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Philippine Bases and U.S. Nuclear Weapons Policy

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**THE
IMMEDIATE AND LONG-TERM
CONSEQUENCES
OF
NUCLEAR WAR IN THE PHILIPPINES**

by

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(With an Introduction by Boone Schirmer)

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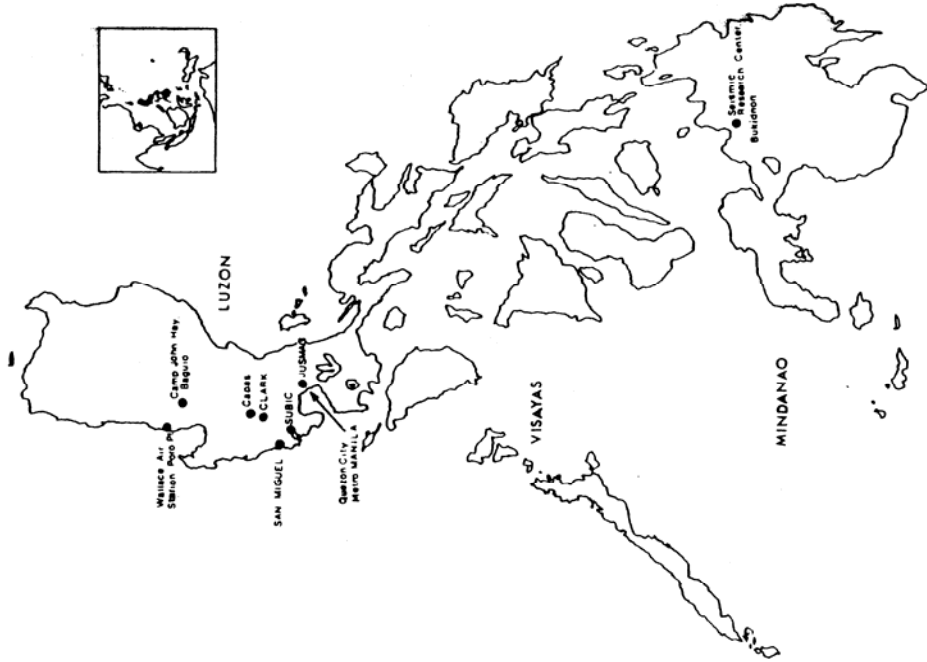
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MAP OF THE PHILIPPINES SHOWING SOME U.S. MILITARY BASES
 (INSET: MAP OF SOUTHEAST ASIA)

INTRODUCTION: PHILIPPINE BASES AND U.S. NUCLEAR WEAPONS POLICY

In 1947, when the newly independent Philippine government granted the United States the right to use military bases at Subic Bay and Clark Air Field, the United States government saw to it that the terms included the right of the U.S. to install on these bases "any type of weapons."¹ From the very beginning the Pentagon insisted on establishing the right to relate U.S. bases in the Philippines to possible plans for nuclear war.

Also, from the very beginning many Filipinos opposed U.S. bases in the Philippines, and in 1958 the Philippine nationalist leader, Senator Claro M. Recto, identified them with U.S. plans for nuclear war when he denounced a proposal to use these bases as launching pads for U.S. nuclear missiles. This use, he warned, would sign away "the lives of our people, without previously asking them if they were willing to commit suicide."²

In 1959, U.S. Ambassador Charles Bohlen and Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs Felixberto Serrano signed a new bases agreement. In this document the U.S. agreed to consult with the Philippine government before installing missile sites or using the bases for any purpose other than mutual defense.³ Perhaps this was a response, in part at least, to Recto's anti-nuclear agitation.

Another agreement signed in 1966 by U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs Narciso Ramos reaffirmed the prior consultation clause of the previous accord.⁴

However, the stipulation of prior consultation did not appear in the bases agreement of 1979, negotiated under the Marcos dictatorship. Instead, Marcos gave the U.S. the right to "unhindered military operations" on the bases.⁵ A Philippine political commentator writing in the summer of 1981, interpreted this to mean that the U.S. could bring as many nuclear weapons as it wanted onto the Philippine bases, so long as it did so "discreetly."⁶

Meanwhile, early in 1981 a popular movement that had developed in the Philippines against the installation of a Westinghouse nuclear reactor on Batan peninsula broadened its scope to include opposition to U.S. nuclear weapons and bases in the Philippines. In this way, a Coalition for a Nuclear Free Philippines was formed of representatives from church, labor, women's, student and scientific groups. The Coalition has since joined forces with a larger Movement for a Nuclear Free Pacific. In January 1983, a broadly-based anti-bases coalition was established. Before these groups were organized, opposition to nuclear weapons had been concentrated in the Civil Liberties Union of the Philippines, a more or less elite grouping.

The growth of public opposition to nuclear weapons may have had something to do with an announcement President Marcos made in September 1982, just before his visit to the United States. Then he told the press that the Philippines and the U.S. had an agreement not to store nuclear weapons on U.S. bases there.

installations and bases which put their own lives and their children's lives their very nationhood--in such dreadful jeopardy. U.S. citizens must question the morality of a policy of their government that threatens an Asian nation of 90 million with the catastrophic consequences uncovered by Mr. Emmanuel.

-- D. Boone Schirmer

FOOTNOTES

1. Treaties and Other International Agreements of the U.S., 1776-1949, Volume 11, Philippines-United Arab Republic, p. 58.
2. Renato Constantino, The Making of A Filipino, p. 283.
3. George E. Taylor, The Philippines and the United States, p. 239.
4. United States Treaties and Other International Agreements, Vol. 17, Part 1, 1966, pp. 1212-1213.
5. United States Treaties and Other International Agreements, Vol. 30, Part 1, 1978-79, p. 864.
6. Teodoro Benigno. (Manila) Times Journal, August 12, 1981.
7. (Manila) Bulletin Today, September 7, 1982.
8. Defense Monitor, Center for Defense Information, February 1975.
9. Far Eastern Economic Review, January 27, 1981; Washington Post, September 13, 1982.

When the Friends of the Filipino People made inquiry, the U.S. State Department would neither confirm nor deny the existence of this agreement, in line, it was said, with U.S. policy not to disclose the whereabouts of nuclear weapons.

Alongside of the agreement announced by Mr. Marcos must be placed the finding of authorities such as the Center for Defense Information in Washington, D.C., that the U.S. does store nuclear weapons on the Philippine bases.

In any case, it is a matter of public record that U.S. nuclear-armed aircraft carriers and nuclear-armed submarines have put up at Subic Base, as has the Navy's nuclear capable cruiser the U.S.S. Sterlet. Nuclear capable F-4E planes are stationed at Clark Field. The Strategic Air Command (nuclear capable B52's) maintains a Communications Center at Clark Air Field and B3 Orion nuclear capable anti-submarine fighter planes operate out of Cubi Point near Subic Bay. Altogether, U.S. bases in the Philippines are important repositories of nuclear weapons and nuclear war support systems.

As Recto pointed out, the existence of nuclear weapons and installations on U.S. bases makes the Philippines a target for Soviet nuclear retaliation in case of nuclear war between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.

Moreover, U.S. bases and nuclear installations in the Philippines would serve to launch limited nuclear war in the Mideast and the Korean Peninsula, (two of the three areas for which the Pentagon makes such projections, the third being Europe). Limited nuclear war in either area might trigger the U.S.-Soviet nuclear exchange that would be disastrous for the Philippines.

In April 1983, the United States government and the government of the Philippines are to begin a review of the bases agreement of 1979. It is reported that Mr. Marcos will seek a three- or four-fold increase in financial remuneration from the United States for the bases from \$500 million over a five-year period to \$1.5 billion or \$2 billion.

The Reagan Administration will certainly look with favor upon these demands coming from Mr. Marcos. Mr. Marcos represents a right-wing military dictatorship that supports U.S. military bases in the Philippines essential to military intervention and limited nuclear war in Asia and the Mideast. Mr. Reagan has a well-known proclivity for such institutions and policies. It would be well for those in the United States who are opposed to their government's preparations for military intervention and nuclear war to be aware of this situation.

Opponents of the nuclear arms race in both the Philippines and the United States can greatly benefit from the work of Jorge Emmanuel detailing the effects of nuclear war upon the Philippines. Mr. Emmanuel is a former General Electric research chemical engineer and is presently a doctoral candidate in engineering. His conscientious study raises important questions for both Philippine and U.S. citizens. After reading this study, Filipinos may ask themselves if they can countenance the presence in their land of U.S. nuclear