

# **The U.S. Role in the Mindanao Peace Process**

## ***Bangsamoro Perspective***

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## US-MILF contact <sup>(1)</sup>

- **Ambassador Ricciardone raised the point that the U.S. Government wants to know what the MILF wants or how the conflict would be resolved when he addressed FOCAP last January. To clarify the issue, the late MILF Chairman Salamat Hashim wrote President George W. Bush last January 20, 2003 informing him of what the MILF wants and inviting the U.S. to assist in resolving the conflict between the Bangsamoro people and the Philippine government.**

## US-MILF contact (2)

- **During President Arroyo's state visit to the U.S. President Bush announced in the joint press conference: "The President and I also reviewed the development with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front – MLIF. That group must abandon the path of violence. If it does so, and addresses its grievances through peaceful negotiations, then the United States will provide diplomatic and financial support to the renewed peace process."**

## US-MILF contact <sup>(3)</sup>

- **On May 30 Chairman Salamat Hashim wrote again President Bush welcoming “the offer of the United States Government to extend support to the on-going peace process between the MILF and GRP.”**
- **Assistant Secretary of State James A. Kelly, on behalf of the U.S. Government and upon instruction of President Bush, responded outlining the U.S. policy regarding the conflict between the MILF and the GRP.**

## U.S. interest in the peace process <sup>(1)</sup>

- **The United States has to lead in enhancing the prospects for conflict resolution because the “political will” of others and “our common security” depend on it.**

*(Prof. Dennis J.D. Sandole, George Mason University)*

## U.S. interest in the peace process (2)

- **The U.S. wants to deny the “terrorists” the conditions they can exploit. President Bush said: “As we fight the terrorists, we’re also determined to end conflicts that spread hopelessness and feed terror.”** *(Remarks before the Philippine Congress, Oct. 18, 2003)*

## U.S. interest in the peace process <sup>(3)</sup>

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- **The U.S. recognizes that the Muslims in South of the Philippines have serious, legitimate grievances and it wants the MILF to pursue political negotiations as a way of addressing these grievances instead of using violence.**

# U.S. policy regarding the conflict

- **Commitment to the territorial integrity of the Philippines**
- **Recognition that the Bangsamoro people have serious legitimate grievances that must be addressed**
- **Desirous to see an end to the violence in Mindanao**
- **Readiness to support, both politically and financially, the peace process between the MILF and GRP**
- **Will play supporting role to the Malaysian initiatives of facilitating and mediating the on-going GRP-MILF peace negotiations**



## Approach <sup>(1)</sup>

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- **The U.S. will not mediate between the MILF and the Government, nor will it participate in the negotiations directly.**
- **Track Two diplomacy (unofficial contacts and interaction) is used to encourage the negotiation process.**

## Approach (2)

- **The success of Track Two diplomacy will be used by the leaders of Track One (diplomatic efforts to resolve conflicts through the official channels of governments) to get involve in the negotiations.**
- **The United States Institute of Peace (USIP), an independent, non-partisan organization created and funded by the U.S. Congress, is assigned to play facilitating role in an unofficial capacity.**

## Approach <sup>(3)</sup>

- **Track Two initiatives involve: consultations, dialogue and training.**
- **USIP delegations was here last August 11-15 and met Pres. Arroyo, the GRP peace panel, leaders from ARMM and other provinces in Mindanao, senior AFP and PNP officers, members of the Senate and House of Representatives, civil society and religious representatives.**

## Approach (4)

- **Today, USIP delegation is in Mindanao meeting the MILF CCCH members, Bangsamoro civil society and NGOs, and religious leaders.**
- **Last September USIP conducted “problem-solving workshops” at the AIM in Makati.**
- **Earlier, Sec. Ermita and Sec. Dureza were invited to USIP headquarters in Washington D.C. for consultations. Invitation was also extended to the MILF but it deferred to later date the sending of representatives.**

## Approach (5)

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- **Part of the U.S. strategy to encourage both parties to come to an agreement is a financial package.**

## Bangsamoro expectations <sup>(1)</sup>

- **The United States will be able to offer and “open new formulas that permanently respond to the aspirations of the Bangsamoro people for freedom” as envisaged in the Tripoli Agreement of Peace of 2001.**

## Bangsamoro expectations (2)

- **A new formula that will correct the historical injustice experienced by the Bangsamoro people when their homeland was incorporated by the U.S. to the Philippine state without their plebiscitary consent, and despite their numerous petitions to the U.S. Government objecting to the planned incorporation.**

# Bangsamoro expectations <sup>(3)</sup>

- **The United States shall be able to encourage the Philippine Government to address the “serious, legitimate grievances” of the Bangsamoro people through democratic means – the holding of internationally supervised referendum that will provide them the opportunity to decide whether to remain part of the Philippines or to be free and independent. If they chose the former, what political arrangement: enhanced autonomy, federalism or free association?**



## Bangsamoro expectations (4)

**The holding of referendum on self-determination will ensure that the will of the Bangsamoro people serves as the basis of authority and last word on a solution to the conflict between the Bangsamoro people and the government.**

## Bangsamoro expectations <sup>(5)</sup>

- **Development assistance is welcomed but if implemented in isolation from the political solution, it will not solve the problem.**



*Thank you*