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Talk at the Anniversary Celebration of the Defeat of the Bases Treaty

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Author

Schirmer, Daniel Boone

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Talk by Boone Schirmer of the Friends of the Filipino People, U. S. A.,
at the Anniversary Celebration of the Defeat of the Bases Treaty,
Manila, September 16, 1993.

I want to express my thanks for the high honor of the award given me and for the invitation to participate in the anniversary celebration of this great patriotic victory for the Philippine nation.

I believe the overwhelming cause of this victory was the anti-bases and anti-nuclear movement of the Philippine people. I was privileged to see the growth of this movement under the splendid leadership of Senators Jose W. Diokno and Lorenzo M. Tanada. This movement culminated in the Senate vote of the Magnificent Twelve, so ably led by Senators Wigberto Tanada and Jovito Salonga.

It is true there was a support movement in the United States calling for Philippine base removal, participated in by organizations of the church, of the Philippine solidarity movement, of the peace movement, and by many democratic-minded individuals, but this was a very modest effort.

All the more does your invitation to a representative of this U. S. movement to participate in your celebration pay tribute to a warm Philippine generosity of spirit, to a strong Philippine sense of internationalism.

The defeat of the bases treaty was a victory for Philippine democracy and for U. S. democracy as well.

When I called my son in Madison, Wisconsin, to tell him that I was coming to Manila to celebrate the victory, he told me to deliver his personal thanks to the Philippine people for taking a heavy tax burden off his shoulders. As long as the bases remained in the Philippines U. S. tax-payers had to pay one billion dollars a year for their support.

There was another, perhaps even more important, reason for U. S. voters to hail the removal of the Philippine bases. As long as the U. S. military presence was in place the U. S. high command was repeatedly tempted to use the Philippines as a staging area for U. S. intervention in the

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Third World, most recently in the Gulf War.

But U. S. wars of intervention in the Third World, like that in the Persian Gulf, only stand in the way of government efforts to solve the pressing problems of U. S. democracy, like unemployment, homelessness, decay of the inner cities, and all the rest.

Accordingly, those of us in the United States who supported base removal were dismayed to learn last November that high U. S. military officials and their Philippine counterparts had agreed that the U. S. military should have continued access to the Philippines, in this way bolstering the Pentagon's chosen role of global policeman.

Our dismay was even greater when we learned that Admiral Charles Larson, commander of the U. S. Pacific fleet, had declared last June that the Philippines, under the access agreement, may be used as a staging area for U. S. troops should the U. S. engage in wars of intervention in the Mideast and the Korean peninsula, now regarded as trouble spots by the Pentagon.

Some have misunderstood those of us in the U. S. who oppose using the Philippines as a springboard for the projection of U. S. military force. They think we do this to cause bad and unfriendly relations between our two countries. The opposite is true. We believe taking the U. S. troops and military presence out of the Philippines for once and for all, finally ridding the relationship of the aspect of U. S. military domination, would be the greatest possible contribution to a true and lasting friendship between our peoples.

Long live the friendship of the people of the Philippines and the people of the United States!

Boone Schirmer
