

# U.S. BASES: asset, liability or insult?

It was during World War II that the United States learned that she needed a base for her Asian operations, thereby hoping to establish a protective shield around the world to protect the country's interests. The strategic proximity of the Philippines to most of the South East Asian countries and its inaccessibility from the outside by land made it a natural front in line with Hawaii, Midway and Guam. And so at the end of World War II the United States signed three military agreements with the Republic of the Philippines.

The first was the Military Bases Agreement, signed March 14, 1947. This governs the right of the United States to use, operate, control and have access to military bases in the Philippines for 99 years. This agreement was cut to 25 years during negotiations in 1966 and unless extended by mutual agreement prior to 1972, will expire after a year's notice by either country.

According to Amado Guerrero, "As of 1969, it (the U.S.) had at least 50,000 troops in the Philippines and at least 20 military bases occupying more than 100,000 hectares (one hectare=2.471 acres) of land."

There are three main U.S. military bases in the Philippines: Clark Air Base and the Navy's Sangley Point and Subic Bay, and several minor installations. Subic is the most important forward repair base for the U.S. 7th Fleet operating in Vietnam west of Pearl Harbor. Clark is a logistics, maintenance and management center, headquarters for the 13th Air Force and primary staging area for men and materials for Vietnam, Thailand and Taiwan. Sangley is a secondary naval air station basing about fifty planes. Subic and Clark are considered vital if the U.S. is to maintain power in the Western Pacific.

Through consultations in 1956, further implications for the use of the bases were established by the Bohlen-Serrano Agreements of 1959 (U.S. Ambassador Charles E. Bohlen and R.P. Foreign Secretary Felixberto M. Serrano). Under this agreement the U.S. is obliged to consult with the Philippine Government on the use of the bases for combat operations, meaning operations originating in the Philippines, and on the establishment of long range missiles in the country. Positioning of U.S. bases in the Philippines has caused considerable displeasure. For one, the adherence to these conditions is widely disputed by many knowledgeable Filipinos. They believe that there are offensive air and sea missions originating from the U.S. installations. On April 13, 1966, a Manila newspaper cited that a Philippine-based heavy attack plane had been shot down in Communist China (Voltaire-Garcia, p. 66). Others have observed heavily armed aircraft taking off from Clark Air Base.

A second complaint was reported in the *Manila Chronicle*, May 28, 1970, by Senator Jose W. Diokno. He warned the U.S. against abusing Filipino hospitality and sovereignty by grabbing farmlands outside Clark Air Base. He said that authorities from the base fenced off farm lands in the province of Tarlac that do not belong to the base reservation. In calling for the abrogation of the R.P.-U.S. bases agreement he stated that the bases do not give any lasting benefit to the country, as they only serve to protect U.S. interests. He feels that the U.S. base authorities feel they can violate the territorial integrity and sovereign rights, behaving as though the country were still a colony of the U.S. and that the bases

had allowed the U.S. to operate a government within the government of the Philippines.

The second military arrangement established following World War II was The Military Assistance Agreement, signed March 21, 1947, and made retroactive to July 4, 1946, the date of the Philippines' independence. This agreement was later superseded by the Military Assistance Agreement of 1953.

This assistance agreement has been directed:

1. to help maintain the U.S.-Philippine defense partnership in Southeast Asia;
2. to assist in creating an internal security capability in the Philippines;
3. to promote regional alliance by supporting the Philippines to maintain a limited force within SEATO for mutual defense; and
4. to develop self-sustaining capabilities within the Philippine Armed Forces which will eliminate the need for U.S. assistance through the establishment of the Joint U.S. Military Advisory Group in the Philippines (JUSMAG).

There has been some question as to the "advisory" capacity of the Chief of JUSMAG. According to R.P. Congressman Joaquin Rocas, in his paper, "A Report on R.P.-U.S. Military Agreements," drafted in 1969, there have been some occasions when the Chief of JUSMAG issued orders directly to subordinate-level commanders of the Air Force Philippines, forgetting that the AFP is not a part of the U.S. forces.

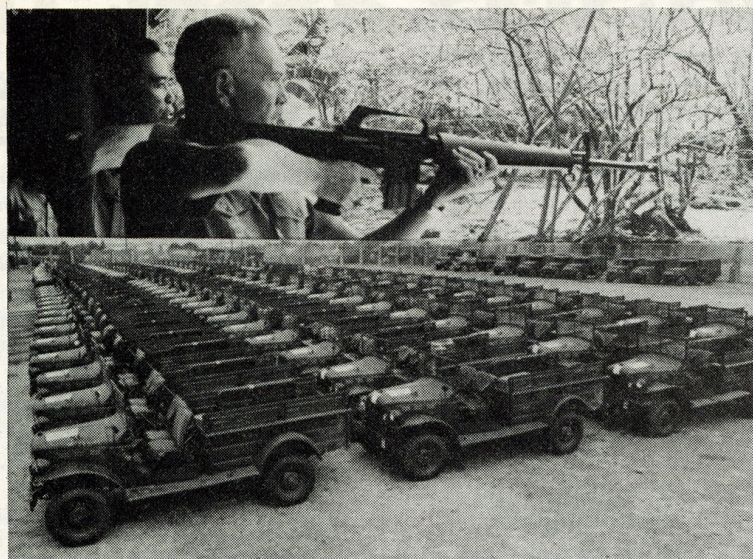
The Military Assistance Program contributed significantly to the success of the Philippine Armed Forces in suppressing the Huk revolution in the 1950's. This assistance comprised equipment, services and training. Weapons since 1950 have included a large number of aircraft, ships, combat vehicles, artillery, some air-to-air missiles plus construction and maintenance equipment. (Symington Report, p. 300).

The third military agreement signed between the two countries was the Military Mutual Security Agreement of 1951. It obligates the two parties to:

1. develop the capacity to resist armed attack;
2. consult with each other if their territorial integrity, political independence, or security is threatened in the Pacific; and
3. take appropriate action if either party is the object of an "armed attack" in the Pacific Area.

Article X of this agreement provides that the armed attack referred to includes not only an attack on the metropolitan territories of either the Philippines or the U.S., but also on the "island territories under (their) jurisdiction in the Pacific or on (their) armed forces, public vessels or aircraft in the Pacific." This commitment of mutual defense has





Top: Gen. George Pickett, Jr., Chief of JUSMAG, and Gen. Rafael Ileto, Commanding General of the 2nd Military Area, demonstrating M16 rifles. Bottom: 116 units of M601-1 ton cargo trucks, making a total of 373 new vehicles valued at more than one million dollars delivered to Armed Forces Philippines since General Pickett took command in July, 1969.

raised the question of the impact of the presence of U.S. armed forces in the Philippines. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, in 1954, pointed to the primary implication in a note to the Philippine Foreign Secretary saying, "... that an armed attack on the Philippines could not but be also an attack upon the military forces of the United States. As between our nations, it is no legal fiction to say that an attack on one is an attack on both. It is a reality that an attack on the Philippines is an attack on the United States."

The implication is, of course, that there is no distinction between an attack on the Philippines and one on the U.S. forces because of the danger to U.S. servicemen in the country. The response by the U.S. in either case would be one of instant retaliation to protect the U.S. military, but would require mutual agreement with regard to the security of the totality of the Philippines. This has been reiterated in successive communiques between Presidents Garcia and Eisenhower in 1958, Macapagal and Johnson in 1964, and Marcos and Johnson in 1966.

However, the point that confuses this established relationship is that if there were any massive attack on the Philippines the U.S. is committed to assist the country militarily, *provided that there is mutual agreement*. Therefore, it is not automatic but subject to joint consultation in view of the time and circumstances under which an attack might occur. The distinction between "time and circumstances" and "instant retaliation" becomes a decision for the President of the U.S., because although the defense obligation is restricted to an armed attack on the Philippines by another country, the task of protecting U.S. Forces would arise should the Philippine government be the aggressor provoking attack, should there be widespread internal revolution or if, in fact, there was an attack by an outside force.

It is not stipulated in any agreement or treaty between the two countries that the U.S. forces may intervene in the Philippine internal affairs. Despite this fact, there have been instances of such involvement. As reported in the Syring-

ton Report (p. 234) this includes furnishing a helicopter and crew for transportation and air-to-ground communication assistance with raids against insurgents in Luzon. There have been a number of photographic missions using U.S. helicopters for logistic support. While this is limited support in terms of forces, as stated above, the Military Assistance Program provides substantially through grants of equipment, armaments and training.

A U.S. official, James M. Wilson, Jr., Deputy Chief of American Diplomatic Mission in Manila, has cited two possible reasons why the Philippine Government would want the U.S. bases retained. First is the supposed threat from China—not that this is a political reality now, but as a long-range fear. Second, Marcos and his government are concerned about external support for some of the dissident activities within the Philippines.

Offering an alternative and more plausible explanation is Mr. Teodoro Locsin of the *Philippines Free Press*. On March 7, 1970, he wrote that the Americans have every reason to want the retention of their military bases in the Philippines:

1. The bases will draw the first wave of missile attack from China away from the American mainland to their military bases in the Philippines.
2. The bases will protect U.S. investments in the Philippines and maintain the status quo, which has been so beneficial to the American economy.
3. The bases protect the Filipino elite upper class and its vested interest that is also maintained by the status quo. They are the best customers for U.S. luxury items.
4. The U.S. bases will insure the continued flow of vital raw materials to American industrial firms in the U.S. whose products are later exported to the Philippines as semi-finished or finished products.
5. Should civil war break out, the presence of the U.S. bases in the country will serve as an excuse for intervening in the internal affairs of the country (protection of "our men").