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The Global Policeman and Subic Base

Daniel B. Schirmer

On July 17 the United States and the Philippines announced an agreement whereby the U.S. military would withdraw from Clark Air Field in September 1992, but would remain at Subic Naval Base for at least ten more years. It is impossible to understand this agreement unless it is placed in the broader context of current U.S. foreign policy.

Today, with the decline of the Cold War and the perceived Soviet threat, Washington has pushed to the foreground its role as the global policeman of the Third World. Grenada, Panama, and, above all, the Gulf War have made this quite evident. It follows that foreign bases and troop deployments, war materiel emplacements abroad, naval dispositions and exercises in foreign seas—all that would be helpful to future military interventions in the Third World—must be maintained to the degree that is possible, given the current budget crisis.

Fred Kaplan, writing from Washington for the *Boston Globe* of July 14, noted massive U.S. troop cuts in Europe as a result of the end of the Cold War, but called attention to the fact that Secretary of Defense Cheney had ordered only a small reduction of troops in the Western Pacific, from 136,000 to 121,000. Kaplan quoted a categorical Pentagon statement that U.S. forces in the Western Pacific "should remain much as they are."

This is the background to the U.S. government's insistence on keeping Subic Base for another ten years and to its initial negotiating demand for a continued presence at Clark (although U.S. officials for some time have suggested that this base was less strategically important than Subic).

Today, U.S. military domination of the Third World serves to compensate on the international scene for its relative economic decline.

It was not, however, any diminution of the Cold War or strategic re-evaluation that decided Clark's fate. Rather it was nearby Mt. Pinatubo that erupted and buried the base under tons of volcanic ash. Nature's threat caused the military of the world's great super-power to vacate Clark in very short order, leaving Filipino soldiers to guard U.S. property there. For years Philippine nationalists had been urging U.S. forces to withdraw from Clark, so their sudden evacuation was nothing less than a gift, drastically and cruelly disfigured and discounted, however, by the human suffering and environmental damage caused by the volcano and its continuing disturbances.

Kaplan points to the maintenance of the status quo of U.S. forward deployment in the Western Pacific, but in fact this is also the case in other areas of the Third World where possible military intervention is a matter of concern to Washington. Recent policy indications of the Bush Administration suggest where these areas are. In April, after the Gulf victory, Gen. Colin Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said he was "running out of villains," with only Cuba's Fidel Castro and North Korea's Kim Il Sung remaining. Recently President Bush has been pressing for further military action against Iraq, and the Pentagon has sent 50 mili-

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The Philippine Peace Process and the "New World Order"

Tim McGloin

Publicly, fourteen Philippine Senators stand opposed to a new bases treaty, reflecting the strength and importance of the growing movement for peace and social justice in the Philippines. The context for the Philippine peace movement is the Bush administration's pronounced policy to enforce the "New World Order." As envisioned by Pentagon and Defense Department strategists, Third World nations are the enemy, and U.S. military doctrine is directed at those peoples whose movements challenge U.S. interests and the old world order.

Any doubts about this were dispelled in early 1989 when Bush announced that, "In cases where the U.S. confronts much weaker enemies, our challenge will not be simply to defeat them, but to defeat them decisively and rapidly." A year later, the Defense department released the description of the framework of U.S. military doctrine to pursue this new world order with the report, *A Strategic Framework for Asia-Pacific Rim: Looking Forward to the 21st Century*. By early 1991, both the people of Panama and the more than 100,000 men, women, and children in Iraq who died in the Gulf War were victimized

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tary advisors to Peru to help in a war against drug dealers and Maoist guerrillas. From all this it appears that the Pentagon considers Latin America and the Mideast—as well as the Western Pacific—to be areas of potential U.S. military intervention.

Certainly the Pentagon shows little inclination to give up its access to military facilities in Central America—in Honduras, Puerto Rico, and Panama. Indeed, it is possible that the invasion of Panama was motivated at least in part by the desire to prepare for the preservation of Panamanian bases into the 21st century.

Nor does it seem that the Pentagon is at present satisfied merely to maintain the current status of forward deployment in areas of possible intervention in the Third World; it presses for extension and enlargement. U.S. officials told the *New York Times* of July 27 that even before it had agreed to give up Clark, "the Bush Administration had asked Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand to consider expanding American access to their military sites." On August 1 the same paper reported:

As the Bush Administration consults with its allies about further military action against Iraq . . . American negotiators who met last month with their counterparts in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates said they had made "considerable progress" on a range of issues from joint military exercises to arms sales to the use of air bases.

Maintenance of the status of forward deployment in the Pacific relates not only to possible U.S. intervention in Korea, but to that in the Mideast as well, as the case of the Philippines military presence illustrates. During the Gulf War the naval facility at Subic was frequently used as a supply base for U.S. warships on their way to Saudi Arabia. So the prospect of further military action against Iraq must heighten the Pentagon's determination to hold on to Subic. Were there to be any U.S. military intervention in Korea, Subic would also serve as a rear base of support.

All in all, there is considerable pressure at the moment behind the Bush Administration's demand to keep Subic Base.

What are the chances of a treaty based on the present agreement—guaranteeing continued U.S. access to Subic—passing the Philippine Senate with the two-thirds vote required by the post-Marcos constitution? Since the negotiations began three years ago the Philippine Senate has been a sounding board for nationalist agitation against the bases, to the displeasure of U.S. conservative opinion. On July 30, 1991, Senate President Jovito Salonga reported a straw vote showing 16 senators opposed to a treaty, enough to block its passage in the 23-member Senate. Members of the Senate appear to be especially antagonized by the compensation the U.S.

a treaty at a time when more than half-a-million people have lost their livelihoods as a result of the eruption." Public opinion polls show a majority of Filipinos support a continued base presence, especially because of the perception that the bases bring economic benefits to their impoverished country. This point of view cannot but be influenced by the broad hints given out by U.S. and Japanese officials that economic aid to the Philippines would be adversely affected by treaty rejection.

Despite such foreign and domestic pressures enough opposition senators may remain firm to block the treaty and, in effect, veto Subic. Should this happen, right-wing figures in both the Philippines and the United States have suggested

lines of action which, although blatantly anti-democratic and interventionist, might have a decisive counter-effect. Philippine military rebels of ultra-right persuasion have more than once made plain that they would happily abolish the Senate should they succeed in taking power. And an important U.S. establishment personality, Admiral Thomas Moorer, a former head of the Joints Chiefs of Staff, told the *Army Times* of July 18, 1988 that the Philippine installations were so valuable that "if we lost the bases we'd simply have to take them back."

Given the current democratic pretensions of the Bush Administration, it is unlikely either of these options would have a high priority. Ernesto Maceda, Chair of the Philippine Senate's Armed Services Committee, interviewed in the *Far Eastern Economic Review* of May 16, outlined a scenario that might accomplish the same end with an appearance of legality and democratic procedure. Senator Maceda stated that there was enough ambiguity in the Philippine constitution to allow the issue to be delayed until after next year's presidential and congressional elections.

This has been the position of the United States government all along. Citing a previous Rusk-Ramos agreement, Washington has maintained that the United States did not have to vacate the bases until September 1992, a year after the

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offered for Subic in the agreement: \$360 million for the first year and \$203 million for each of the remaining nine years, in contrast to the \$825 million per year the Philippine negotiators wanted.

Some Philippine analysts evidently think the straw vote does not accurately foretell the actual vote on the Senate floor. John McBeth, Manila correspondent for the *Far Eastern Economic Review* reported on August 1 that "political observers believe it will be difficult for the Senate to reject

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September 1991 notice of termination. Moreover, the Maceda scenario was spelled out in detail in a book by the prestigious U.S. Council on Foreign Relations, *The Philippine Bases: Negotiating for the Future*. Issued in 1988, this book summarizes discussions carried on in the United States by a group of high-level corporate, academic and governmental figures, including representatives of Dillon, Read & Co., the Rand Corporation, IBM, and the Bank of the Philippines. The group was co-chaired by Brent Scowcroft, presently George Bush's Advisor on National Security Affairs. The book states:

If . . . the Senate blocks the treaty . . . the 1992 campaign, in which all Senate seats are to be contested, could focus on this single issue. The arrangement might be salvaged by the election of more pro-bases senators in June 1992 (before the one year abrogation notice is completed in September 1992).

U.S. political intervention in the Nicaraguan elections of 1989 helped to achieve a



victory for the anti-Sandinista coalition led by Violeta Chamorro. Evidently, elite opinion in the United States has been confident for some time that similar opportunities in the Philippine elections of 1992 could produce similar results. From the comments of Senator Maceda it is obvious that at least one prominent political figure in the Philippines is giving serious consideration to a U.S. plan to circumvent possible nationalist obstacles to the continuation of its military presence in the Philippines. This can only be seen as fitting within the neo-colonial tradition of U.S.-Philippines relations.

The neo-colonial disdain with which the Bush Administration treats Philippine democracy can be seen in other ways as well. Members of the Senate and of the broad anti-bases movement outside the Senate point to the fact that a foreign military presence undermines Philippine national sovereignty. And, in the just-concluded negotiations, Washington successfully put pressure on the Philippine government to allow, with its permission, the storage of U.S. nuclear weapons on Philippine soil and the presence—no permission required—of nuclear weapons on U.S. warships in Philippine ports. This is a flagrant violation of the post-Marcos Philippine Constitution which prohibits nuclear weapons on Philippine soil, waters, or air space. Popular morality is likewise flouted by the prostitution of Filipino women and children that accompanies the U.S. military presence.

What is the point of all this Third World intervention, preparation for intervention, and threat of intervention—this U.S. policy that places so much importance on the retention of Subic Base? The people of the Philippines could well answer this question from their own experience. From 1899 to 1902 the U.S. government waged a war against armed nationalists in the Philippines, a former colony of Spain, having first defeated the latter in 1898. U.S. political, military and economic proponents of the Philippine-American War were quite explicit as to its objectives. They were, it was said, to get control of the natural resources and cheap labor of the Philippines, to dominate the Philippine market for manufactured goods and investment capital, and (foreshadowing Subic) to secure the Philippines as a jumping-off place for U.S. intervention elsewhere.

Today the objectives of U.S. military intervention in the Third World are much the same as they were in the Philippines ninety years ago. But there is a difference. From the turn of the century to the 1950s, the U.S. sought dominance in the Third World to crown its ascendancy to economic supremacy vis-à-vis its commercial rivals. Today, U.S. military domination of the Third World serves to compensate on the international scene for its relative economic decline. Thus control of the oil of the Mideast, the chief prize of the Third World, confirmed by Washington's role in the Gulf War, helps give U.S. big business leverage against German and Japanese rivals as they otherwise tend to

FRIENDS OF THE FILIPINO PEOPLE
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Three Points of Unity

1. We seek an end to United States military and political intervention in the Philippines.
2. We oppose the long-standing domination of the Philippine economy by U.S. corporations which has been a major cause of the continued poverty and underdevelopment of that nation.
3. We support the Filipino people in their efforts to secure social and economic justice and full freedom and independence.

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overtake it economically.

The fact remains, however, that the United States had to turn to its commercial competitors to help finance its military intervention in the Gulf, just as the British Empire, as it passed its prime at the turn of the century, had to turn to U.S. bankers to help finance its war against the Boers in South Africa. Imperial over-extension unquestionably characterizes U.S. foreign policy at present. That is, today, the real meaning of Washington's long-standing obsession with a military presence in the Philippines. ♦