



Resist and frustrate Oplan Bantay Laya II

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Introduction

The Arroyo regime began a new Internal Security Operations Plan (or National Internal Security Plan) called Oplan Bantay Laya 2 (OBL 2) at the start of 2007. OBL 2 is a harsher version of its failed predecessor Oplan Bantay Laya 1 that was implemented in 2001-2006.

Although shorter in duration (three years), OBL 2 is much more ambitious. It seeks to decisively cripple the New People's Army before 2010 and thereby achieve a so-called strategic victory over the armed revolutionary movement.

OBL 2 will step up the all-out attacks already begun under OBL 1 against a bigger number of NPA guerrilla fronts and intensify terrorism among the people. This suppression campaign is targeted mainly against suspected NPA forces and their mass base as well as entities in the open democratic movement forcibly being linked to the Party and the armed revolutionary movement. Its intensification is aimed at destroying the mass base and mass organizations, the militarization of barrios and communities in the countryside, town centers and cities, the massive use of fascist terrorist methods and efforts to form fascist anti-communist mass organizations directly under AFP control in villages, towns and provinces.

To thwart this scheme, the Party has defined as the entire revolutionary movement's central task during this tactical period the intensification of guerrilla warfare, the overthrow of the puppet fascist regime and the further expansion and consolidation of the armed revolution.

How did Oplan Bantay Laya 1 fare?

As declared by the Arroyo regime in 2001, OBL 1's objective was to

put a stop to the revolutionary movement's expansion in the countryside and decisively defeat it by 2006. Overall, OBL 1 was a failure.

Under OBL 1, the AFP's target was to concentrate troops in 300 to 600 villages nationwide at any given time. It was unable to concentrate forces in over 300 barrios due to lack of personnel.

Since 2001, not a single guerrilla front was lost by the NPA. Neither did it suffer a decrease in the overall number of Red fighters, despite the AFP's widespread use of the tactics of terrorist violence and intimidation.

While such AFP operations inflicted casualties and caused temporary dislocations, in the long run they served as a stark demonstration of the need for armed revolution and strengthened unity between the people and the NPA.

By 2005, the NPA's intensified tactical offensives nationwide in the face of the Arroyo regime's mounting suppression gave the lie to the AFP's declarations of victory. The regime's military and security officials concluded in an internal assessment in September 2006 that OBL 1 had failed, contrary to their constant claims in the mass media.

As OBL 1 drew to a close, the regime drafted its more ambitious and more vicious successor, OBL 2.

What is Oplan Bantay Laya 2?

harsher methods. Oplan Bantay Laya 2 has an even closer deadline for the destruction of the armed revolution.

With its desperate scramble to achieve quick results, however, OBL 2 can only lead to the further intensification of fascist terrorism and militarization.

OBL 2's particular target is to decisively cripple, if not strategically defeat the revolutionary movement by 2010. It aims to reduce by over 50% the NPA's strength, which the AFP claims to be down to no more than 7,000 fighters.

The two OBLs are generally not much different from past regimes' "counter-insurgency" plans. The

AFP itself has admitted that Oplan Bantay Laya is a modified version of Oplan Lambat Bitag that was implemented in 1988-98. The AFP mistakenly believes that Lambat Bitag succeeded in weakening the revolutionary movement in the latter part of the 1990s.

There is nothing new with OBL except for the new names it has given to old and inutile strategies. Its "Win-Hold-Win" strategy is no different from the Clear-Hold-Consolidate-Develop concept of old. "Win-Hold-Win" consists of three stages:

> "win" or "clear," which aims to drive away the NPA and destroy revolutionary organizations;

> "hold," which aims to consolidate the military's position by setting up detachments, recruiting intelligence assets, establishing the Barrio Intelligence Network (BIN) and forming the CAFGU, Civilian Volunteer Organization (CVO) and other paramilitary units or vigilante groups.

> "win" or "consolidate and develop," which aims to use lo-

Faced with OBL 1's failure, the Arroyo regime crafted OBL 2 with even more ambitious objectives and employing much

What is the content of Oplan Bantay Laya 1 and 2?

cal governments and NGOs and introduce deceptive projects.

In terms of objectives and methods, the Strategic Holistic Approach (SHA) is not much different from the “total war” strategy and that of continuing operations, which comprised Oplan Lam-bat Bitag’s old approach. The military clears targeted priority barrios by conducting what is now known as Triad Operations that combine combat, intelligence and civilian-military operations.

OBL uses the RSOT (or the Reengineered Special Operations Team). This is nothing but the SOT (Special Operations Team) of old. They are section- or platoon-size military forces that openly enter target communities and make a show of conducting civilian-military operations to win the people’s sympathy, along with conducting psywar, deception and intelligence operations among the barriofolk. The RSOT has since dropped the “winning hearts and minds” approach in favor of concentrating mainly on intelligence work (familiarization with the population and setting up an intelligence network directly related to servicing combat operations), psywar and deceiving the people. The RSOT, which serves as the military’s main psywar unit that directly comes face-to-face with the target communities, is supervised by special Civil Military Operations (CMO) units that have been formed in all divisions and brigades.

What is new with OBL 2?

The AFP has directed the conduct of five “offensives” and three programs under OBL 2. It has planned out “offensives” in the military, legal, political, economic and propaganda arenas. Waging these “offensives” constitutes the main activity of the RSOT under OBL 2.

In addition, there are less visible combat units comprising company- to one or more battalion-size forces that position themselves and conduct patrols around the barrio to “clear” the area, provide security for troops who enter the barrio and launch attacks whenever they detect the NPA’s presence.

The enemy likewise deploys intelligence agents and assets

within and outside the barrio.

Anti-NPA combat operations

To achieve quick and dramatic results, the AFP has increased its forces in priority guerrilla fronts and targets the recruitment of 6,000 additional soldiers. Each area command identifies primary and secondary priority targets within its scope.

The Arroyo regime has commissioned the Philippine National Police under OBL 2 and in its overall “counter-insurgency” campaign.

The AFP high command adamantly insists on waging relentless operations to pursue and defeat NPA guerrilla units. It advocates the widespread use by local military commands of “hunter-killer operations” that combine small hunter teams that conduct clandestine surveillance operations and bigger killer units concealed from the public eye. The killer units surface and launch attacks only when they have identified NPA units to target.

Aside from local AFP units, the military also deploys mobile units like the Long Range Patrol (LRP) that clandestinely enters and conducts long-term patrols in NPA guerrilla zones and bases.

In such cases, local regular units and CAFGU openly conduct patrols, forcing NPA units to shift area and become targets of concealed LRP units. Aside from regularly relying on big killer units, the enemy likewise utilizes relatively small but specialized forces (such as the Philippine Army Scout Rangers and the Marines Force Recon) that clandestinely conduct surveillance and launch attacks against identified targets.

These operations are directly supervised at the brigade and division levels. Concentrated operations against priority targets are likewise planned and directed at these levels.

Fascist operations are utilized against ordinary folk suspected of supporting or sympathizing with the NPA. Extrajudicial executions and campaigns of suppression are aimed at mass organizations that actively defend the rights and welfare of the exploited and oppressed masses.

The state’s fascist butchers enforce a reign of terror against

the peasantry in a desperate attempt to force them to renounce the revolutionary movement. Captured NPA cadres and fighters are brutally treated. The state never owns up to the abductions and killings to avoid accountability under existing laws and agreements.

Intelligence operations

OBL 2 stresses the need for excellence in intelligence work. The Arroyo regime thus provided an additional P1 billion for this purpose in 2006. It allotted P400 million of this amount to the AFP, P300 million to the PNP and P400 million to special intelligence agencies.

It is the objective and priority of intelligence operations to cripple the revolutionary movement's leadership, main guerrilla units and the various centers of gravity; and corner for the purpose of attacking, abducting and killing suspected cadres and members of the Party/NPA and leaders and activists of legal democratic organizations.

There has been enhanced coordination and cooperation among intelligence units. They have also been given more funds and modern communications and electronic surveillance equipment.

Base denial

The AFP aims under OBL 2 to destroy what it suspects to be organizations and mass bases established by the NPA in the countryside. Villages and communities in the countryside as well as rural town centers and cities are put under AFP control through the use of fascist terrorist methods.

The overall objective is to dismantle politico-military organs in the barangays to deprive of mass support the armed revolutionary movement as well as the open organizations of the democratic movement and progressive parties. AFP units conduct censuses in barrios to come up with a list of suspected supporters of the revolutionary movement. Those under suspicion are "visited," interrogated and pressured.

The AFP likewise campaigns for the surrender of NPA members. In the latter's absence, the military looks for identified or suspected former members or civilians who are presented as NPA members convinced to surrender. The "surrenderees" are placed in Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) programs and in the Redefined Amnesty Program for Rebel Returnees. The AFP also seeks to establish fascist and anti-communist mass organizations directly under its control.

Forming the Integrated Territorial Defense System (ITDS)

Through the ITDS, the enemy consolidates and mobilizes the police, local governments, CAFGU and other paramilitary forces and even armed civilians to "defend" the territory and assist in AFP "offensives." Special CMO units under divisions and brigades focus on the ITDS. CMO Task Groups have also been formed within the brigades' areas of responsibility, to be composed of representatives from the PNP and local government units to lead and coordinate CMO campaigns. These groups launch programs that mimic government services and activities of reformist NGOs, but with the purpose of strengthening the military's position and power in the community.

The military nonetheless tramples on local government officials. The movements of NGOs and other social groups are restricted. They are forced to cooperate with the AFP to avoid being branded as "terrorist organizations" or "front organizations."

Those who do not readily give in to the military's wishes are threatened once they question the AFP's moves. Civilian authority is virtually subsumed to military power. To win the people living in target communities, the CMOs also launch their own token projects under the Army Concern on Community Organizing for Development (ACCORD) and the Community Assistance and Rural Empowerment through Social Services (CARES).

The AFP tries to mask its vicious face by pretentiously involving itself in civic and development projects as well as other community endeavors. All these are used as opportunities to con-

duct intelligence work and deceive and control the people. Nonetheless, since this is all tokenism, the AFP is unable to sustain them.

Legal offensive and psywar operations

The intensification of psywar and deception by the enemy is part and parcel of OBL 2 and is a political and propaganda adjunct of the AFP's all-out war and relentless campaign of killings and suppression. The enemy conducts its psywar and deception campaign to the hilt. One of its propaganda tactics is to blame on the CPP-NPA crimes that have been committed by the AFP.

There are unrelenting accusations that legal organizations have links with the armed movement to justify the intensification of suppression campaigns against progressive forces and others opposed to the ruling regime.

All agencies of the reactionary government and military units are mobilized for the legal and psywar offensive against both the revolutionary movement and the open mass movement. The Arroyo regime has formed the IALAG (Inter-Agency Legal Action Group) led by high-ranking Malacañang officials to directly supervise this task. The IALAG also focuses on fabricating stories and cases for its psywar and legal offensives against the revolutionary movement and the legal democratic movement.

In accordance with OBL 2, all AFP companies have been ordered to simultaneously conduct military and psywar campaigns. The AFP has also put up Public Information Platoons up to the brigade level that act in tandem with CMO units to concentrate on waging psywar and slander campaigns against the NPA and the revolutionary forces and to establish close links with the mass media in their areas of responsibility.

To malign the revolutionary movement and tarnish its image, these units constantly manufacture accounts and cases such as the so-called internal purges within the revolutionary movement that are allegedly behind the political killings; NPA recruitment of child soldiers; NPA involvement in the production of illegal drugs; and the like.

They persistently propagate such stories in the mass media and file cases in court that are utterly without basis and replete with distortions of fact and irrationalities—stories and accusations that would not stand up against any thorough and genuine investigation.

The so-called Human Security Act (HSA) or the Anti-Terror Law can now be invoked as legal basis for OBL 2. Through the HSA, illegal acts by the military and police can now have legal aprobation. The HSA serves as impetus for the state's armed forces to intensify attacks against organizations and forces considered as “terrorist” under the new law.

Economic offensive

Another basic component of OBL 2 is its “economic offensive” that focuses on efforts to deprive the revolutionary movement of its sources of funds. Obstacles are put up to prevent the movement from collecting taxes, contributions and other material support.

Various entities are intimidated to prevent them from contributing to the armed revolution. Propaganda and slander campaigns focus on economic and finance-related issues against the revolutionary movement such as alleged corruption and high-living of Party leaders.

A propaganda line often drumbeated by the AFP involves claims that the armed revolution serves as a hindrance to economic development and is thus the cause of the people's continuing poverty. At the same time, the regime implements the harshest economic policies that are pro-imperialist and serve the interests of the ruling classes and the corrupt regime.

The campaign of political killings and abductions of activists, militant workers, peasants, church people,

lawyers, students and other forces and personalities of legal progressive and democratic organizations, alliances and parties is a key component of Oplan Bantay Laya 2.

In the eyes of the AFP, the campaign of extrajudicial killings and abductions is part of the effort to destroy the so-called political infrastructure of the revolutionary movement.

This campaign is directed and supervised by the Cabinet Oversight Committee on Internal Security (COCIS). Malacañang provides special funds administered and released by the COCIS for such executions and abductions. The funds are directly coursed through the AFP General Headquarters.

Battalion commanders choose from a list of targets prepared by the battalion's intelligence officer (Bn-S2) and submit project proposals for funding. Such plans are evident in various internal and public documents of the AFP. Most prominent among such documents is one entitled "Knowing the Enemy" which was propagated among soldiers in 2005. In this document, the AFP identifies progressive and democratic organizations like BAYAN and Bayan Muna as "partners" of the CPP.

The AFP has been specifically tasked to neutralize the layers of legal alliances that allegedly create "revolutionary conditions." The document harps on the idea that in order to defeat the NPA, one must also defeat the mass base it enjoys. Earlier, in 2004, the AFP came out with two internal documents: "Target Research on Sectoral Organizations" and "Institutionalizing the Conduct of Target Research as a Major Component in the Intelligence Project Preparation, in Particular, and Intelligence Cycle Process, in General." These two documents state that legal democratic mass organizations and progressive party-list organizations are intelli-

What is OBL 2's particular emphasis against the legal democratic movement?

gence targets of the military and police.

In intelligence work, in particular, the AFP focuses on collecting data on target personalities, especially leaders of mass organizations and alliances. After data gathering, the information is passed on to tactical and combat units which will draft orders of battle (or lists of targets for assassination). The Intelligence Service of the AFP (ISAFP) likewise imposes a quota system on personalities targeted for liquidation by the Military Intelligence Groups under its command.

The AFP is hellbent on eradicating distinctions between armed adversaries on the one hand, and civilians and activists on the other. Rabid anti-communist Fr. Romeo Intengan has been making the rounds lecturing soldiers on the view that civilians who oppose the government should be considered as armed adversaries by the AFP.

What is US imperialism's role in Oplan Bantay Laya?

“Counter-insurgency plans” by the puppet Philippine state have long been based on and follow US imperialist military strategy. In fact, US “advisers” have been directly in-

involved in designing and implementing such plans. The US directly advises the AFP in its operations through the Joint US Military Advisory Group (JUSMAG).

The JUSMAG likewise supervises the AFP's use of military equipment granted by the US. It is US President George W. Bush's regime that designed, guides and funds Oplan Bantay Laya 2. Its objective is the eradication of the revolutionary movement which it considers the main force in the country waging resistance against imperialist control and economic plunder perpetrated by the US, the puppet regime and its other allies. OBL creates conditions that would enable the US to raise the level of intervention in the country.

Its control over the military constitutes the main base of sup-

port for US hegemony in the Philippines. The US continues to influence and control the reactionary armed forces and police through indoctrination, strategic planning, special officers' training and joint military exercises, as well as by providing funding, equipment and supplies.

Since 9/11, the scale of US military intervention in the Philippines has expanded on the pretext that the country is the US' so-called "second front" in its international war against terrorism. It invokes pursuit operations against the Abu Sayyaf, a bandit group created by the CIA to counter the Moro National Liberation Front and that is now being linked to Al Qaeda.

The US continues to expand its troop deployment in various parts of the Philippines, especially in areas adjacent to or within NPA guerrilla fronts. US troops coordinate with Philippine puppet troops not only during military exercises but also in intelligence and surveillance operations, in manning outposts and conducting patrols and when joining the puppet troops in combat operations.

Since 2001, actual US military aid to the puppet government has increased by 1,600%. On paper, the US has provided \$11 million to the Philippines but up to \$30 million has been allotted since 2005-2006.

The Philippines is the recipient of the biggest chunk of military aid in the entire East Asia-Pacific Region. It is the main recipient of US surplus military equipment in the whole of Asia. Worldwide, the Philippines ranks third among countries receiving increased military aid from the US for military studies and training (it received more than \$150 million for this purpose in 2006).

Oplan Bantay Laya 2 is bound to fail just like the previous Oplans of the reac-

tionary puppet state. For five years, OBL 1 failed to crush even a single region. OBL 2 is bound to meet an even more ignominious fate.

Why is Oplan Bantay Laya 2 bound to fail?

OBL 2 will fail mainly because it is an unjust, antipeople, brutal and destructive war. It will fail because it is not supported by the Filipino people. OBL 2 is a war that defends the ruling system that oppresses and exploits the people.

OBL 2 will likewise fail because the ruling regime is fraught with crisis. The regime is extremely hard put achieving its goal of strengthening and expanding its armed forces because it severely lacks funds. It can only attain its objective at the cost of adding to the already heavy tax and debt burden and reducing social services.

OBL 2 will fail because the AFP is severely factionalized. There are so many criminal syndicates and political factions within the AFP. Moreover, there is growing opposition among the rank-and-file to the corruption of high-ranking officers and to the brutal and illegal abductions, torture and killings.

The people cannot stomach the unjust, antipeople, brutal and destructive OBL 2. They have long been waging resistance to it. OBL 2 has in fact sparked widespread local and international protests. Among those who have expressed dismay are the European Union, the UN through its special rapporteur Philip Alston, the Permanent People's Tribunal and even US senators and congressmen. Even governments allied with the Philippines have called on the Arroyo regime to take responsibility for and put a stop to grave abuses of human rights.

What are our tasks in resisting Oplan Bantay Laya 2?

It is the entire revolutionary movement's central task at this stage to intensify guerrilla warfare, severely weaken and overthrow the puppet fascist regime and further expand and consolidate the armed revolution. Intensifying and further expanding guerrilla warfare is our most urgent task in fighting and frustrating OBL 2.

Towards this end, the NPA must set up more company-

strength guerrilla fronts and more platoon-size fighting units. Tactical offensives must be launched more often in every region, province and front, especially in areas where the revolutionary forces are bigger and stronger. The further expansion and consolidation of our guerrilla forces and mass base depends on all this.

The NPA must launch more numerous, more frequent and more widespread tactical offensives to seize and maintain the initiative in war and to throw into disarray, block or render less harmful if not altogether stop the enemy's attacks and schemes on various levels.

We must inflict heavier blows on the enemy more often than it could strike at the people's army. We must make sure to strike at the enemy in areas where it concentrates its attacks and sows fascist terror.

We must combine many body blows with a few head blows. Each NPA tactical offensive is a political offensive as well. It is a declaration by the Filipino people of their determination to resist the Arroyo regime's fascist terrorism. The intensification of tactical offensives is also a critical requisite in the intensification of various forms of people's struggles that would culminate in the overthrow of the hated ruling regime.

Further expand and consolidate the revolutionary forces, guerrilla fronts and mass base

Even as we fight to the hilt, we must persevere in expanding and consolidating the revolutionary forces, guerrilla fronts and mass base. The NPA enjoys a wide berth in organizing the people, recruiting more Red fighters, setting up local organs of revolutionary political power, addressing the masses' problems and needs and launching tactical offensives.

We must give our utmost attention to advancing campaigns to improve livelihood and production, education, culture and health and to resolve other daily problems of the masses. These are essential—especially livelihood and production campaigns—in maintaining the highest levels of unity with and leadership over the masses, sustaining their intense fighting spirit and support for

the armed revolution and enhancing the capabilities of the people's army to be self-sufficient, launch tactical offensives and persist even in the midst of intense encirclement by the enemy.

Since suspected revolutionary mass bases and open legal democratic organizations are the enemy's main targets, we must undertake measures to ensure their security, especially those in danger of being killed, abducted, imprisoned, tortured, put under surveillance and subjected to other forms of fascist attacks by the enemy.

We must enforce stricter security measures along with continuously expanding and deepening the revolutionary underground movement. We must recruit into the people's army those who could no longer safely and effectively work openly and are ready and qualified to enlist.

The safety of persons living within guerrilla fronts and zones who have not yet joined the people's army can be ensured by the people's militia, self-defense units and the wide and deep mass base. We must further expand and deepen the revolutionary underground movement and root ourselves among the masses in cities and town centers. We must prepare clandestine places where our forces can retreat, if not within cities and town centers, then in the vastness of our guerrilla fronts and zones and our mass of supporters in the countryside.

Further expand and invigorate anti-imperialist, antifeudal and antifascist struggle to isolate and overthrow the Arroyo regime

We must further expand and invigorate anti-imperialist, antifeudal and antifascist struggles among the broad masses of the people while simultaneously exposing OBL 2. We must infuse vigor into mass struggles, expanding the united front and other political tasks to isolate and overthrow the US-Arroyo regime.

We must excel in propaganda, mobilization and organizing work among the broad masses. We must persevere in struggle to completely isolate and overthrow the puppet and fascist US-Arroyo regime.

We must persevere in expanding and consolidating our solidarity and cooperative relations with all progressive, democratic and friendly forces even as we concentrate our heaviest blows on the puppet and fascist Arroyo regime.

Resist and defeat Oplan Bantay Laya 2!

Intensify guerrilla warfare!

Down with the US-Arroyo regime!

Further advance the armed revolution!