

CRS Report for Congress

Received through the CRS Web

U.S. Military Operations in the Global War on Terrorism: Afghanistan, Africa, the Philippines, and Colombia

February 4, 2005

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Summary

U.S. military operations in Afghanistan, Africa, the Philippines, and Colombia are part of the U.S.-initiated Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). These operations cover a wide variety of combat and non-combat missions ranging from fighting insurgents, to civil affairs and reconstruction operations, to training military forces of other nations in counternarcotics, counterterrorism and counterinsurgency tactics. Numbers of U.S. forces involved in these operations range from 18,000 to just a few hundred. Some have argued that U.S. military operations in these countries are achieving a degree of success and suggest that they may offer some lessons that might be applied in Iraq as well as for future GWOT operations. Potential issues for Congress include the long-term U.S. military strategy in Southeast Asia and Africa, proposals for NATO to assume command of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan, and how counternarcotics operations in that country should be conducted. This report will not discuss the provision of equipment and weapons to countries where the U.S. military is conducting counterterrorism operations nor will it address Foreign Military Sales (FMS) which are also aspects of the Administration's GWOT military strategy. This report will be updated on a periodic basis.

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U.S. Military Operations and the Global War on Terrorism: Afghanistan, Africa, the Philippines, and Colombia

Overview

U.S. military operations as part of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) began on October 7, 2001 and continue today. The military component is just one aspect in this endeavor which also involves diplomacy, intelligence, law enforcement, and financial efforts intended to defeat terrorists around the world. This report focuses on U.S. military operations in four areas — Afghanistan, Africa, the Philippines, and Colombia — although the U.S. military is likely engaged in a variety of activities in other countries or regions that are considered part of the GWOT by the Administration. While some consider military operations in Iraq as part of this war, many do not, and because of the complexity of this issue Iraq is treated separately and in greater detail in other CRS reports.¹

Congress has a wide ranging interest in U.S. military operations in these regions. Some suggest that these operations have lessons learned that could be useful in Iraq and also in future operations. Others also question what the Administration's long-term goals are for ongoing military operations in Southeast Asia and Africa. U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF) have played a central role in all four of these U.S. military operations — not just in direct combat but also other roles such as training and civil affairs — and their use raises a variety of issues for potential congressional consideration.²

¹ CRS has a wide variety of reports on Iraq. The following reports discuss the military aspects of Iraq in great detail: CRS Report RL31763, *Iraq: Summary of U.S. Forces* and CRS Report RL31701, *Iraq: U.S. Military Operations and Costs*.

² For additional information on U.S. Special Operations Forces see CRS Report RS21048, *U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF): Background and Issues for Congress* and CRS Report RS22017, *Special Operations Forces (SOF) and CIA Paramilitary Operations: Issues for Congress*.

Afghanistan³

Current Operations

There are approximately 18,000 U.S. military personnel in and around Afghanistan. Troops currently in Afghanistan represent the fifth major troop rotation in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) since the United States became involved in the fall of 2001. At present, the majority of U.S. ground forces come from the Hawaii-based 25th Infantry Division.⁴ U.S. Special Forces are also operating in Afghanistan and are primarily concerned with capturing or killing Taliban and Al Qaeda leaders. In addition, Army units from the Oklahoma National Guard are working with forces from other coalition countries on training the new Afghan National Army (ANA).⁵ The Marines have elements from the Camp Pendleton, California-based First (I) Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) deployed to Afghanistan as part of OEF 5.⁶

U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) Commander, Army General John Abizaid, has reportedly requested about 20,000 troops for the sixth rotation (OEF 6) and these units will take over in March 2005.⁷ Major forces for OEF 6 include headquarters elements from the Southern European Task Force (Airborne) from Vicenza, Italy, the 173rd Airborne Brigade also from Vicenza, a brigade from the 82nd Airborne Division from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and the Florida National Guard's 53rd Infantry Brigade which will be involved with ANA training.⁸ The Second (II) MEF from Camp Lejeune, North Carolina will supply the Marine component to OEF 6.⁹

Security for Presidential Elections. In September 2004, the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) deployed additional troops to Afghanistan on a temporary basis to assist in providing security for the October 9 presidential elections. The U.S. provided about 1,100 additional troops from the 82nd Airborne Division and NATO allies Italy, Spain, and Great Britain sent about 1,500 soldiers. These soldiers, along with about 15,000 ANA soldiers and 48,000 Afghan police provided security for some 21,521 voting stations in Afghanistan. The

³ For a more detailed treatment of Afghanistan see CRS Report RL30588, *Afghanistan: Post-War Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy* (Updated regularly).

⁴ Lisa Burgess, "U.S. Troop Presence in Afghanistan at 17,900 and Expected to Hold Steady," *Stars and Stripes*, July 9, 2004.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Information provided by the U.S. Marine Corps Congressional Liaison Office, January 24, 2005.

⁷ Jim Garamone, "Iraq, Afghanistan Troop-Rotation Plans Announced," *American Forces Information Services*, July 8, 2004.

⁸ U.S. Department of Defense News Release No. 1289-04, December 14, 2004, "DOD Announces OEF/OIF Rotational Coverage."

⁹ Information provided by the U.S. Marine Corps Congressional Liaison Office, January 24, 2005.

election, held on October 9, was characterized as uneventful aside from a few isolated attacks on remote voting stations and Afghans reportedly turned out “en masse” in what some international observers reported as “free and fair” elections.¹⁰ U.S. Army Lieutenant General David Barno, commander of Combined Joint Task Force-180 (CJTF-180) reportedly called the election “a big defeat for the Taliban” given their numerous public threats to disrupt the elections.¹¹

The Winter Offensive. On December 11, 2004 — four days after Afghan president Hamid Karzai’s inauguration — U.S. forces began “Operation Lightning Freedom” in an attempt to further eliminate Taliban and Al Qaeda forces prior to the April 2005 Afghan National Assembly elections. According to a U.S. military spokesman, the operation — going on throughout Afghanistan — is intended to “search out and destroy the remaining remnants of Taliban forces who traditionally we believe go to ground in the winter.”¹² The 25th Infantry Division Commander, Major General Eric Olson, also reportedly stated that U.S. forces would also be redeployed to tighten border security with Pakistan and that U.S. Special Forces would conduct raids to capture insurgent leaders.¹³ Another commonly perceived objective of Operation Lightning Freedom is to convince militants to accept President Karzai’s and the U.S. military’s offer of amnesty shortly after the inauguration.¹⁴ Major General Olson reportedly suggested that if a large number of Taliban give up and return to their villages, that U.S. troop strength might be reduced this summer after planned parliamentary elections.¹⁵ The commander of CJTF-180, LTG Barno, however stated that the current U.S. troop strength — around 18,000 — would remain steady throughout the year.¹⁶ To date, little has been publically reported regarding how Operation Lightning Freedom is progressing, although Taliban attacks appear to have become more sporadic and less lethal in recent months.

International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF)

ISAF is a NATO-led organization, consisting of approximately 8,000 troops from 36 NATO nations, as well as troops from nine partner and two non-aligned countries.¹⁷ The United States has approximately 200 troops assigned to ISAF but these troops serve primarily in staff and support roles. ISAF operates under a series

¹⁰ Joshua Kuccera, “Paving the Way to Peace,” *Jane’s Defense Weekly*, December 15, 2004, p. 24.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² “U.S. Begins New Offensive Vs. Afghan Militants,” *Wall Street Journal*, December 11, 2004.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ “New Push Targets Taliban Rebels,” *Baltimore Sun*, December 12, 2004.

¹⁶ Charlie Coon, “Top U.S. Commander in Afghanistan Says Troop Levels Should Remain Steady at 18,000.” *European Stars and Strips*, January 15, 2005.

¹⁷ For a breakdown of ISAF contributing nations and their troop contributions as of November 23, 2004 see [<http://www.nato.int/issues/afghanistan/040628-factsheet.htm>].

of U.N. mandates and conducts security patrols in Kabul and surrounding districts and runs several Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) located throughout Afghanistan.¹⁸ In addition ISAF coordinates Civil Military Cooperation projects throughout the area of operations.¹⁹ ISAF does not participate in offensive operations against the Taliban and Al Qaeda — these operations are carried out by the U.S.-led CJTF-180 and forces from 19 other countries²⁰ (including some countries that have other forces assigned to ISAF) and the ANA. ISAF is considered by some as important not only from a security perspective but also from an economy of force perspective in that its existence permits the United States to focus the majority of its troops on combating Taliban and Al Qaeda insurgents.

Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs)²¹

PRTs are small, civil-military teams originally designed to extend the authority of the Afghan central government beyond Kabul and to facilitate aid and reconstruction projects. The U.S., British, and German militaries provide the security component for these 19 teams spread throughout Afghanistan. PRTs have enabled coalition forces to extend a degree of security to outlying regions and have also permitted U.S. forces to establish personal relationships with local Afghan leaders which some believe has helped to diminish insurgent influence in a number of regions.²²

U.S. Training of the Afghan National Army (ANA)

Training of the ANA commenced shortly after U.S. and coalition forces defeated Taliban forces in early 2002. The Bonn II Conference on rebuilding Afghanistan in December 2002 mandated a 70,000 strong Afghan National Army consisting of officers, non-commissioned officers, and soldiers in ground and air forces, air defense forces, civilian employees of the Ministry of Defense, student cadets of post-secondary institutions and other specialized units.²³ Reportedly under existing plans, these forces will not be fully operational until 2011 and could possibly grow beyond 70,000 to include additional specialized units and a reserve

¹⁸ “NATO in Afghanistan: Factsheet,” as of December 17, 2004, [<http://www.nato.int/issues/afghanistan/040628-factsheet.htm>].

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ See [http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/enduring-freedom_orbat-03.htm] for a listing of these countries as of June 2004.

²¹ Information in this section, unless otherwise noted, is taken from DOD Factsheet - Provincial Reconstruction Teams, dated September 27, 2004 [<http://www.defenselink.mil/home/articles/2004-10/a100107b.html>].

²² Joshua Kuccera, p. 25.

²³ Rebuilding Afghanistan: Peace and Stability - Petersberg - December 2, 2002 [<http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/www/de/infoservice/download/pdf/friedenspolitik/afghanistan/dekret.pdf>].

component.²⁴ The ANA currently has almost 21,000 troops, with about 17,800 trained troops and about 3,400 still in training.²⁵ Most agree that a significant U.S. military presence will remain in Afghanistan until additional ANA forces are trained and the ANA becomes self-sufficient.

According to some, the ANA soldiers are proving to be effective and willing participants in U.S. counterinsurgency operations.²⁶ ANA forces right out of training were integrated into U.S.-led combat operations against insurgents and ANA forces have been employed on numerous occasions by the Afghan government to “douse flareups” between Afghanistan’s rival regional leaders who control about 30,000 armed fighters and who exert varying degrees of influence in many regions of the country.²⁷ Although some characterize the ANA as more effective than Iraq’s new national army, the ANA experienced a number of issues early in its development and Afghan officials credit the U.S. military with providing “the backbone” of the ANA, agreeing that it will take some time before the ANA achieves the necessary degree of self sufficiency.²⁸

The War on Drugs²⁹

Afghanistan’s opium industry is estimated to employ directly or indirectly anywhere between 20 to 30 percent of the Afghan population and provides for almost 60 percent of Afghanistan’s gross domestic product (GDP).³⁰ Both the Administration and some members of Congress have reportedly called for the eradication of Afghanistan’s illegal narcotics trade and U.S. military involvement in supporting or participating interdiction and eradication operations with Afghan forces.³¹ Many analysts as well as senior U.S. military officials suggest that such a

²⁴ Joshua Kucera, “Afghanistan Looks to Army Expansion,” *Jane’s Defense Weekly*, October 13, 2004, p. 6.

²⁵ “Afghan Army Has Made Great Progress, Says U.S. Officer,” *American Forces Press Service*, January 10, 2005.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Halima Kazem, “New Afghan Army Asserts Itself,” *Christian Science Monitor*, August 23, 2004.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ For a detailed treatment of both military and non-military aspects of this issue see CRS Report RL32686: Afghanistan: Narcotics and U.S. Policy (*December 7, 2004*).

³⁰ Ted Galen Carpenter, “How the Drug War in Afghanistan Undermines America’s War on Terror,” CATO Institute - Foreign Policy Briefing No. 84, November 10, 2004 and “Fear of Fighting and Economic Ruin Hold Back Bid to Stamp Out Opium,” *London Financial Times*, January 4, 2005, p. 7.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp 2-3.

policy is not only not achievable given U.S. force levels in Afghanistan but could also significantly undermine its counterinsurgency campaign.³²

The cultivation of poppies — used in making opium for heroin — which was reportedly regulated and taxed under Taliban rule, flourished after the elimination of the Taliban regime.³³ In August 2004, U.S. Defense Secretary Rumsfeld reportedly stated that U.S.-led coalition forces were “preparing a coordinated effort to attack the narcotics trade in the country, recognizing that drug income could be used to fund insurgents and terrorists.”³⁴ While few doubt the validity of this assertion, others believe that a policy of direct involvement by the U.S. military would not only adversely affect the U.S. military campaign against insurgents but also pose a risk for the Karzai government.³⁵ The central premise is that many of the regional commanders who have helped the United States in the fight against the Taliban and Al Qaeda derive significant revenues from the drug trade.³⁶ Some experts suggest that an aggressive eradication plan could drive these powerful figures into an alliance with the insurgents.³⁷ United States Central Command (USCENTCOM) Deputy Commander, Air Force Lieutenant General Lance Smith, reportedly stated that “Central Command would rather not be in the drug eradication business ... we have spent a lot of capital in trying to build relationships with people and now this has the potential for us to do things that wouldn’t be popular.”³⁸

It appears that the U.S. military has modified its position on involvement in counternarcotics operations. Reportedly, Air Force Lieutenant General Lance Smith recently stated that “it is absolutely clear to us, that everything that we’ve done in Afghanistan would be for [nothing] if we allowed the narcotraffickers to take over. So it is clear that we have a role to play.”³⁹ Although officials allegedly have not yet finalized the details of this support, some suggest that it will likely involve providing additional aerial surveillance, providing airlift into staging areas and security to Afghan counternarcotics police, and additional training for Afghan National Police who provide security for drug eradication operations.⁴⁰ One report suggests that the United States may provide the Afghan National Police with up to eight U.S. or

³² Rowan Scarborough, “Military Resists Anti-Drug Role,” *Washington Times*, October 26, 2004, p. 9.

³³ “U.S. Set to Battle Afghan Drug Trade,” *New York Times on the Web*, August 11, 2004.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Ted Galen Carpenter, p. 1.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Victoria Burnett and Peter Spiegel “Fear of Fighting and Economic Ruin Hold Back Bid to Stamp Out Opium,” *Financial Times*, January 4, 2005.

³⁹ Joshua Kucera, “U.S. Military Weighs Up Entering Drug Fight in Afghanistan,” *Jane’s Defense Weekly*, January 5, 2005, p. 5.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

Russian helicopters for their use in counternarcotics operations.⁴¹ Even if U.S. military forces are not directly involved, some suggest these efforts might still push militia commanders to oppose the Karzai.⁴²

The Horn of Africa⁴³

In October 2002, the United States established Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) Horn of Africa (HOA) to combat terrorism in the region. For the purpose of this operation, the Horn of Africa is defined as “the total airspace and land areas out to the high-water mark of Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, and Yemen.”⁴⁴ CJTF-HOA is headquartered at Camp Lemonier in Djibouti and consists of approximately 2,000 personnel including U.S. military and Special Operations Forces (SOF), U.S. civilian, and coalition force members.⁴⁵ In addition to CJTF-HOA, Combined Task Force (CTF)150 is a naval task force consisting of ships from Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Pakistan, New Zealand, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States, and has the task of monitoring, inspecting, boarding, and stopping suspect shipping not only in the Horn of Africa region, but also in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.⁴⁶

Mission and Operations

The stated missions of CJTF-HOA and CTF-150 are “to detect, disrupt and defeat terrorists who pose an imminent threat to coalition partners in the region ...” and to “work with host nations to deny the reemergence of terrorist cells and activities by supporting international agencies working to enhance long-term stability for the region.”⁴⁷ CJTF-HOA has reportedly devoted the majority of its effort to date to train with other coalition forces and to train selected armed forces units of the countries of Djibouti, Kenya, and Ethiopia in counterterrorism and counterinsurgency

⁴¹ “U.S. to Help Afghanistan in Counternarcotics Campaign,” *Wall Street Journal*, January 27, 2005.

⁴² Eric Schmitt, “Afghans’ Gains Face Big Threat in Drug Traffic,” *New York Times*, December 11, 2004, p. 1.

⁴³ For additional information see CRS Report RL31247, *Africa and the War on Terrorism*, January 17, 2002.

⁴⁴ News Transcript - DOD Briefing - Joint Task Force Horn of Africa Briefing, January 10, 2003.

⁴⁵ Abraham McLaughlin, “U.S. Engages Africa in Terror Fight,” *Christian Science Monitor*, September 17, 2004, p. 2.

⁴⁶ Navy News Stand - Eye on the Fleet [http://www.navy.mil/view_single.asp?id=13996], accessed on January 18, 2005

⁴⁷ News Transcript - DOD Briefing - Joint Task Force Horn of Africa Briefing, January 10, 2003.

tactics.⁴⁸ In addition, CJTF-HOA has conducted a variety of civil affairs missions including rebuilding schools and medical clinics as well as providing medical services to the aforementioned three countries.⁴⁹ CJTF-HOA has also provided military training to Chad, Niger, Mauritania, and Mali. As part of the Administration's \$125 million Trans-Saharan Counter Terrorism Initiative, troops in Senegal, Nigeria, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco will also receive military training and equipment.⁵⁰ Some note that there has been little reported in terms of actual terrorist interdiction operations, other than non-specific remarks by a departing CJTF-HOA commander that they had captured "dozens of terrorists" and averted at least five terrorist attacks.⁵¹ Others suggest, however, that publicizing these activities might not only reduce the cooperation of countries in the region but could also compromise sensitive ongoing efforts to capture terrorists and disrupt terror networks.

A Model for Future Operations?

Some suggest that U.S. military activities in the Horn of Africa region may serve as a model for future war on terror operations. Robert D. Kaplan of the *Atlantic Monthly* writes:

The goal will be suppression of terrorist networks through the training of — and combined operations with — indigenous troops. That is why the Pan-Sahel [Trans Saharan] Initiative in Africa, in which Marines and Army Special Forces have been training local militaries in Mauritania, Mali, Niger, and Chad, in order to counter Al Qaeda infiltration of sub-Saharan Africa, is a surer paradigm for the American imperial future than anything occurring in Iraq and Afghanistan. In months of travels with the American military, I have learned that the smaller the American footprint and the less notice it draws from international media, the more effective is the operation.⁵²

David Ignatius of the *Washington Post* writes:

That suggests a dirty, drawn-out conflict in which each side tests the other's will and staying power. It's not the sort of war that democracies are usually good at fighting ... Yet because the battlefield is society itself, the United States cannot think of the struggle in purely military terms. CENTCOM's 1,000 troops who are digging wells and performing other reconstruction tasks in the Horn of Africa may be a better model for success than the 150,000 soldiers hunkered down in Iraq.⁵³

⁴⁸ David H. Shinn, "Fighting Terrorism in East Africa and the Horn," *Foreign Service Journal*, September 2004, p. 41.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Abraham McLaughlin, p. 2.

⁵¹ David H. Shinn, p. 41.

⁵² Robert D. Kaplan, "Indian Country," *The Wall Street Journal*, September 25, 2004.

⁵³ David Ignatius, "Achieving Real Victory Could Take Decades," *Washington Post*, December 26, 2004, p. B1.

Although these observers believe that U.S. military operations in the Horn of Africa could serve as a template for future GWOT operations, others suggest an ulterior motive for U.S. engagement in the region as well as some potential problems. Some analysts believe that in addition to combating terrorism, that U.S. involvement in the region responds to “a need to protect Africa’s rapidly expanding oil industry.”⁵⁴ These analysts note that at present, the United States imports about 15 percent of its oil from Africa — a figure which could reportedly rise to as much as 25 percent within a decade.⁵⁵ According to one source, a senior U.S. official predicted that African oil would become potentially more important to the United States than oil from Russia or the Caucasus and that the African oil industry ran the risk of imploding as a result of “the region’s inherent instability” unless “the U.S. did something more to prop it up.”⁵⁶

Some experts feel that the region’s instability could also pose some other potential problems. One concern is that countries receiving U.S. military training and arms and equipment could easily use these resources against internal opposition groups as well as other countries in the region.⁵⁷ Another concern is that countries such as Sudan and Somalia either have poor relations with the United States or are in such a state of internal disarray that any sort of military operation with the United States is difficult at best.⁵⁸ Still others note that an excessive focus on a military solution could detract from other efforts designed to address the root causes of terrorism in the region.

The Philippines⁵⁹

The government of the Philippines, a long time and major non-NATO ally of the United States, faces an insurgency threat from four major groups — three Islamic groups who seek an independent state in Mindanao and one communist group which seeks a Marxist state.⁶⁰ One group in particular, the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), has reported financial and training links to Al Qaeda and has become the focus of the Administration’s counterterror efforts in the region.⁶¹ Estimates vary on the size of Abu Sayyaf — ranging from one thousand to a couple of hundred fighters — and their activities were largely aimed at the Philippine government until 2001 when allegations emerged that Abu Sayyaf had been involved in planning the assassination

⁵⁴ Abraham McLaughlin, p. 1.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 2.

⁵⁶ Julian Borger, “Oil and Terrorism Drive the Presidential Tour,” *The Guardian*, July 7, 2003.

⁵⁷ Abraham McLaughlin, p. 3.

⁵⁸ David H. Shinn, p. 41.

⁵⁹ For additional information see CRS Report RL31265, *Abu Sayyaf: Target of Philippine-U.S. Anti-Terrorism Cooperation*, April 8, 2003.

⁶⁰ “Philippines,” Center for Defense Information (CDI), October 28, 2004, p. 1.

⁶¹ U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM) Fact Sheet, “Abu Sayyaf History,” March 5, 2002.

of the Pope during a planned visit to the Philippines and also plans to hijack and destroy 12 U.S. airliners.⁶² Philippine authorities reportedly suspect that Abu Sayyaf had a role in the October 2002 bombing near a Philippine military base which killed three Filipinos and one U.S. Army Special Forces soldier.⁶³

Operations

U.S. military operations in the Philippines are limited by the Philippine constitution (foreign military forces are not permitted to participate in combat operations on Filipino territory) to training in counterinsurgency and counterterrorism tactics, advising Filipino units, and participating in civil-military operations. The focus of civil-military operations is to limit the influence of insurgents with the local population, particularly in the southern region where most Abu Sayyaf and other Islamic insurgent group activity is focused.

The United States has been conducting large joint training exercises with the Philippines since 1981 called the Balikatan exercises.⁶⁴ In 2002, two Balikatan exercises were conducted — one from January through July and one from April through May.⁶⁵ The first exercise, Balikatan 2002-1, reportedly involved 1,650 U.S. troops, including 150 U.S. Army and Navy special forces troops.⁶⁶ This operation was conducted on Basilan and Zamboagna islands in the southern Philippines — areas where Abu Sayyaf frequently operates — and was intended to destroy the Abu Sayyaf group as well as free a U.S. missionary couple who were taken hostage in May 2001.⁶⁷ These operations were conducted by the Filipino military with the U.S. serving in a training and advisory role. Some sources suggest that these operations by the Philippine armed forces “severely disrupted” and “significantly reduced” the Abu Sayyaf Group.⁶⁸ The second exercise, Balikatan 2002-2, involving 2,665 U.S. troops, was held on the island of Luzon and focused on civil-military operations and a humanitarian assistance exercise.⁶⁹

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ “5 Bomb Suspects Nabbed In Philippines,” *CBSNEWS.com*, October 23, 2002.

⁶⁴ C.H. Briscoe, “Balikatan Exercise Spearheaded ARSOF Operations in the Philippines,” *Special Warfare, The Professional Bulletin of the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School*, September 2004, pp. 16 -25.

⁶⁵ “Operation Enduring Freedom - Philippines Balikatan 2002-1,” *GlobalSecurity.org*, March 16, 2004, [http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/balikatan_02-1.htm].

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ On June 6, 2002 the Philippine military attempted to rescue the U.S. hostages and U.S. missionary Martin Burnham was killed in the attempt but his wife Gracia was wounded and later recovered.

⁶⁸ Robert Nolan, “Terror in the Philippines,” *Foreign Policy Association Newsletter*, March 6, 2003 and C.H. Briscoe, “Reflections and Observations on ARSOF Operations During Balikatan 0201,” *Special Warfare, The Professional Bulletin of the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School*, September 2004, pp. 55 -57.

⁶⁹ “Operation Enduring Freedom - Philippines Balikatan 2002-1,” *GlobalSecurity.org*, (continued...)

The 2003 Balikatan exercise generated controversy in the United States and the Philippines when it was reported that U.S. soldiers, Marines, and special forces with their Filipino compatriots would “conduct or support combat patrols” against Abu Sayyaf.⁷⁰ This proposed U.S. participation in combat, allegedly sanctioned by both Philippine President Arroyo and the Bush Administration, resulted in significant political opposition in the Philippines.⁷¹ Balikatan 2003 was eventually modified to insure that U.S. forces would not participate in combat operations.

Balikatan 2004 was conducted from February 23, 2004 to March 7, 2004 for two weeks and involved about 2,500 U.S. troops participating in a variety of exercises and training sessions with the Philippine Armed Forces.⁷² U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM) reports that Balikatan 2005 is scheduled for February 21 through March 6 but specific details are not available.⁷³

The United States has frequently conducted lower-level training exercises with specialized Filipino counterterrorism and counterinsurgency forces.⁷⁴ This training, typically involving no more than 100 U.S. Special Forces troops at one time, focuses on the training of individuals and small units on planning, tactics, and techniques and also on specialized counterterrorism equipment provided to the Philippine Armed Forces. Reportedly, the United States has also begun counter-drug training with the Philippines which is considered a major drug transshipment center and a major regional producer of marijuana.⁷⁵

A Second Front for the War on Terrorism?

Some suggest that U.S. involvement in the Philippines is part of a greater U.S. strategy to combat Islamic terrorism throughout Southeast Asia.⁷⁶ Some U.S. officials reportedly believe that Abu Sayyaf has established connections with Jemaah Islamiyah, an Al Qaeda affiliate operating across Indonesia and the Philippines, who

⁶⁹ (...continued)

March 16, 2004, [http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/balikatan_02-1.htm]

⁷⁰ “U.S. Troops Aid Riles Philippines,” *CBSNEWS.com*, February 21, 2003 and Eric Schmitt, “U.S. Combat Force of 1,700 is Headed to the Philippines,” *New York Times*, February 22, 2003.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² “Balikatan 2004 - Improving Combat Readiness Between Philippine and U.S. Forces,” Asia Pacific Defense Forum, Spring 2004.

⁷³ U.S. Pacific Command Website [<http://www.pacom.mil/ops/exerlist.shtml>] as of January 19, 2005.

⁷⁴ Information in this paragraph is from C.H. Briscoe, “Balikatan Exercise Spearheaded ARSOF Operations in the Philippines,” *Special Warfare, The Professional Bulletin of the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School*, September 2004, pp. 16 - 25.

⁷⁵ “RP-US Troops Start Anti-Narcoterrorism Exercise,” *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, August 31, 2004.

⁷⁶ For additional information see CRS Report RL32259, *Terrorism in South Asia*, December 13, 2004.

are believed to be responsible for a string of bombings including Bali in 2002 and the Davao bombings in 2003.⁷⁷ While some note the relative success of joint U.S.-Filipino training exercises in combating Abu Sayyaf, others warn that increasing U.S. involvement could “complicate” the Philippine’s insurgency dilemma and also possibly fuel anti-American sentiment in the region which could form the basis “of a new pan-Islamic solidarity in the region.”⁷⁸ Some experts contend that not all militant Muslim groups operating in Southeast Asia are aligned with Al Qaeda and it is important that U.S. counterterror efforts in the region “do not motivate these potential affiliates to join the Al Qaeda cause.”⁷⁹

Colombia

Colombia occupies a unique position in the Administration’s global war on terror in that its targeted terrorist groups are Marxist as opposed to Islamic-based and have no reported links to Al Qaeda or other Islamic groups. U.S. military involvement began in 2000 under “Plan Colombia” and was limited to training Colombian counternarcotics units. Colombia has been involved for almost forty years in what some describe as a civil war and others describe as a counterinsurgency campaign against three major groups. The first two groups, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN) started in the 1950s as Marxist revolutionary groups but reportedly have lost most of their ideological support and have transformed into violent criminal organizations.⁸⁰ The other group, the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) is a conglomerate of illegal self-defense groups formed in rural areas where the Colombian government did not exert a strong presence.⁸¹ All three groups allegedly fund their activities through drug revenues⁸² and are on the Administration’s official list of terrorist organizations.⁸³ These groups also currently hold a number of Colombian and foreign hostages whom they use as negotiating leverage — these include three U.S.

⁷⁷ See Eric Schmitt, “U.S. Combat Force of 1,700 is Headed to the Philippines,” *New York Times*, February 22, 2003 and Anthony Davis, “Southeast Asia Awaits JI’s Next Move,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, September 2004, pp. 27 - 29 and Marc Erikson, “Philippines the Second Front in the War on Terror?” *Asia Times*, October 27, 2001.

⁷⁸ Robert Nolan, “Terror in the Philippines,” *Foreign Policy Association Newsletter*, March 6, 2003.

⁷⁹ Gaye Christoffersen, “The War on Terrorism in Southeast Asia: Searching for Partners, Delimiting Targets, Center for Contemporary Conflict, U.S. Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California, March 2002, p. 6.

⁸⁰ Lieutenant Colonel Kevin W. Buckley, “U.S. Support to Plan Colombia: A Heading Check,” U.S. Army War College Strategy Research Project, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, March 19, 2004, p. 1.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ U.S. State Department - Designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations, April 30, 2001, [<http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/pgtrpt/2000/2450.htm>].

defense contractors who were taken by the FARC in February 2003 when their observation plane was shot down.⁸⁴

In 2002, the U.S. military's role in Colombia changed from focusing on counternarcotics training to counterinsurgency training. Under P.L. 107-206, 2002 Supplemental Appropriations Act for Further Recovery from and Response to Terrorist Attacks on the United States, the U.S. military was directed to support a unified campaign against narcotics trafficking as well as directly against the FARC, ELN, and AUC, although the U.S. military is not permitted to participate in combat operations.⁸⁵ In addition, \$6 million was provided to train and equip a Colombian military unit to protect the Canon-Limon Oil Pipeline⁸⁶ from insurgent attacks.⁸⁷ P.L. 107-206 also limited U.S. military participation in Colombia to 400 military personnel and 400 defense contractors.⁸⁸ The majority of the U.S. military forces are from the Army's 7th Special Forces Group in Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

Results and an Increase in U.S. Military Presence

With its new mandate, in October 2002 U.S. Special Forces reportedly began training a 600-man Colombian "commando" battalion designed to hunt down and kill insurgents and an infrastructure protection force primarily intended to protect the Canon-Limon pipeline.⁸⁹ In 2003, the Colombian government issued a report entitled "Three Years of Successful U.S. - Colombia Cooperation in the Fight Against Drug Trafficking and Terrorism"⁹⁰ which provides a variety of statistics related to progress in the wars on drugs and terrorism. Although the report gives a great deal of credit to U.S. military assistance, experts note that much of the progress cited in the report is directly attributed to Colombian President Alvaro Uribe's commitment to destroy

⁸⁴ Rachel Van Dongen, "U.S. 'Private Army' Grows," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 3, 2003.

⁸⁵ See Section 305 of P.L. 107-206. Although U.S. military forces are not allowed to participate in combat, they can be used in hostage rescue situations.

⁸⁶ The Canon-Limon Pipeline is a 500 mile oil pipeline that runs along Colombia's border with Venezuela. It is operated by Occidental Petroleum of Los Angeles and Colombia's Ecopetrol and transports an estimated \$5 billion a year worth of oil. It has been a frequent target of insurgents and in 2001, pipeline bombings reportedly cost the Colombian government an estimated \$500 million.

⁸⁷ See International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement Section of P.L. 107-206.

⁸⁸ See Section 305 (c) of P.L. 107-206.

⁸⁹ Rowan Scarborough, "U.S. Helps Colombia Take Down Guerillas," *Washington Times*, December 8, 2003 and Joseph L. Galloway, "U.S. Forces Expanding Role in Colombia: Beyond Drug Mission, Troops Now Working to Protect Oil Pipeline," *Charlotte Observer*, January 21, 2003.

⁹⁰ "Three Years of Successful U.S. Colombia Cooperation in the Fight Against Drug Trafficking and Terrorism," Embassy of Colombia, Washington DC, July 2003.

the country's drug industry and end the insurgency either through force or diplomacy.⁹¹ The report cites the following results as indicators of success:

- Colombia has 60 percent more combat-ready troops than four years ago, including three U.S.- trained anti-narcotics brigades (2,300 troops);
- A total of 4,602 guerillas and 1,986 members of self-defense groups were captured during the last year (from August 2002 to June 2003). During the first half of 2003, 385 members of illegal groups have turned themselves in, more than twice the total number of surrenders recorded during 2002;
- During the first quarter of 2003, compared to the same period in 2002, Colombian Armed Forces were more effective in combat as can be demonstrated by 80 and 30 percent increases in AUC and subversive group members killed in combat, respectively; and
- Forty percent fewer attacks on the Canon-Limon pipeline during the first quarter of 2003 as compared to the previous year.⁹²

In testimony to the House Government Reform Committee on June 17, 2004, U.S. defense officials called on Congress to support an Administration request to raise the personnel cap to 800 military and 600 civilian contractors.⁹³ The National Defense Authorization Act for FY2005 approved this request.⁹⁴ While some criticized this increase, calling it a major step towards larger U.S. troop commitments and involvement,⁹⁵ U.S. Southern Command officials stated that the intent of the increase was not so much to deploy another 400 troops to Colombia on a permanent basis but to allow them the flexibility to request and deploy additional forces, including transitory military aircrews and military officials conducting assessment visits, without having to withdraw troops already in Colombia in order to meet the original 400 troop cap.⁹⁶

⁹¹ Jose de Cordoba, "Ravaged Colombia Sees Glint of Hope as Killings Fall Off," *Wall Street Journal*, August 10, 2004 and Lieutenant Colonel Kevin W. Buckley, "U.S. Support to Plan Colombia: A Heading Check," U.S. Army War College Strategy Research Project, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, March 19, 2004, p. 1.

⁹² "Three Years of Successful U.S. Colombia Cooperation in the Fight Against Drug Trafficking and Terrorism," Embassy of Colombia, Washington DC, July 2003, p. 3.

⁹³ Hearing of the House Government Reform Committee on The War on Drugs and Thugs: A Status Report on Plan Colombia Successes and Remaining Challenges, June 17, 2004, p. 34.

⁹⁴ See Section 1052, P.L. 108-375 (S. 2400), The National Defense Authorization Act for FY2005.

⁹⁵ Juan Forero, "Congress Approves Doubling U.S. Troops in Colombia to 800," *New York Times*, October 11, 2004.

⁹⁶ Discussion with U.S. Southern Command Congressional Liaison Office, January 26, 2004.

Issues for Congress

Lessons Learned and Possible Implications for Future Operations

Some experts suggest that U.S. military operations in Afghanistan, Africa, the Philippines, and Colombia provide many valuable lessons which could not only be useful for U.S. forces in Iraq but also in the planning and conduct of future GWOT operations. In Afghanistan, some credit the implementation of a decentralized counterinsurgency strategy in 2003, along with a “broad international backing” with helping to stabilize the situation enough so that elections could be conducted and reconstruction could proceed in a relatively secure environment.⁹⁷ According to U.S. Army Lieutenant General David Barno, commander of Combined Joint Task Force-180 (CJTF-180):

The center of gravity became the Afghan people. If you can provide reconstruction, provide security, bring benefits to the Afghan national government to those provinces, then what you do is deny that area to the insurgents.⁹⁸

Another potential lesson involves the Afghan National Army (ANA). The ANA has been given credit by many for successful participation in combat operations with coalition forces, providing security for the elections, and helping to quell disagreements amongst rival Afghan regional leaders and their followers.⁹⁹ The U.S. officer overseeing the training of the ANA notes that the key to the ANA’s success has been the successful integration of all of Afghanistan’s major ethnic groups into the army’s ranks.¹⁰⁰ Some analysts believe that the ANA might offer some lessons to U.S. forces currently training Iraqi forces.

Operations in Africa, the Philippines, and Colombia might also have implications for future operations. These three operations, spearheaded by U.S. Special Operations forces, are low-key — frequently involving a few hundred U.S. troops — and focus on training and advising indigenous forces in counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations. Some suggest that an indirect benefit is that these operations involve few, if any, U.S. casualties — an issue which could have implications for ongoing and future GWOT operations. Another observation is that these operations, because they are not resource-intensive, can be sustained over a long period of time which many feel is important when attempting to destroy established terrorist networks or defeating insurgencies.

⁹⁷ Joshua Kuccera, “Paving the Way to Peace,” *Jane’s Defense Weekly*, December 15, 2004, p. 24.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* 25.

⁹⁹ “Afghan Army Has Made Great Progress, Says U.S. Officer,” *American Forces Press Service*, January 10, 2005.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

Congress may wish to examine how the Administration is using lessons learned from U.S. military operations in Afghanistan, Africa, the Philippines, and Colombia in Iraq and also how these operations have influenced the Administration's overall Global War on Terror strategy.

NATO and Operation Enduring Freedom

On October 13, 2004, during a meeting of NATO defense ministers in Romania, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld reportedly proposed that peacekeeping and counterterrorism operations in Afghanistan should be merged under NATO command.¹⁰¹ While many NATO ministers were receptive to the proposal, France and Germany were reportedly adamantly opposed to participating in combat operations, despite the fact that both countries have troops deployed to Afghanistan for peacekeeping and reconstruction operations as well as to train the Afghan National Army.¹⁰² While some say that such a merger plan could help to substantially reduce the numbers of U.S. troops in Afghanistan, others question NATO's ability to provide additional troops over and above what they are already providing for ISAF and PRTs, as well as their political commitment to a potentially long-term operation to stabilize Afghanistan. Others suggest that giving NATO such authority might also result in not only conflicting views on eliminating the regional al Qaeda and Taliban threat, but might also impact on the overall U.S. strategy for prosecuting the war on terror.

It is possible that Congress may explore with the Administration, the benefits of further pursuit of this proposal, given the reported success of joint U.S./NATO/Afghan security operations during the Afghan presidential elections and the generally effective conduct of operations under the current command relationships.

Counternarcotics Operations in Afghanistan

Despite the fact that it appears that the U.S. military is not directly involved in counternarcotics operations, but instead providing support to the Afghan military and police, Congress might act to review the merits of taking a more measured approach on this issue. While eventual elimination of Afghanistan's illegal drug trade is in the long term interests of Afghanistan and the United States, some have maintained that these efforts, which would also destroy much of Afghan regional commander's revenues, come at a crucial time when the new Afghan national government is trying to both "disarm and court" the these figures and their militias. Many view obtaining the participation of Afghanistan's regional commanders in the central government and the disarmament of their militia as a requirement for the government to both survive and eventually exert control over the country. An aggressive drug eradication effort at this particular time, they believe, might undermine the greater goal of Afghan security and self-governance. Others suggest,

¹⁰¹ Josh White, "NATO Considers Joint Mission in Afghanistan," *Washington Post*, October 14, 2004.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

however, that an aggressive program might help to deny Taliban and Al Qaeda insurgents needed financial resources and perhaps further diminish their ability to conduct operations against U.S. and coalition forces.

Southeast Asia and Africa

While the U.S. military's counterterrorism efforts in Afghanistan are fairly well understood by many, less is known about how the Administration intends to pursue long-term operations in Southeast Asia and Africa. Some suggest that the United States intends to acquire bases in these regions and station forces there on a permanent basis. Some have warned that such efforts could result in alienating countries in this region and driving insurgent groups, who pose little threat to the United States, into the camps of Al Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiyah. Congress may opt to review the Administration's military strategy in these regions to insure that it strikes the right balance between capturing or destroying terrorists and their organizations that do pose a threat to U.S. national security and not antagonizing those who pose little or no threat.