights of which the Philippines and the US are co-signatories.

To recall, elements of the Navy Special Warfare Group and Army Light Reaction Company (PN-SWAG, PA-LRC) of the Philippine Navy conducted a military operation in Brgy. Ipil, Maimbung at 2:30 o'clock in the morning of Monday, February 4, based on an information given to them by one of their assets that the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) who had kidnapped and hosted Tawi Tawi-based Chinese businesswoman Rosalinda Lao was in the vicinity.

However, the hostile situation imagined by the PN-SWAG, PA-LRC was indeed fictitious, as Brgy. Ipil is a flat and open islet filled with mangroves situated near the mainland of Maimbung, with no trees and dotted only with thirty (30) houses. Not even a rookie kidnapper in his right mind would bring his hostage in such a non-ideal location.

As per recounted by survivors of the incident, these so called "soldiers" of the people forced the residents out of their houses, threatening all of them that they would be indiscriminately fired at if they did not do so.

One of the residents, an MNLF integree of the 40<sup>th</sup> IB of the Philippine Army assigned at San Mateo, Cotabato City who was on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of his official leave, Cpl. Inno Wahid, came out of his house and identified himself, calling back, "Papa Alpha" to inform the soldiers that he was of the Philippine Army. Despite showing all the paraphernalias to prove his identity, Cpl. Wahid was harassed and accused of being a member of the ASG. He was hogtied with plastic handcuffs and made to lie flat on his stomach. They then kicked his back with their heavy boots and stepped on it. After that, an M-16 rifle was pressed on his back and a full magazine of bullets was emptied to his spine, in front of his pleading wife.

At the time when the shots were fired, three families composed of eleven (11) individuals from nearby houses fled towards the shore and rode on a small wooden boat or *banka* to get away. They were intercepted by a rubber naval boat and at about two meters distance, they were strafed at without let up. In the process, seven more civilians were killed. One was a four year old girl, Marisa Failan, another was a nine year old boy, Rismin Lahim, and yet

another was a four-month pregnant woman, 24 year old Nasriyah Bin Akub. A Barangay kagawad, Eldhisim Lahim, was also killed. His eyes was mutilated and his right pointer finger was cut out. One of those who had survived from the *banka*, Saida Failan, mother of Marisa Failan, shouted at the soldiers on the naval boat and pleaded not to fire at them because they were all civilians. But their pleas were not heeded. Another survivor said that someone from the boat shouted "fire" right before the carnage began. In the middle of the carnage, two of the survivors dove into the water and steered the *banka* away from the naval boat towards the direction of another islet, Mahika.

Luckily, a two year old baby survived the massacre, because a fifteen year old teen managed to drop herself over the baby on the *banka* floor.

The widow of Cpl. Wahid, Rawina Wahid, who was also handcuffed, was later brought to the naval boat together with the body of her husband. Inside, she saw at least four (4) US soldiers. She also saw some of her properties and livestock onboard, apparently looted by this very same group. The presence of the US soldiers was later confirmed by vendors along the wharf of the Jolo port, because they saw them go off-board along with Rawina Wahid, the body of Cpl. Wahid, and the PN-SWAG, PA-LRC soldiers after it had docked.

What is amazingly horrible to this sorry scenario is that no ASG was found in the area. No Rosalinda Lao was found and rescued either. And instead, there was a massacre of innocent civilians, a summary execution of a member of the Philippine Army, massive looting attributed to elements of the PN-SWAG, PA-LRC, and shockingly, to add insult to injury, medals were awarded to the very perpetrators of this heinous crime and Task Force Comet Commanding Officer, BGEN Ruben Rafael only said, "Sorry" to Sulu Governor Abdusakur Tan for the gruesome incident.

These facts are more than enough to refute and debunk the earlier claims of Task Force Comet that it was a legitimate AFP-ASG encounter. There seems to be moral erosion within the Armed Forces of the Philippines. This state of unreliability on their part as front liners of the government does not bode well at a time when the separate peace processes with the MNLF and the MILF are fluid and volatile at best. This insanity must end and it must end now!

It is in this context that we, the undersigned leaders of the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society, vehemently condemn in the highest terms the terroristic, merciless and senseless mass killing and summary execution done by the PN-SWAG, PA-LRC to the innocent civilians of Bgy. Ipil whose main reason for living in that islet was to ekk out a meager income derived from the seaweed and mangrove products in the area.

We also condemn the obvious presence of at least four US soldiers from the Balikatan Exercises during the incident and in their act of condoning and/or aiding and abetting such a massacre to happen. This substantiates the general apprehension and fear of many sectors that the VFA and the Balikatan Exercises are nothing but clear and present dangers to the peace and security of the people in Mindanao, especially to the Bangsamoro.

We are one with the families of the victims of the Bgy. Ipil Massacre as they mourn the untimely and tragic death of their loved ones in the hands of alleged defenders of the people. We also pray for the eternal repose of their soul. May Allah (S.W.T.) keep them in His infinite bosom and give them everlasting succor and bliss.

Let not the culture of impunity perpetuate within the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Let us be reminded that sovereignty resides in the people and all government authorities emanate from them. Let us uphold that civilian authority is always supreme over military authority, not the other way around.

We, therefore, call on all national and local leaders in the government, in the military and in the private sector, as well as civil society organizations, concerned agencies, institutions and individuals here and abroad who are true servants of the people to join us in strongly urging the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo Administration to sincerely act on the following, post haste:

1. To conduct an impartial, transparent and open investigation to identify, bring to the folds of justice, and prosecute using the full force of the law all the perpetrators of the Bgy. Ipil Massacre.
2. To indemnify and give justice to the families of the victims of the Bgy. Ipil Massacre and the residents of Bgy. Ipil.
3. To scrap the VFA and render inutile the Balikatan Exercises, ordering the pull out of all US troops in Mindanao.
4. To fulfill and uphold the unconditional realization of human rights, not only in the Province of Sulu, but all over the Philippines, while it is engaged in a peace process with the Bangsamoro People through the MNLF and the MILF.

Let us unite and cry for justice! Let us unite and cry for peace!

Signed on this, the 9<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2008 at Jolo, Sulu. Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

**(Sgd.) TEMOGEN TULAWIE**  
Chairperson, CBCS Sulu Region

**(Sgd.) MAGUID MARUHOM**  
Chairperson, CBCS Sibugay Region

**(Sgd.) NATHAN INSUNG**  
Chairperson, CBCS Basilan Region

**(Sgd.) MUNIB KAHAL**  
Chairperson, CBCS Zamboanga Region

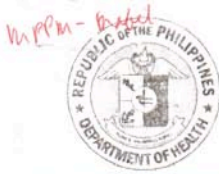
**(Sgd.) UST. RAHIB KUDTO**  
Chairperson, CBCS Kutawato Region

**(Sgd.) AMINODEN CALI**  
Chairperson, CBCS Ranaw Region

**(Sgd.) OSCAR SULAIMAN**  
Chairperson, CBCS Rajah Buayan Region

**(Sgd.) SAMMY BUAT**  
Chairperson, CBCS Dabaw Region

**(Sgd.) SAMMY P. MAULANA**  
Secretary General  
CBCS

**ANNEX 18 - Letter of Dr. Silak Lakkian to Sulu Provincial Governor**

Republic of the Philippines  
 AUTONOMOUS REGION IN MUSLIM MINDANAO  
 Department of Health  
 SEIT LAKE, PANAMAQ, SULU



December 28, 2007

**HON. ABDUSAKUR M. TAN**  
 Provincial Governor  
 Province of Sulu

**THRU: DRA. FAHRA T. OMAR**  
 PHO II  
 IPHO-Sulu  
 Jolo, Sulu

Attention: Dr. Akhramien T. Hassan  
 Officer-in-charge  
 IPHO- Sulu  
 Jolo, Sulu

Dear Sir:

Assalamualaikum!

Please be informed that todate, we have not yet resumed our night duty at the Panamao District hospital, in Seit Lake, Panamao, Sulu.

This incident started last November 30, 2007 (Friday) when at about 4 o'clock in the afternoon when our chief nurse was advised by Mr. Cris de Palma, an American soldier to leave the hospital before 6 o'clock that afternoon. Immediately, our staff-on-duty packed up and left the hospital. The following day, December 1, 2007 (Saturday) I advised our staff to go back the hospital. That night they had to turn off the light because they were advised not to go to the back of the hospital once darkness sets in because they will shoot whoever comes out. Since the generator house is at the back of the hospital, they decided not to turn on the generator for fear that if it fluctuates no one can go out and fix it. The next day, December 2, 2007 (Sunday), one of our staff went out at about 5 o'clock in the morning to pray "subu" and according to Master Sgt. Ron Berg, another American soldier, he was about to pull his trigger when he saw him but fortunately he recognized our staff. That afternoon I went to see Lt. Tangilan of the MBLT 11 and inquired from him about the situation. He told me they are on "red alert" and suggested that we do not go on night duty. Since the civilians are still around and it seemed everything was normal, I insisted that we slept at the hospital and allow us to turn on the lights. He agreed with the condition that if there is a problem, we coordinate with them. I also talked to Master Sgt. Ron Berg about his order for us not to go to the back of the hospital. I told him we will coordinate with them. So we went on night duty. However, at

exactly 10:26 in the evening, Cris de Palma called us through cellphone and ordered us to turn off our generator. Two of our staff were advised to go out placing their left hands on their head for proper identification and turn-off the generator. We could not do otherwise for fear that the American soldiers will shoot our staff.

The following morning, December 3, 2007 (Monday) at 7 o'clock in the morning I went to see the municipal mayor and informed him of the situation. We told him that since we are not allowed to turn on our lights which is very unlikely for a hospital setting because the Americans are allegedly under "threat" and with permission from our Provincial Health Officer, Dra. Fahra T. Omar, we requested that we will no longer go on night duty until such time that this issue will be resolved. This is because if there is no light we cannot attend to our patients. Beside it is very hot and mosquitoes abound which will also endanger the health of our staff. Sulu being endemic for malaria. He then referred us to the Hon. Gov. Tan, who then called Col. Atienza. While we are still waiting for the result of the talk between the Governor and Col. Atienza, patients, especially indigent ones have been airing their sentiments to us regarding their medical problems at night. They are requesting that we resume our night duty. On the other hand, our staff wants also to resume night duty because going to Panamao from Jolo and vice versa daily is risky, tiresome and expensive.

Then last December 22, 2007 (Saturday), there was an armed conflict in Kalingalan Kaluang which resulted in several casualties especially civilians. Two of the wounded civilians were brought to Panamao District Hospital at about seven o'clock in the morning. Since we were still on our way from Jolo, the hospital was still closed. The American soldier, Cris de Palma has to pass through the window of the pediatrics ward to be able to open it and treat the casualties. Had we been on night duty this could not have happened. Casualties within our capability could have been treated by us thus decongesting the Sulu Provincial Hospital and the patients could save on transportation.

Then last Monday, December 24, 2007, Mr. King the head of the American soldiers in Panamao together with Lt. Tangilan came to see us regarding the problem. He apologized for the actions of his men and suggested that we stayed at the Municipal Hall during the night time while the "threat" is still there, which we find illogical. How can we attend to the patients when we are not in the hospital?

This is the fourth time that the operation of the hospital has been affected with the presence of the marine camp near us. The first time was last February, 2005 when the camp was attacked by the MNLF, then last November, 2006 when the MNLF fired their mortars at the camp and last April 2007 when there was an encounter between the military and MNLF in Barangay Tayungan, Panamao. Had this camp been located far from us, these things could have been avoided.


In view of this, we would like to appeal to you to help us request for the relocation of the marine camp. If this camp will not be relocated this will become a perennial problem to the disadvantage of the constituents of Panamao.

With the belief that you sympathize with our plight it is fervently hoped and prayed that this request will merit your most favorable and immediate action.

Thank you for all the support.

More power!

Very truly yours,

  
SILAK A. LAKKIAN, M.D.  
Chief of Hospital I

C.C.

TAHIR B. SULAIK, M.D., MPH, DTC&E  
Regional Secretary  
DOH-ARMM  
Cotabato City

ATTY. JOSE MANUEL S. MAMANAUG, MNSA  
Regional Director  
CHR, Region IX, Zamboanga City

## PRESS REPORTS

### **More protests, citizens' watch greet Day 1 of RP-US Balikatan**

MindaNews, February 18, 2008

DAVAO CITY (MindaNews/18 February) - More protest actions will greet Day 1 of the seventh year of RP-US Balikatan today in key areas in Mindanao while a Citizens' Peace Watch will be monitoring Balikatan in Zamboanga and Sulu. The first Balikatan in Mindanao started in January 2002 in Basilan and Zamboanga City, supposedly to finish in July although some stayed US military forces stayed behind to finish some infrastructure projects.

Since January 2002, there had always been a batch of American soldiers in Mindanao. Asked about this in February 2005, then US Ambassador Francis Ricciardone told MindaNews, "we established a semi-continuous, not permanent, but semi-continuous (military presence), that is to say, some number of our personnel, rotate, at the pleasure of the command, your command...It's a high-priced consultancy, only we're doing it for free. And the second your command says it's not useful, we leave."

Only the first Balikatan was covered with a Terms of Reference.

Contingents of the US troops Out Now! Mindanao and Bayan from Lanao del Sur, Bukidnon and Butuan gathered in Sunday in Cagayan de Oro for a mass protest there today. The groups' press statement said General Santos City, Cotabato City, and Pikit will also hold rallies today, despite what the press statement calls alleged "intimidation" from military agents.

"The past two weeks, activities of Out Now Mindanao have been subject to military surveillance and intimidation in Marawi, Cagayan de Oro and Bukidnon, showing the military's desperate attempt to suppress the people's protest against the Balikatan exercises," it said, citing the latest incident on Saturday night when volunteers posting anto-Balikatan protesters were harassed by two military gents. "The volunteers were slapped in the head, pushed away, and dispersed by gunfire by these agents who appeared drunk."

"Agents were also spotted spying in our forums in Cagayan de Oro, Bukidnon and Marawi with speaker Prof. Roland Simbulan, a noted anti-US bases activist from the Center for People Empowerment in Governance. In the forum in Xavier University last February 7, an agent was spotted taking note of the participants and the program. A student saw this agent writing on his paper "wala man dinhi si Satur" (Rep. Ocampo is not here). We are treating this as an indication of a threat on Rep. Ocampo, if not an insidious monitoring of his presence and activities. Another agent was seen in the forum taking pictures with his video phone in Valencia, Bukidnon on February 8. When asked for his identification and invitation, this man quickly vanished," it said.

Ocampo and Gabriela Women Party Representative Liza Maza, leading proponents in Congress for the rejection of Balikatan and the Visiting Forces Agreement, will join the caravan in Cagayan de Oro while Mindanawon Gabriela Women Party-list Rep. Luz Ilagan will deliver today her privilege speech in the House of Representatives against US military intervention.

The press statement also noted how Army Major Benedicto Manquiquis disrupted a student forum in Mindanao State University-Iligan Institute of Technology (MSU-IIT) last Wednesday.

The mass actions against Balikatan have continued despite a press release earlier this month by the Public Affairs Section of the United States Embassy in Manila, that there will be "no military exercises or war games conducted in Mindanao and Sulu" during Balikatan 2008 from February 18 to March 3 but "Mindanao and Sulu" will receive

"humanitarian assistance" within that period.

The press release did not specify in which areas in Mindanao they were going to conduct the "humanitarian assistance," citing only "Central and Western Mindanao" and "the Sulu Archipelago" where "approximately 23 humanitarian assistance projects" will be conducted within the period.

Mindanao has 27 provinces and 33 cities.

The press release said "approximately 600 U.S. troops will work with civilian authorities and the AFP (Armed Forces in the Philippines) in these regions on humanitarian projects" and that the joint teams will offer "free medical, dental, and veterinary care."

"They will also construct and repair schools and other community infrastructures in areas of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago that are in great need of assistance. The majority of U.S. personnel are construction engineers and medical specialists. They will be working side-by-side with their AFP counterparts who will be in charge of all projects," the US Embassy said.

"These humanitarian assistance and training activities enable our soldiers to get to know each other, train together, and provide assistance in communities where the need is greatest," the press release quoted U.S. Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney as saying. "True to the meaning of the word *Balikatan*, Americans and Filipinos are shouldering the load together to help the greatest possible number of people in need," Kenney said.

Lawyer Beverly Musni, convenor of US Troops Out Now - Mindanao said, "the military is using underhanded methods to repress our efforts to expose the real intent of the *Balikatan* exercises which is to establish a permanent basing of the US military in the Philippines to promote and protect US economic interest in Asia Pacific."

In Zamboanga City, the Citizens' Peace Watch will hold a press conference in Zamboanga City at 11 a.m. February 18.

In its press statement, the Citizens' Peace Watch says it "plans to meet with military officials, government officials, local civil society groups and local residents" in the two areas and have in fact "written to top military and cabinet officials demanding that they be allowed to inspect the facilities where US troops are staying and working."

"The group notes that the Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines has its headquarters inside Camp Navarro in Zamboanga City and has its troops deployed in small teams all over Mindanao. Acting on the US and Philippine governments admission that the unit is constructing military facilities in Mindanao, the group hopes to find out whether these facilities constitute military basing which is prohibited under the Philippine Constitution," the press statement read.

The Citizens Peace Watch is initially composed of representatives from the Moro Human Rights Center, Anak Mindanao Party List, Akbayan Party List, Pinay Kilos (PINK), Focus on the Global South, Mindanao Peoples' Caucus, STOP the War Coalition Philippines, Tulong Lupah Sug, Bangsamoro Women's Foundation, BANGSA Solidarity, Mindanao Peoples Peace Movement, Sumpay Mindanao, and Alyansa ng Kabataan sa Mindanao para sa Kapayapaan, Bangsamoro Caucus, Task Force Detainees of the Phils/Mindanao, Kilusan Pasa sa Pambansang Demokrasya/Mindanao, Peace Women Partners., Muslim Women's Organization.

### **Citizens' group conducts probe on US presence in the country**

By Bong Garcia

Sun Star, February 19, 2008

ALARMED by the persistent reports that the US military is involved in combat and is building military facilities in Mindanao and dismayed by the government's lack of transparency on the issue, a group of concerned citizens is conducting its own inquiry just as the Balikatan 2008 started Monday.

The members of the group called the Citizens' Peace Watch (CPW), composed of lawyers, non-government organizations, party-list political parties and other sectors, arrived on Monday in this city and are en route to Sulu for a fact-finding mission.

Its objectives is to investigate veracity of reports that US military has established military basing/presence in the Philippines and to look into the forms of such basing or presence have taken; to investigate the role of US military in the operations and to determine accuracy of reports that US troops are involved in combat; and to propose appropriate policy recommendations.

Lawyer Corazon Fabros of the Stop the War Coalition Philippines said aside from the group's objectives, they also want to find out how the people have benefited from all the humanitarian activities done during the joint military exercises. Fabros said they received reliable information there were some \$275 million that were poured in Mindanao in the previous humanitarian operations.

"These activities (Balikatan) are not open to everyone," Fabros said citing that there had been no transparency over the activities. Lawyer Virginia Pinlac of the Kilusan para sa Pambansang Demokrasya/Kaisa Ka/Citizen's Coalition for Human Rights said they also want to the sentiments of the people over the conduct of balikatan exercises. The group of meeting with military officials, government officials, local civil society groups and local residents of this city and Sulu to get their sentiments over the issue.

"Acting on the US and Philippine governments admission that the unit (US forces) is constructing military facilities in Mindanao, the group hopes to find out whether these facilities constitute military basing which is prohibited under the Philippine constitution," the CPW said.

Fabros said the report of the group will be presented to members of Congress, in the hope that an independent congressional inquiry can be conducted, as well as to the general public. The US Embassy earlier said that there will be approximately 23 humanitarian activities to be conducted during the Balikatan 2008 in Central and Western Mindanao, the Sulu Archipelago and Palawan.

The US Embassy assured that there will be no military exercises or war games conducted in Mindanao or Sulu.

Fabros said it should be civilian personnel that should undertake all the humanitarian projects and not uniformed soldiers who are trained to fight.

Fabros also said the continued stay of the US forces in the country is more alarming now citing 22 ports in the country has been identified as an access point of US troops.

She said they can be everywhere unlike before when the US maintains military bases in the Philippines, the US troops were confined in Clark and Subic. "There are a lot of consistencies by what we see," she said of the new style of presence of US troops in the country.

## **Peace group denounces US' "militarization" of Mindanao**

By Angel Tiamson-Saceda

MindaNews, February 22, 2008

ZAMBOANGA CITY – The Citizens Peace Watch declared that US troops parading the streets of Sulu in full battle gear are destroying the “culture of peace” that different organizations have been painstakingly trying to establish in the province.

“We see them on the streets with sophisticated weapons, and our children are exposed to this culture of war at such an early age,” said Fatmawati Salapuddin of the Lupah Sug Bangsamoro Women’s Group.

Salapuddin is just one of the many members of the Citizens Peace Watch, an organization composed of more than 20 civic society organizations and party list groups which include STOP the War Coalition, Akbayan Partylist, Mindanao People’s Peace Movement, Pinay Kilos and Moro Human Rights Center.

The Citizens Peace Watch was recently established to investigate US military presence and intervention in the country, specifically in Mindanao.

From Feb. 18-21, the group traveled to this city and Sulu to conduct a fact-finding mission on the alleged participation of US troops in actual combat operations, particularly the Feb. 4 encounter in Maimbung town which killed eight civilians.

Lawyer Cora Fabros of STOP the War Coalition said that based on their initial findings, Rawina Wahid, a widow of one of the victims who directly witnessed the shootout, claimed that US troops were present during the operation. A few other residents reported to have seen US troops within the vicinity, but it was not clear if these instances were during the actual encounter, during investigation, or during humanitarian missions conducted by US forces in the province.

“The humanitarian projects of US troops are just a ‘cover up’ of US ‘militarization’ of Sulu,” said lawyer Virgie Pinlac of the KaisaKa/Citizen’s Coalition for Human Rights.

US humanitarian projects in Sulu include medical and dental missions and infrastructure projects like rehabilitation of roads and school buildings.

Citizens Peace Watch claimed that development projects provided by the US government, including those of the US Agency for International Development (USAID), have little impact on the province and the presence of armed US soldiers during project implementation is not helping the situation.

“The Japanese and Canadian governments also provide development assistance to Sulu, but we do not see their armed soldiers on the streets,” implied Mabel Carumba of the Mindanao People’s Peace Movement.

In their mission statement, Citizens Peace Watch asserted that US “militarization” is clearly indicated by the presence of a US military basing in Mindanao, citing the Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines (JSOTF) military unit inside the Armed Forces of the Philippines’ Western Mindanao Command Headquarters in this city, the US forces’ “actionable intelligence” through operation of spy planes and sophisticated communications facilities, and the conduct of certain US operations outside the control of Philippine government and military.

According to Maj. Eugenio Batara Jr., WesMinCom spokesman, the presence of the JSOTF military unit inside the camp was borne out of the Philippines’s request for aid from the US government for its anti-terrorism campaign, which includes training exercises and improvement of military equipment.

Batara also clarified that US soldiers are not allowed to loiter the streets of Sulu for security reasons, and it is only during humanitarian missions that they come in contact with locals. He also stated that there were no US troops anywhere within the vicinity of the Maimbung encounter during and after the shootout.

The Citizens Peace Watch is compiling a mission report on these issues which will be submitted to both chambers of Congress for further investigation.

**Group calls for abrogation of military pact with US**

By Jocelyn Uy

Philippine Daily Inquirer, February 22, 2008

MANILA, Philippines -- A civil society organization urged the government on Friday to terminate the Visiting Forces Agreement with the United States, saying it discovered "truths" about the existence of a US base and intervention in the Philippines during the course of a fact-finding visit to Zamboanga City and Sulu this week.

The Citizens Peace Watch, composed of various sectoral organizations and party-list groups, highlighted its concerns over the general conduct of US troops in Mindanao, saying that these must be addressed through a Senate inquiry.

"We challenge our elected representatives to take the initiative to demand and conduct inquiries into the issue," the group said in a statement read at a press conference on Friday.

Based on its four-day fact-finding mission that started last Monday, the group said the US has already established a fortified facility within Camp Navarro in Zamboanga City.

"It is a base within a base, surrounded by wiring and sandbags," reported Herbert Docena, researcher of the group Focus on the Global South.

The report also said that US troops have been involved in actual combat operations, citing the clash between troops and Moro extremists in Maimbung, Sulu early February in which eight civilians, including two children, were killed.

In taking part in actual combat, the US military committed human rights violations in the Philippines, Docena said.

He also said that the US was conducting operations outside the control of the Philippine government and military, noting that last December, it ordered the Panamao District Hospital to stop operating at night.

This was confirmed by the hospital director, Dr. Silak Lakkian, whom the fact-finding team interviewed during their visit at the hospital, he added.

The report alleged that the US troops' humanitarian projects were a mere cover for their military operations in the country.

The group observed during their investigation that the wharves the US constructed in Sulu were too large for local pump boats and fishing vessels, indicating that these were constructed for US warships.

"We are concerned that such projects are merely bribes to lure an impoverished people to support US military objectives in their desperation," Docena added.

He said the presence of US troops in the region only disturbs the "fragile" peace agreement between the government and the Moro National Liberation Front.

**What US Bases? They Are Temporary Military Facilities!**

Mindanao Examiner, February 22, 2008

ZAMBOANGA CITY, Philippines – The Philippine military has denied Friday reports by a Filipino fact-finding group that US troops have put up secret bases in Mindanao.

The Citizens Peace Watch (CPW), an umbrella organization of political and human rights groups, said it has confirmed the presence of a fortified US military base inside the headquarters of the Western Mindanao Command in Zamboanga City.

It said the base is the headquarters of the US Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines, a unit of the US Special Forces that has been deploying troops to various parts of Mindanao since 2002.

Lawyer Corazon Fabros, of the CPW, said her group was sent away by Filipino soldiers after they failed to get a permission to inspect the US facility. She said the base has communication facilities and is heavily guarded that even Filipino soldiers are not allowed without a pass.

“The ‘visitors’ have not only stayed on, they have set up camp in our house and told us – their hosts – to go away,” said Fabros in a statement sent to the Mindanao Examiner.

She said the US military base stands out and is sealed from the rest of Western Mindanao Command by walls, concertina wire, and sandbags. The actual size of the area it occupies could not immediately be established from the outside. But communication facilities such as satellite dishes, antenna, and other instruments are visible.

US Marines provided protection for the facility; some workers were seen wore IDs identifying them with DynCorp, a controversial US military contractor.

The group said other facilities inside the base were unknown. “What exactly are they hiding here? Why all this secrecy?” asked Amabella Carumba, of the Mindanao People’s Peace Movement, a member of the fact-finding mission.

The US military maintains similar facilities in Mindanao where it is assisting and advising Filipino troops in fighting terrorism. US troops were also spotted inside the headquarters of the Philippine Army’s 6th Infantry Division and in Philippine Marine bases in Sulu province and in Mactan island in Central Philippines.

There are American forces in Tawi-Tawi and Lanao provinces.

A Bangkok-based international research organization called Focus on the Global South, said US troops deployed in Mindanao have established a new kind of US base.

Major Eugene Batara, a spokesman for the Western Mindanao Command, strongly denied the reports and said there are no secret US bases in the region. “There are no US bases in Mindanao. In Zamboanga City, the US maintains a temporary facility inside the Western Mindanao Command. It is not a US base nor it is secret because everybody knows about it,” he said in a separate interview.

Batara said Filipino soldiers also use the facility of the JSOTF-P. “We also use their facility, such as their communications as part of the joint Balikatan program,” he said.

But Focus on the Global South said contrary to previous efforts by the US and Philippine governments to portray the troops as participating only in temporary training exercises Balikatan, it has since been revealed that this unit has stayed on and maintained its presence in the country for the last six years.

Contradicting claims that they are not involved in the fighting, Focus has gathered pronouncements by US troops themselves who have gone on record to say that their mission in the south is “unconventional warfare” – a US military term that encompasses combat operations.

With the Philippine government not giving a definite exit date, and with US officials stating that this unit – composed of between 100 to 500 troops depending on the season – will stay on as long as they are allowed by the government, it is presumed that it will continue to be based in the Philippines for an indefinite period.

According to Focus' research, the JSOTF-P's stationing in the south is a prototype of the new kind of overseas basing that the US has introduced as part of its ongoing effort to realign its global basing structure.

Since 2001, the US – which has more than 700 bases and installations in over 100 countries around the world – has embarked on the most radical realignment of its overseas basing network since World War II.

Part of the changes is the move away from large permanent bases – such as the ones in Subic and Clark – in favor of smaller, more austere, more low profile bases such as the JSOTF-P's presence in Zamboanga and in other places in Mindanao.

In terms of profile and mission, Focus pointed out that the JSOTF-P is very similar to the Combined Joint Task Force–Horn, which was established in Djibouti in western Africa in 2003 and which has been described as a sample of the US austere basing template and the “model for future US military operations.”

Focus said the Philippines is one of the “nodes for special operations forces” that former Defense Secretary Donald Rusted himself revealed the Pentagon would establish as part of its changes in Asia.

Focus notes that US troops themselves refer to their base in Sulu as “Advance Operating Base-920.”

It also said the US Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC) had in June 6, 2007, awarded a six-month \$14.4-million contract to a certain “Global Contingency Services LLC” of Irving, Texas for “operations support” for the JSOTF-P.

According to its own website, the NAVFAC is the unit within the US military that is in charge of providing the US Navy with “operating, support, and training bases.” It “manages the planning, design, and construction and provides public works support for US Naval shore installations around the world.” Among their business lines are “bases development” and “contingency engineering.”

The Pentagon said the contract awarded to Global Contingency Services LLC includes “all labor, supervision, management, tools, materials, equipment, facilities, transportation, incidental engineering, and other items necessary to provide facilities support services.”

Global Contingency Services LLC is a partnership between DynCorp International, Parsons Global Services, and PWC Logistics. The \$14.4 million contract is actually part of a bigger \$450-million five-year contract for Global Contingency Services to “provide a full range of world-wide contingency and disaster-response services, including humanitarian assistance and interim or transitional base-operating support services.”

According to DynCorp's website, this will include “facility operations and maintenance; air operations; port operations; health care; supply and warehousing; galley; housing support; emergency services; security, fire, and rescue; vehicle

equipment; and incidental construction.”

Contingency Response Services LLC describes its work as encompassing “operating forces support,” “community support,” and “base support.” According to the Defense Industry Daily publication, the contract also includes “morale, welfare, and recreation support.”

The specific contract for work for the JSOTF-P was expected to be completed last month, but other contracts may follow as part of the \$450 million-package.

According to Focus' research, the JSOTF-P has not only been involved in the Philippine military's operations in the south, it also represents the new kind of more austere, more low-profile kind of overseas presence that the US has been striving to introduce as part of its comprehensive restructuring of its forward-deployment.

Last year, US Embassy deputy spokesperson and deputy press attaché Karen Schinnerer admitted the American government commissioned the construction of facilities across Mindanao for US soldiers, but insisted the projects are not permanent military bases.

She said the US construction projects are for “medical, logistical and administrative services” to be used by the American soldiers. She said the structures are not permanent US bases. US troops use the facilities only on a temporary basis for them to “eat, sleep and work,” she told The Manila Times.

**US troops gave expired drugs to Mindanao residents--watchdog**

They engaged in combat, set up camp, group says

By Maila Ager

INQUIRER.net, February 22, 2008

MANILA, Philippines -- American troops have allegedly handed out expired medicines, built its own base inside a Philippine military camp, and engaged in actual combat operations in Zamboanga and Sulu, a fact-finding mission disclosed on Friday.

From February 18 to 21, the Citizens Peace Watch traveled to the two provinces and conducted its own investigation of the US troops' presence and alleged involvement in combat operations.

And at a press conference in Quezon City, the group confirmed the presence of a US base in Zamboanga City.

"We saw with our own eyes the US military base inside the Armed Forces of the Philippines' Camp Navarro in Zamboanga City. It is a base within a base -- off limits to troops, as admitted by a Filipino soldier -- but a US military definition," it said in a statement.

"We have found out that the base belongs to the Joint Special Operations Task Force Philippines, a US military unit that has been stationed in the country continuously since 2002," it said.

This presence of the US base, the group said, was a direct violation of the 1987 Constitution, which "expressly prohibits military bases in the country."

A witness interviewed by the group, Rawina Wahid, also claimed that US troops were present during a shooting incident in Barangay (village) Ipil in Maimbung, Sulu last February 4 where nine people, including a pregnant woman and two children, were reportedly killed.

"We also spoke with a number of other residents, who also claimed to have seen US troops in the vicinity of the fighting in other operations in other parts of Sulu," the group said.

Aside from allegedly ordering to close the operations of the Panamao District Hospital in Sulu late last year, the American soldiers have also allegedly distributed expired medicines to residents there.

"We were informed that in one incident, US troops even handed out expired medicines to locals," the statement said.

Herbert Docena, spokesman of the group, urged Congress to look into the matter and demanded the immediate suspension of the joint military exercises "pending fair and independent review of and investigations on their [US troops] presence and intervention."

"We call on concerned Filipinos, civil society groups and social movements to join us in our quest for transparency, and for peace," Docena said.

"The truth about US military basing and intervention in the Philippines will not come from governments determined to conceal it. We will have to pursue it ourselves," he added.

Arnold Noel of the Citizens Council on Human Rights appealed to everyone to also give attention to this problem in Mindanao, instead of focusing only to the expose of Rodolfo "Jun" Lozada Jr., key witness in the national broadband network controversy.

Lozada is a key witness to the corruption-tainted NBN project of the government.

“Ang problema kasi, naka-focus lang tayo kay Lozada. Bigyan nyo naman ng atensyon ang Mindanao [The problem is that we are focused only on Lozada. Let us give attention to Mindanao],” Noel said.

**NGO calls on lawmakers to probe US military intervention, bases**

Manila Times, February 25, 2008

THE Citizen's Peace Watch calls on the Congress and Senate to conduct an immediate investigation of the massacre in Maimbung, Sulu, and scrutinize United States military presence and intervention in the country.

Herbert Docena, research associate of Focus on the Global South, said members of the group, dismayed by the failure of the elected representatives to act on the said incident, have taken the initiative to probe deeper into the issue of US basing and intervention in the country particularly in Mindanao.

"We challenge our elected representatives to conduct an inquiry into the issue," said Docena.

The group is questioning the presence of four US soldiers in a shooting incident on February 4, 2008, in Barangay Ipil in Maimbung, Sulu, which the Commission on Human Rights earlier said the military killed innocent civilians.

Lawyer Virginia Suarez-Pinlac, spokesman of Kaisa Ka, said it is not the first incident where US soldiers got involved in shooting of civilians.

The group is also demanding the suspension of the US military deployment to the Philippines, specifically the stationing of the Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines as well as the military exercises, pending fair and independent review of and investigations on their presence and intervention.

"We decry the decision of the US and Philippine military officials to ignore and to effectively reject our requests for interviews and inspection of US military facilities in the country," Docena stressed.

Pinlac and Docena said the construction of US military facilities in Mindanao violates the 1987 Constitution that prohibits foreign military bases in the country.

At the same time, the group are calling on "concerned Filipinos, civil groups and social movements to join us in our quest for transparency, and for peace."

Citizen's peace watch consists of different group of sectors, civil groups and nongovernment organizations.

"As citizens, we have the right to information and transparency, especially on issues with deep implications on our welfare, on peace, and on our sovereignty," Docena stressed.

-- Ira Karen Apanay

**U.S. military presence strongest in Mindanao**

The Daily PCIJ, April 29, 2008

THE Focus on the Global South recently released a map showing what it calls “the true scale and extent of U.S. military presence” in the country today.

The map, according to the Bangkok-based research institute, illustrates the different ways and forms by which the United States has established its military basing in the Philippines, pointing to:

- \* the locations of the increasing number of military exercises the U.S. has been holding year-round throughout the country from Batanes to Tawi-Tawi since 2001;

- \* the growing number of ports that an increasing number of U.S. warships have been visiting;

- \* the underreported presence of a unit of U.S. Special Operations Forces that has been stationed continuously and indefinitely in various camps throughout Mindanao since 2002, with its headquarters inside the Western Mindanao Command in Zamboanga City.

The U.S. and Philippine governments have been downplaying American military presence in the country, but the Focus for the Global South has been belying such claims. Its recent report, *At the Door of All the East: The Philippines in United States Military Strategy*, points out that the U.S. is “transforming its presence in the Philippines in a way that seeks to heighten its capacity for intervention within the country and in the region.”

“At no point since the historic closure of the bases has the alliance (RP-US) been more robust; with arguably no other country in Southeast Asia are the ties stronger,” the report said.

Diverging from the so-called “global war on terror,” Focus on Global South pointed out that the U.S., in a larger context, aims to perpetuate its position as the world’s superpower by preventing the rise of any rivals.

According to the report, the U.S. believes that China poses the greatest threat and must therefore be contained the region and in the world. The U.S. is therefore attempting to enlist countries around China to take its side and to encircle China with its bases and troops. And because of the Philippines’s strategic location, it is among the countries where the U.S. wants to establish these bases, secure access agreements, and station its troops.

**‘U.S. base in Zamboanga’**

Just this February, a fact-finding mission conducted by independent people’s initiative Citizens’ Peace Watch (CPW) in Mindanao discovered a U.S. military base that is reportedly in operation.

“We saw this facility that is a base within a base,” said Herbert Docena, Focus for the Global South representative during the post-mission press conference last February. “The headquarters of the Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF), it’s separated from the rest of Camp Navarro.” Camp Navarro is the Armed Forces of the Philippines’s military base in Zamboanga City.

As witnessed by the fact-finding group of more than 20 civil society organizations, the alleged U.S. military base is walled-in, surrounded by concertina wiring and sandbags. The actual size of the area could not be established from the outside, but communication instruments such as satellite dishes and antenna were visible. The

facility displays a restricted area sign and workers wore identification cards.

“Filipino soldiers whom we have spoken with even confirmed that they, themselves — Filipino soldiers stationed inside the camp — are not allowed to enter this camp,” Docena added.

The group stressed that the presence of such a base is a clear violation of the 1987 Constitution, which expressly prohibits foreign military bases in the country. The last of the U.S. military bases on Philippine soil — Clark Air Base in Pampanga and Subic Naval Base in Zambales — closed down in 1992.

### **‘Actual combat’**

The group’s major concern is that the U.S. troops might be involved in actual combat operations in the area. They went to Barangay Ipil in Maimbung, Sulu, site of the February 4 massacre, and spoke directly with witnesses and some of the relatives of the nine victims mistaken by the Philippine military as members of the terrorist group Abu Sayyaf.

One of the survivors, Rawina Wahid, widow of one of the victims, claimed that she saw four members of the U.S. military in the vicinity during the operation. Aside from Wahid’s testimony, the group also spoke with a number of other residents who also claimed to have seen American troops in the vicinity fighting in other operations in other parts of Sulu.

“Mayroon pong indications na talagang sumasama sa combat yung mga ‘bisitang’ Amerikanong sundalo (There are really indications that the ‘visiting’ American soldiers join combat),” said Docena.

U.S. troops describe their mission in Sulu as “unconventional warfare” and “counter-insurgency” — not just humanitarian mission or training exercise. This pertains to collecting “actionable intelligence,” operating spy planes, removing landmines, transporting casualties and undertaking other actions as part of joint RP-US military operations.

CPW, however, maintained that all these constitute involvement in “actual combat,” which is prohibited under the Constitution, and as affirmed by the Supreme Court. In taking part in such combat operations, U.S. troops can be held accountable for human rights violations blamed on the Philippine military by local residents, including the latest massacre of civilians in Maimbung.

### **‘Special operations’**

The U.S. is also said to be conducting operations outside the control of the government and the military. Dr. Silak Lakkian, director of the Panamao District Hospital, recounted that U.S. soldiers once ordered the closure of the hospital for a month and threatened to shoot anyone who defied their order.

“The Americans cannot just do anything in the Philippines without informing the Philippine government,” said human rights advocate Sr. Arnold Noel.

This incident deprived the town of about 40,000 people of medical care every night for about a month, undermining the U.S. military’s so-called humanitarian concern for the people of Sulu. There were also allegations of U.S. troops giving out expired medicines to locals.

CPW claimed that development projects provided by the U.S. government have little impact on the province. “The Japanese and Canadian governments also provide development assistance to Sulu, but we do not see their armed soldiers on the

streets,” said Mabel Carumba of the Mindanao People’s Peace Movement in a Pinoy Press online report.

### **Not helping**

Members of the Moro National Liberation Front told CPW that “they now see the U.S. military — because of their obvious support for the Philippine military in their operations against them and against the Moro people — as enemies.”

The group claimed that the U.S. draws the party away from “a just and lasting resolution to the war and could even potentially trigger an escalation of the conflict.”

“Paano na lang kung merong mangyari sa mga tropang Amerikano na ‘to at ang gagantihan ay ‘yung buong komunidad (What if something happens to US troops and they’ll retaliate against the whole community)?” Anak Mindanao party-list Rep. Mujiv Hataman lamented. “Hindi pa nangyari sa atin ito pero nangyari na sa ibang bansa tulad nung sa Afghanistan, nangyari sa Iraq. Eto yung mas pangamba (This has not happened yet to us, but it has in other countries, in Afghanistan, in Iraq. This causes much worry).”

### **Call for action**

To encourage further investigation of the US military presence in the south, CPW submitted its mission report to the House of Representatives, where it is currently under review by a technical committee.

“Hindi kami magbibigay ng conclusion pero itong fact-finding ng Citizens’ Peace Watch, iko-consider namin ito at malaking bagay at makakatulong sa amin (We will not give any conclusions but this fact-finding of the Citizens Peace Watch, we’ll consider this and [it] will be a big help),” said Hataman.

The group also demanded the suspension of U.S. military deployment to the Philippines, specifically the JSOTF as well as military exercises, pending the fair and independent review and investigation on their presence and intervention. They also urged the media to go to Zamboanga to “see for themselves.”

“Actually, kung walang taong nakapunta doon, ‘di natin malaman kasi silent rin ang media about this case (if nobody went there, we wouldn’t know because the media is also silent about this case),” complained Sr. Noel.

In Cotabato City, Muslim religious leaders have called for a review of the Visiting Forces Agreement, the agreement that governs the conduct of the war games.

“‘Visiting Forces Agreement’, but it’s no longer ‘visiting’ because they are already based there,” said Sr. Noel.

Before the fact-finding mission, CPW had asked members of the Cabinet, military officials and the U.S. embassy for meetings and an inspection of the U.S. military facility in Camp Navarro. The request was however denied. A Philippine military official told the group that the request would only be addressed in “two months or in 2013.” (with additional reporting by Alecks P. Pabico)

See also previous PCIJ reports on U.S. military presence in the country:

- \* The U.S. troops ‘unconventional’ presence
- \* Video probes U.S. military’s unconventional presence in Mindanao
- \* Why is a U.S. construction unit spending P650 million in Mindanao?
- \* Military base redefined?

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