



OPERATION PACIFIC EAGLE-PHILIPPINES

LEAD INSPECTOR GENERAL REPORT TO THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS



OCTOBER 1, 2018–DECEMBER 31, 2018

ABOUT THIS REPORT

In January 2013, legislation was enacted creating the Lead Inspector General (Lead IG) framework for oversight of overseas contingency operations. This legislation, which amended the Inspector General Act, requires the Inspectors General of the Department of Defense (DoD), Department of State (DoS), and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to, among other things, provide quarterly reports to Congress on each contingency operation and the activities of the Lead IG agencies.

The DoD Inspector General (IG) is designated as the Lead IG for Operation Pacific Eagle-Philippines (OPE-P). The DoS IG is the Associate IG for OPE-P. The USAID IG also participates in oversight for the operation.

The Offices of Inspector General of DoD, DoS, and USAID are referred to in this report as the Lead IG agencies. Other partner agencies also contribute to oversight of OPE-P. The Lead IG agencies collectively carry out their statutory missions related to this overseas contingency operation:

- Develop a joint strategic plan to conduct comprehensive oversight over the contingency operation.
- Ensure independent and effective oversight of programs and operations of the Federal Government in support of the contingency operation through either joint or individual audits, inspections, and investigations.
- Report quarterly and biannually to Congress and the public on the contingency operation and activities of the Lead IG agencies.

METHODOLOGY

To produce this quarterly report, the Lead IG agencies gather data and information from their agencies and open sources, including congressional testimony, policy research organizations, press conferences, think tanks, and media reports. DoD, DoS, and USAID officials also provide written responses to quarterly data call questions from Lead IG agencies. This quarter, due to the partial government shutdown, the DoS and USAID did not participate in the production of this report.

The sources of information contained in this report are listed in endnotes or notes to tables and figures. Except in the case of audits, inspections, or evaluations mentioned or referenced in this report, the Lead IG agencies have not verified or audited all of the data and information provided by the agencies. For further details on the methodology for this report, see the Appendix.

FOREWORD

We are pleased to submit the Lead Inspector General quarterly report to the U.S. Congress on Operation Pacific Eagle-Philippines. This report discharges our individual and collective agency oversight responsibilities pursuant to sections 2, 4, and 8L of the Inspector General Act of 1978.

The Secretary of Defense designated OPE-P as a contingency operation in 2017 to support the Philippine government and military in their efforts to isolate, degrade, and defeat Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) affiliates and other violent extremist organizations in the Philippines.

This report provides information on the status of OPE-P and is organized by the following strategic oversight areas adopted by the Lead IG agencies:

- Security
- Support to Mission

This quarter, due to the partial government shutdown and the furlough of staff at the Department of State and the U.S Agency for International Development, this report does not contain a section on Humanitarian Assistance and Recovery, which is typically provided by the U.S. Agency for International Development Office of Inspector General. The Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development also did not review this report or provide input. However, the Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development Inspectors General reviewed and concurred with the content of this report.

Working in close collaboration, we remain committed to providing comprehensive oversight and timely reporting on these contingency operations.



Handwritten signature of Glenn A. Fine in black ink.

Glenn A. Fine
Principal Deputy Inspector General
Performing the Duties
of the Inspector General
U.S. Department of Defense



Handwritten signature of Steve A. Linick in black ink.

Steve A. Linick
Inspector General
U.S. Department of State



Handwritten signature of Ann Calvaresi Barr in black ink.

Ann Calvaresi Barr
Inspector General
U.S. Agency for International
Development



On the Cover

Top row: A U.S. and a Philippine Marine clear a room during a training exercise as part of Kamandag 2 in the Philippines (U.S. Marine Corps photo); Philippine and U.S. Marines listen to a class during a training exercise (U.S. Marine Corps photo). Bottom: U.S. Marines conduct an amphibious raid at Philippine Marine Corps base Gregorio Lim, Philippines (U.S. Marine Corps photo).

MESSAGE FROM THE LEAD INSPECTOR GENERAL



Glenn A. Fine

I am pleased to present the 5th Lead Inspector General quarterly report on Operation Pacific Eagle-Philippines (OPE-P). This report summarizes the quarter's events for the operation and describes completed, ongoing, and planned Lead IG and partner agency oversight work relating to these activities.

This quarter, the Department of Defense (DoD) continued to provide assistance to the Armed Forces of the Philippines in its fight against ISIS-Philippines (ISIS-P) and other violent extremist organizations. According to the DoD, ISIS-P remained fragmented and degraded. However, it still posed a security threat, with an estimated 300 to 550 fighters active in the Southern Philippines as of the end of the quarter.

According to the DoD, the main effort under the OPE-P advise and assist mission has been to help enhance the intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capacity of the Philippine forces to better track and target terrorist organizations. The United States continues to provide other support to the Philippines under the longstanding bilateral security relationship between the two nations, such as joint training exercises and transfers of weapons and other defense articles.

During the quarter, the Philippine government continued to pursue political reconciliation with the Muslim minority in the country's south. Preparations took place for an upcoming referendum that would grant enhanced autonomy to the Philippines's Muslim-majority provinces.

This report contains a summary of the DoD OIG's first oversight project related to OPE-P, which was an evaluation of the DoD's oversight of bilateral agreements with the Philippines.

My Lead IG colleagues and I remain committed to fulfilling our responsibility to provide oversight of this overseas contingency operation through oversight projects, quarterly reports, and coordinated oversight planning.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Glenn A. Fine". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Glenn A. Fine

Principal Deputy Inspector General

Performing the Duties of the Inspector General
U.S. Department of Defense





A U.S. and a Philippine Marine clear a room during a training exercise as part of Kamandag 2 in the Philippines. (U.S. Marine Corps photo)

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Philippine Marines clear a simulated room during a training exercise. (U.S. Marine Corps photo)



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The DoS and USAID, and their Offices of Inspector General (OIG), experienced a lapse in appropriations beginning in December 2018. Due to the suspension of affected agency functions, the DoS and USAID OIGs were unable to report on OPE-P-related developments in the area of humanitarian assistance and recovery during this quarter. Their agencies did not review or provide input to this report.

This quarter, the Department of Defense (DoD) reported few new developments in the ongoing conflict between the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and ISIS-Philippines (ISIS-P). According to U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM), ISIS-P remained active with approximately 300 to 550 fighters in the southern Philippines.¹ Its activity was limited to the Sulu archipelago, where it had several low-level clashes with the AFP, each of which resulted in greater casualties for ISIS-P than the Philippine government forces according to USINDOPACOM.² In addition, a bomb blast at a southern Philippine shopping mall on December 31, 2018, was attributed by Philippine officials to ISIS-P, but no group claimed responsibility.³

According to USINDOPACOM, ISIS-P made no progress in expanding its areas of operations or influence this quarter. USINDOPACOM attributed the group's weakness to its fragmented membership in the Philippines and its frayed relationship with the core ISIS group in Iraq and Syria (ISIS-Core).⁴

This quarter, several individuals were identified by the DoD and media sources as potential leaders of ISIS-P, but no single leader was publicly recognized by the extremists in the Philippines or ISIS-Core.⁵ USINDOPACOM also reported that ISIS-P was no longer receiving the same level of financial support and quality media coverage from international affiliates as it had in 2017.⁶ However, this may be attributed to a weakening of the global ISIS organization rather than a lack of willingness of ISIS-Core to support ISIS-P.⁷

One of the main objectives of OPE-P is to provide the AFP with intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) support and to build the AFP's capacity to use ISR in operations



Approximately
300-550
ISIS-P Fighters
in the Southern
Philippines

against ISIS-P.⁸ According to U.S. Special Operation Command Pacific (USSOCPAC), the AFP's current organizational infrastructure is insufficient to generate, process, and act upon intelligence gathered from manned and unmanned aerial systems independently from U.S. support.⁹ In an effort to fill this capacity gap, the DoD provided the AFP with an intelligence training package, software, multiple unmanned aerial vehicle systems, tactical command posts, and other equipment to increase command and control, situational awareness, and operational security.¹⁰ Additionally, USINDOPACOM stated that it planned to spend \$50.1 million on contracted ISR and \$11.8 million on U.S. Army ISR support to the AFP in FY 2019.¹¹

ISR support is one area where the scope of OPE-P is unclear, and the DoD OIG has questioned what ISR-related activities conducted by U.S. forces should be considered part of the contingency operation or the broader bilateral security cooperation efforts. The DoD stated that activities that fall under OPE-P are generally limited to “advise and assist” operations, while training and equipping activities take place under the security cooperation relationship.¹² USINDOPACOM stated that providing the AFP with ISR assets and training their personnel on how to use them fall under security cooperation, but they also support efforts under OPE-P. DoD officials stated that related programs such as this are combined in pursuit of broader objectives.¹³

This quarter, the DoD OIG completed an evaluation of DoD Oversight of Bilateral Agreements with the Republic of the Philippines. This evaluation found that the DoD's Joint Staff Directorate for Logistics did not have visibility of the logistical support, such as military equipment, weapons, and ammunition, sold to the Philippines. Specifically, the Directorate was unaware of 76 of the 77 transactions, valued at \$13 million, which were executed with the Philippine government over a 20-month period. As a result, the Directorate did not have assurance the \$13 million in transactions for logistic support, supplies, and services with the Republic of the Philippines were accurate and were reimbursed. As of June 5, 2018, only \$882,880 was reported as reimbursed by U.S. Army Pacific. The DoD OIG made four recommendations to improve the tracking of Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement transactions and training for personnel responsible for managing these transactions, and the DoD concurred with these recommendations.

1 U.S. Marines begin 10-day training exercise with AFP counterparts, focusing on counterterrorism, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief efforts.

15 The Asian Development Bank announces \$400 million in grants and loans for the rehabilitation of Marawi, including reconstruction of houses, roads, bridges, schools, hospitals, and sanitation facilities.

12 Philippine Congress votes to extend martial law on Mindanao, which has been in place since mid-2017, through the end of 2019.

7 AFP Chief of Staff visits Moro Islamic Liberation Front camp to encourage support for the peace process under the Bangsamoro Organic Law.

26 Philippine National Police announces plans to deploy its elite Special Action Force units of about 100 police commandos against terrorists in areas where “lawless violence” is most rampant.

31 A bomb blast at a Mindanao shopping mall kills at least 2 and wounds 34; Philippine authorities suspect ISIS-P.

SECURITY

ISIS-P Remains Active Despite Organizational Weakness

TIES WITH ISIS-CORE APPEAR TO REMAIN SEVERED

Last quarter, USINDOPACOM reported to the DoD OIG that it uses four metrics to track the degradation of ISIS-P: 1) lack of an ISIS-Core designated ISIS-P emir; 2) amount of funding ISIS-Core provides ISIS-P; 3) quality of ISIS-Core media coverage of ISIS-P activities; and 4) cohesion or fragmentation of ISIS-P's individual elements.¹⁴

This quarter, USINDOPACOM reported that it had no update on the status of an ISIS-P emir, but it still believed Hatib Sawadjaan, an Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) sub-unit commander, was the acting emir. USINDOPACOM reported that ISIS-Core did not confirm an emir and that it was not clear what ties Sawadjaan had with ISIS-Core.¹⁵ According to media reports, AFP officials identified Abu Dar, a Maute Group leader, as a potential ISIS-P emir. However, as of this quarter, no unified leader of ISIS-P was recognized by the extremist groups in the Philippines or ISIS-Core.¹⁶

Regarding ISIS-P funding, USINDOPACOM reported that there was no change in the amount of funding provided by ISIS-Core this quarter and that any funds received by ISIS-P were not substantial. This assessment was based on lack of evidence that ISIS-P had increased its recruitment, local network, or lethal capabilities by any significant degree during the quarter.¹⁷

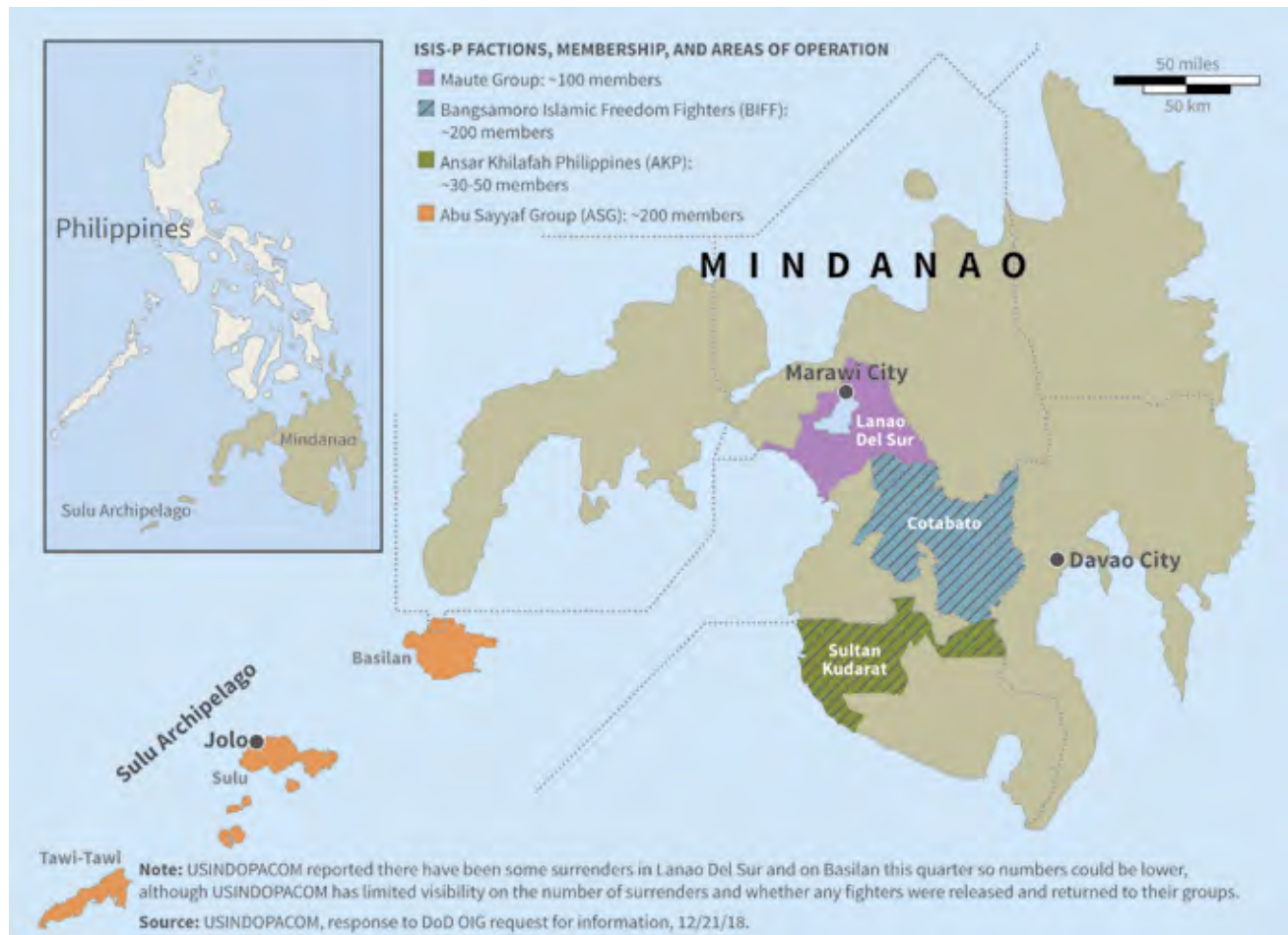
USINDOPACOM reported that during the quarter it had no evidence of a direct relationship between ISIS-Core and ISIS-P, and that the death and imprisonment of key ISIS-P individuals following the October 2017 conclusion of the Marawi siege “fractured the relationship.”¹⁸ USINDOPACOM stated that it continues to monitor for indicators that ISIS-P and ISIS-Core have reestablished direct relations.¹⁹

Regarding the third metric, USINDOPACOM defined “quality” media coverage as well-edited publications and clips that contain complex construction techniques and voice-overs using Koranic verses or language. USINDOPACOM reported that it saw no evidence of quality media this quarter and only saw raw, unedited footage in ISIS-P media that lacked logos or insignia. USINDOPACOM further stated that it believed ISIS-Core would make an announcement in ISIS media when ISIS-P conducted an attack deemed worthy of recognition.²⁰

In addition, media coverage from ISIS-Core may become a decreasingly useful metric, as the central organization in Syria becomes increasingly dispersed, lacking the capacity to generate its own quality media coverage. DoD officials told reporters this quarter that ISIS's total media footprint had decreased by as much as 83 percent since its peak in 2014 and 2015, and its professional-quality monthly online magazine, *Rumiyah*, had not been published in 14 months. While ISIS's high-quality media campaign was once a hallmark of the organization, it has deteriorated substantially with the group's military and territorial defeats.²¹ Diminished media coverage for international affiliates such as ISIS-P may reflect the status of ISIS-Core rather than that of the affiliates.

USINDOPACOM reported that it had no update on the status of an ISIS-P emir, but it still believed Hatib Sawadjaan, an Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) sub-unit commander, was the acting emir.

Figure 1.

ISIS-P Factions, Membership, and Areas of Operation

In terms of ISIS-P cohesion, USINDOPACOM reported that there was no change in ISIS-P command and control during the quarter, and ISIS-P made no significant strides toward rebuilding the cohesion and capacity the group demonstrated during the 2017 siege of Marawi.²² USINDOPACOM described ISIS-P as being in a “reorganization stage” with the capability to carry out only “small-scale attacks like [improvised explosive devices] and small-arms/ambush attacks.”²³ According to USINDOPACOM, there was no change in ISIS-P tactics during the quarter, and the group remained incapable of conducting large-scale attacks.²⁴

ISIS-P FORCE STRENGTH AND TERRITORIAL PRESENCE REMAIN UNCHANGED FROM LAST QUARTER

This quarter, USINDOPACOM assessed the force strength of ISIS-P to be 300 to 550 members, which was the same as the previous quarter and significantly less than the group’s peak strength during the Marawi siege, in which more than 1,000 militants fought (see Figure 1).

USINDOPACOM reported that it was aware of attempts by ISIS-P to recruit new members but lacked sufficient information to assess the extent of recruiting efforts.²⁵ USINDOPACOM reported that an indicator of successful recruitment would be an increase in the number of ISIS-P fighters involved in clashes with the AFP, and there was no observed increase during the quarter.²⁶

The DoD's estimates of ISIS-P force strength reported to the DoD OIG since the end of the Marawi siege have fluctuated from approximately 200 to 550. Despite numerous killings and surrenders, there has been no observable trend in the estimates of force strength, which might suggest that the group is capable of at least sustainment-level recruitment. However, USINDOPACOM officials informed the DoD OIG that they lacked confidence in these estimates and they may be inflated. The officials noted that many Filipino jihadists claiming affiliation with ISIS may simply be using the internationally recognized terrorist group's label for notoriety and funding, indicating that many of these fighters and their supporters had an unknown level of commitment to ISIS ideology.²⁷

USINDOPACOM estimated that there were approximately 40 foreign fighters, mostly from Malaysia and Indonesia, in the Philippines during the quarter, and it saw no indication of fighters from outside the region. According to USINDOPACOM, there was no evidence of either an influx or exodus of foreign fighters during the quarter.²⁸ USINDOPACOM reported that ISIS-P neither gained nor lost territory during the quarter, and extremist activity was limited to the Sulu archipelago—in particular the island of Jolo.²⁹ According to USINDOPACOM, the AFP and ISIS-P clashed regularly in Jolo, but ISIS-P suffered greater casualties than the AFP in each encounter.³⁰ USINDOPACOM stated that ISIS-P made no progress in expanding its operations or influence outside of the Sulu archipelago.³¹

Only one major terrorist attack was reported in the Philippines this quarter. On December 31, 2018, a bombing at a shopping mall killed at least 2 and wounded 34 in Cotabato City, south of Marawi on the island of Mindanao. A second, smaller explosive device was discovered at the shopping mall and safely detonated by security personnel.³² As of the end of the quarter, no group had claimed responsibility for the attack. According to media reports, senior AFP officials stated that the design of the bomb was similar to those used by members of ISIS-P, and the attack was likely retaliation for an AFP offensive the previous week that resulted in the deaths of at least seven ISIS-P militants.³³

USINDOPACOM did not provide a direct answer to the DoD OIG's question asking how activities carried out under OPE-P this quarter affected the four identified metrics. However, based on USINDOPACOM's metrics, ISIS-P appeared to remain in a degraded state during the quarter. Since Lead IG reporting on OPE-P began, USINDOPACOM has characterized ISIS-P as degraded and has neither shown signs of rebuilding and expanding nor indications that it will be completely defeated in the near term.

One issue that the DoD OIG has attempted to evaluate is whether any of the support provided to the AFP under the auspices of OPE-P is also used against non-ISIS-P targets. According to DoD officials, it is often difficult to determine which organization an extremist individual or group may associate with at a given period of time due to the opportunistic nature of ISIS-P and other violent extremist organizations. However, USSOCPAC



On December 31, 2018, a bombing at a shopping mall killed at least 2 and wounded 34 in Cotabato City, south of Marawi on the island of Mindanao.

reported that it vets potential AFP targets against current intelligence assessments and provides advice and assistance to the AFP only when the targets can be associated with valid organizations identified in the OPE-P Execute Order. DoD officials also stated that USSOCPAC does not track AFP operations against other organizations who are unaffiliated with ISIS and do not fall within the Execute Order (such as the New People's Army or narcotics traffickers) under OPE-P authorities.³⁴

OPE-P is Supported by a Small U.S. Footprint

This quarter, USINDOPACOM reported to the DoD OIG that activity under OPE-P was conducted by 86 U.S. special operations forces and 185 other U.S. troops in the Philippines.³⁵ These personnel were supported by 80 U.S. contractors, who provided transportation, security, ISR, communications, casualty evacuation, engineering, logistics, and other services. Additionally, 458 local national subcontractors provided services, such as food preparation, plumbing, engineering, and general labor. One DoD civilian located in country manages the Philippine Operations Support Contract.³⁶

The DoD reported that it had a total of 12 aircraft in the Philippines in support of OPE-P this quarter, including 8 unmanned ISR platforms, 3 medium-lift helicopters and 1 medium-lift airplane providing casualty evacuation support. USSOCPAC reported that it expected two additional contractor owned and operated ISR platforms to begin supporting OPE-P in early 2019, which would eventually reduce the need for DoD ISR assets.³⁷

A U.S. Air Force C-17 Globemaster III takes off at Cesar Basa Air Base, Philippines. (U.S. Air Force photo)



AFP STILL NEEDS EXTENSIVE U.S. ISR SUPPORT

One of the primary objectives of OPE-P is to build the AFP's capability to use ISR in operations against ISIS-P. USSOCPAC reported to the DoD OIG this quarter that the AFP had limited ability to collect information on a target and provide that intelligence to a unit on the ground to act on it.³⁸

According to USSOCPAC, this inability to collect, process, and disseminate intelligence was the result of several problems. First, the AFP lacks ISR assets. Second, the AFP does not have a "Production, Exploitation, and Dissemination cell" capable of synthesizing ISR information and providing it to a decision-making entity. Third, the AFP suffers from an institutional problem, using its limited ISR assets for live tracking of active operations to "provide a semblance of battle tracking for friendly and suspected enemy elements" rather than strategic threat analysis.³⁹

USSOCPAC stated that because of these challenges, the AFP relies heavily on the DoD and its contractors' ISR capabilities to identify the locations of suspected enemy activity and provide intelligence products for their use.⁴⁰ According to USSOCPAC, the desired end state is for the AFP to meet its own needs for ISR support to counterterrorism operations, including the capacity to target and conduct lethal operations against multiple violent extremist threats, without DoD assistance.⁴¹

USSOCPAC stated that this end-to-end capability would require the AFP-Joint Special Operations Group to have "a tactical level ISR platform, an established Aerial Reconnaissance Unit, a Joint Intelligence Component to assist with intelligence collaboration and analysis, and a fully functioning intelligence staff capable of providing actionable intelligence to the AFP-Joint Special Operations Group commander."⁴² USSOCPAC reported that it was working toward this goal by developing the AFP's collection ability, unmanned aerial ISR operators, intelligence personnel, and coordination with AFP operations cells.⁴³

USSOCPAC stated that the AFP lacks the infrastructure necessary for its ground units to communicate effectively with ISR air controllers. In order to improve the AFP's ISR equipment, USSOCPAC was providing an intelligence training package, "analyst notebook software," multiple unmanned aerial vehicle systems, tactical command posts, and other equipment to increase command and control, situational awareness, and operational security. Additionally this quarter, the AFP worked toward obtaining cellular applications to enable ground units to obtain data directly from their own ISR assets, according to USSOCPAC.⁴⁴

In addition, the U.S. military advisors conducted subject matter expert exchanges with the Tactical Operations Wing of the Philippine Air Force and its subordinate elements on the island of Sulu. USSOCPAC reported that these exchanges provided integration and deconfliction of U.S. and Philippine ISR platforms and aided the AFP in "producing a rudimentary collections plan and air tasking order."⁴⁵

According to USINDOPACOM, U.S. Marine Special Operations Teams demonstrated ISR planning, control, and tasking methods to the AFP this quarter, which USSOCPAC reported



USSOCPAC reported to the DoD OIG this quarter that the AFP had limited ability to collect information on a target and provide that intelligence to a unit on the ground to act on it.



Philippine and U.S. Marines listen to a class during a training exercise. (U.S. Marine Corps photo)

has resulted in the AFP effectively assuming airborne ISR of a target or operation from overhead U.S. ISR platforms. USSOCPAC reported that AFP special operations forces have increased the level and frequency of coordination between ground forces and air units. USSOCPAC also reported that advise and assist efforts “at the West Mindanao Command Unified Office of Intelligence level has integrated operational planning and employment of the AFP’s organic ISR platforms with their own internal collection planning priorities.”⁴⁶

USSOCPAC told the DoD OIG that as of the end of the quarter, it was not possible to provide an assessment of AFP progress in the use of ISR, as training was still ongoing this quarter. Upon completion of ISR training activities, USSOCPAC reported it would conduct unit assessments to evaluate all aspects of ISR operations by the AFP.⁴⁷

U.S. MARINES TRAIN WITH PHILIPPINE COUNTERPARTS

Separate from OPE-P, the U.S. 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit deployed to the Philippines to conduct training exercise Kamandag 2 with AFP troops from October 1 to 10, 2018, at multiple locations on the northern island of Luzon. Participants in Kamandag 2 performed training in disaster relief, amphibious landing, close air support, jungle survival, urban operations, combat lifesaving, and live-fire exercises. According to USINDOPACOM, the goal of Kamandag 2 was to enhance cooperation and interoperability between Philippine and U.S. forces, particularly in the areas of counterterrorism, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief capabilities. While this training exercise was conducted under security cooperation authorities, many of these capabilities are also relevant to the joint mission under OPE-P. A U.S. Marine Corps spokesperson stated to reporters that the first iteration of Kamandag in 2017 resulted in advancements between the U.S. and Philippine militaries and expressed hope that the 2018 exercise would build on those results.⁴⁸

United States Returns Historic War Relics to the Philippines as a Symbol of Goodwill

On December 11, 2018, the United States returned the Balangiga church bells to the Philippine government in a public ceremony highlighting the bilateral alliance. American troops had seized the three church bells, which were used to signal an attack by Filipino villagers against the American forces, during the Philippine-American War in 1901. Held by the United States for 117 years, the Balangiga bells hold significant cultural and historical importance for the Filipino people. The Philippine government made numerous requests for their return over several decades, and President Duterte raised the issue in public speeches criticizing the United States.⁴⁹

Philippine Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said that with the return of the historic church bells, “It is time for closure, it is time to look ahead as two nations should with a shared history as allies.”⁵⁰ Then-Secretary of Defense James Mattis stated that the Philippine government should take possession of the historic bells “confident that America’s ironclad alliance with the Philippines is stronger than ever.”⁵¹

Bangsamoro Organic Law Implementation Holds Promise of Peace but also Presents Security Risks

PREPARATIONS FOR REFERENDUM UNDERWAY AS MARTIAL LAW CONTINUES

On December 12, 2018, the Philippine Congress voted to extend martial law on Mindanao through the end of 2019. Martial law has been in place since the 2017 siege of Marawi. This was the third time the government has acted to extend it. The extension was supported by the AFP, citing ongoing security concerns.⁵²

According to media reports, continued extensions of martial law have increased dissatisfaction of local populations with the central government. Opposition lawmakers brought a legal challenge against the most recent extension, and the Philippine Supreme Court agreed to hear oral arguments.⁵³

Last quarter, the Philippine government enacted legislation intended to provide a pathway to enhanced autonomy for the Muslim-populated areas of the southern Philippines. The Bangsamoro Organic Law, as the measure is known, was the product of years of negotiation between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Full implementation of the law requires passage by a local referendum, which was scheduled to take place on January 21 and February 6, 2019.⁵⁴

DoD officials reported that the security situation in Mindanao was largely unchanged since the enactment of the Bangsamoro Organic Law, but they predicted that violence would increase in Mindanao if the referendum did not result in ratification.⁵⁵

AFP CHIEF OF STAFF VISITS MORO ISLAMIC LIBERATION FRONT CAMP

On October 7, 2018, the AFP Chief of Staff, General Carlito Galvez Jr., visited Camp Darapanan, the MILF’s headquarters, to advocate for ratification of the Bangsamoro

Organic Law. Accompanied by other senior officers, he became the first AFP Chief of Staff to enter the militants' camp. General Galvez announced that following his retirement in December, he intended to campaign openly in support of the referendum.⁵⁶

While ISIS-P and other violent extremists continue to threaten stability and security in the southern Philippines, General Galvez praised the peace agreement between the MILF and the Philippine government, expressing confidence that it would be sustained over the long term.⁵⁷

MILF Chairman Al Haj Murad Ebrahim welcomed the AFP commander during his visit to the camp, stating, "This visit represents the degree of progress we have made over the years in bridging significant cooperation and avoiding confrontation among us Filipinos." Murad then presented General Galvez the MILF's highest award, the "Soldier of Peace."⁵⁸

SUPPORT TO MISSION

Costs for OPE-P Expected to Increase Slightly in FY 2019

For FY 2019, USINDOPACOM estimates that requirements associated with OPE-P will cost a total of \$108.2 million, of which \$825,419 was obligated and \$97,874 disbursed as of December 12, 2018. This represents an increase from the \$99.3 million obligated in FY 2018.⁵⁹

USINDOPACOM reported that costs for OPE-P will increase in FY 2019 due to an increase in contracted ISR support to cover an expanded area of operations. USINDOPACOM also reported that the costs for FY 2019 will increase due to the addition of efforts to collect and analyze commercially available local media published in the native languages of the Philippines.⁶⁰

Although OCO funding has been approved for OPE-P in FY 2019, the DoD Comptroller reported that due to the limited size and scope of this operation, it has not established and is unlikely to establish an OPE-P-specific code to capture budget execution detail, as is the case for Operation Freedom's Sentinel in Afghanistan and Operation Inherent Resolve in Iraq and Syria. Instead, USINDOPACOM tracks and reports incremental costs associated with OPE-P to the DoD Comptroller.⁶¹



**\$108.2
million**

Estimated
total cost of
requirements
associated
with OPE-P in
FY 2019.

U.S. Security Cooperation Supports the AFP

Outside of OPE-P, the DoD provided a wide range of cooperative agreements, materiel, and training to enhance the capabilities of the AFP this quarter, some of which may also have direct applicability to the OPE-P campaign goals. In October, the DoD provided the AFP with 109 used cargo and logistics trucks and 2,253 M60 machine guns via the Excess Defense Article program, through which the United States provides surplus defense materiel at reduced or no cost to partner nations. Recipient nations must pay for any related costs, such as transportation, spare parts, maintenance, or refurbishment. USINDOPACOM stated, "this equipment will increase the AFP's mobility and lethality, with possible applications in their operations on Mindanao."⁶²

Table 1.

Current and Estimated Costs of OPE-P

| | FY 2018 Obligations | FY 2019 Forecast |
|---|---------------------|----------------------|
| U.S. Army Gray Eagle Unmanned ISR | \$13,100,000 | \$11,843,125 |
| Contracted ISR | \$47,186,185 | \$50,100,000 |
| Contracted Casualty Evacuation, Personnel Recovery, and Mobility | \$29,859,433 | \$24,800,000 |
| Communications, Technology, and Intelligence Systems | \$3,711,619 | \$9,059,500 |
| C-17 Cargo Plane Rotation | \$1,323,903 | \$3,160,080 |
| Temporary Duty Personnel | \$487,286 | \$837,295 |
| Base Operations Support | \$3,692,463 | \$4,900,000 |
| Media Analyst | — | \$3,500,000 |
| TOTAL | \$99,360,889 | \$108,200,000 |

Source: USINDOPACOM

Additionally this quarter, U.S.-funded improvements were completed at the Philippine Coast Guard station at Balagtas, including an outboard motor facility and a barracks that will support 100 personnel. USINDOPACOM stated that this training facility will increase the Philippine Coast Guard’s domestic maritime interdiction capability, which it reported as being “currently negligible at best.” Although this facility is located on the northern island of Luzon, USINDOPACOM reported that the enhanced capability will be predominantly employed in the southern Philippines. Additional planned DoD-funded improvements at this site will include training facilities for large vessel engineering repair and visit, board, search, and seizure operations.⁶³

This quarter, USINDOPACOM reported several ongoing Foreign Military Sales cases designed to enhance Philippine domestic ISR capacity. These included \$4.9 million to procure new and upgrade existing small-scale, hand-launched unmanned ISR assets operated by the AFP. There were also two Foreign Military Sales cases totaling \$29.2 million for long-endurance, low-altitude Scan Eagle unmanned ISR assets. USINDOPACOM also reported a \$1.8 million case for joint special operations group ISR and intelligence employment training and a \$22 million case for a wide range of Philippine National Police enhancements, including ISR.⁶⁴

Questions Remain about What Costs and Activities Fall under OPE-P as a Contingency Operation

Since the declaration of OPE-P in September 2017, the DoD OIG has sought answers to questions regarding the decision to declare OPE-P as an overseas contingency operation, including which activities are conducted under OPE-P that were not carried out under the preexisting and ongoing U.S.-Philippine Mutual Defense Treaty and how the DoD delineates activities and costs between the two. DoD responses to DoD OIG questions, and



109
Used Cargo and Logistics Trucks

2,253
M60 Machine Guns

Provided by the DoD to the AFP in October via the Excess Defense Article Program.

There are still questions about how the DoD determines if an activity falls under OPE-P or other authorities under the bilateral relationship.

our discussions with DoD officials, have not provided a clear explanation of why OPE-P was designated as a contingency operation or the impact and benefits of doing so.

This quarter, the DoD provided the following explanation of what support is provided to the Philippines attributed to OPE-P:

Support provided under OPE-P is for direct support to the AFP for advise and assist operations on Mindanao and in the southern Philippines. Funding for OPE-P covers incremental costs for aerial ISR, casualty evacuation and personnel recovery for U.S. personnel, base operating support for infrastructure and personnel, and rotational deployment costs. This is separate from support provided to the AFP to Build Partner Capacity for counterterrorism and security cooperation efforts.⁶⁵

The DoD has reported that one of the significant elements of OPE-P is a \$41 million ISR contract to provide greater aerial surveillance capabilities to the AFP to assist with tracking and carrying out operations against ISIS-P and other terrorists.⁶⁶ The DoD informed the DoD OIG that this contract is separate from other ISR training and equipment that the United States provides to the Philippines under security cooperation efforts, which are described previously in this report. The DoD has not provided an explanation as to why it was necessary to designate OPE-P as a contingency operation in order to execute the \$41 million contract for additional ISR.⁶⁷

USINDOPACOM reported to the DoD OIG this quarter that another way to determine whether support provided to the AFP falls under OPE-P or bilateral security cooperation is based on where the support draws its authorities.⁶⁸ USINDOPACOM reported that if an operation is conducted under authorities delineated by the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Philippines Counterterrorism Execute Order issued on May 1, 2015 or Modification 1 to that order, which authorized OPE-P on September 5, 2017, then that support is considered part of OPE-P. Other support provided to the AFP under the U.S.-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty or other U.S. statutory authorities is considered part of bilateral security cooperation.⁶⁹

However, while the specifics of those orders are classified, it appears that counterterrorism previously carried out under the bilateral relationship could also be conducted under OPE-P authority. Therefore, there are still questions about how the DoD determines if an activity falls under OPE-P or other authorities under the bilateral relationship.

The Lead IG agencies are mandated by law to report on overseas contingency operations and the activities and expenditures conducted under the operations.⁷⁰ Therefore, the Lead IG agencies need to be able to understand what activities and costs to include in quarterly reports, and what activities and costs are outside the scope of Lead IG reports. The distinction is essential to reporting on the progress of the contingency operation and coordinating appropriate oversight.

OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

This section of the report provides information on Lead IG and partner agencies' strategic planning efforts; their ongoing audits, inspections, evaluations, and investigations; and hotline activities from October 1 through December 31, 2018, related to OPE-P. However, due to the lapse in appropriations affecting the DoS and USAID OIGs, the oversight information provided below includes only limited information on the details of their activities.

Strategic Planning

Pursuant to Section 8L of the Inspector General Act, the Lead IG develops and implements a joint strategic plan to guide comprehensive oversight of programs and operations for each overseas contingency operation. This effort includes reviewing and analyzing completed oversight, management, and other relevant reports to identify systemic problems, trends, lessons learned, and best practices to inform future oversight projects. The Lead IG agencies issue an annual joint strategic plan for each operation.

FY 2019 JOINT STRATEGIC OVERSIGHT PLAN ACTIVITIES

The first annual plan describing oversight activities for OPE-P, *The FY 2019 Joint Strategic Oversight Plan for Operation Pacific Eagle-Philippines*, was issued on October 1, 2018. The plan organized oversight projects related to OPE-P into three strategic oversight areas: Security, Humanitarian Assistance and Recovery, and Support to Mission. The strategic plan was included in the *FY 2019 Comprehensive Oversight Plan for Overseas Contingency Operations* and will be updated annually.

Audit, Inspection, and Evaluation Activity

The Lead IG agencies use permanent and temporary employees, as well as contractors, to conduct oversight projects, investigate fraud and corruption, and provide strategic planning and reporting. Oversight teams travel to the Philippines and other locations in the region to conduct fieldwork for their projects. In addition, the USAID OIG has a field office in Manila that covers USAID's operations in Philippines and other countries in the region, enabling it to monitor events on the ground.

This quarter, the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies completed one report related to OPE-P. As of December 31, 2018, four oversight projects were ongoing, and two were planned. Table 2 lists the project titles and objectives for the ongoing projects, and Table 3 lists the project titles and objectives for the planned projects.



**FY 2019
Comprehensive
Oversight Plan
for Overseas
Contingency
Operations**

Lead IG Strategic Oversight Areas

SECURITY

Security focuses on determining the degree to which the contingency operation is accomplishing its mission to defeat violent extremists by providing security assistance to partner security forces. Activities that fall under this strategic oversight area include:

- Conducting counterterrorism operations against violent extremist organizations
- Training and equipping partner security forces
- Advising and assisting partner security forces
- Advising and assisting ministry-level security officials

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND RECOVERY

Humanitarian Assistance and Recovery focuses on aid intended to save lives, alleviate suffering, and maintain human dignity during and after conflict, as well as to prevent and strengthen preparedness for such crises. Distinct and separate from military operations, activities that fall under this strategic oversight area include:

- Providing food, water, medical care, emergency relief, and shelter to people affected by crisis
- Building resilience by supporting community-based mechanisms that incorporate national disaster risk reduction, emergency preparedness, and humanitarian response systems
- Assisting and protecting internally displaced persons and returning refugees
- Setting the conditions which enable recovery and promote strong, positive social cohesion

SUPPORT TO MISSION

Support to Mission focuses on the United States' administrative, logistical, and management efforts that enable military operations, empower host-nation governance, and provide humanitarian assistance to the local population. Activities that fall under this strategic oversight area include:

- Ensuring the security of U.S. personnel and property
- Providing for the occupational health and safety of personnel
- Supporting the logistical needs of U.S. installations
- Managing government grants and contracts
- Administering government programs

Final Report

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

DoD Oversight of Bilateral Agreements with the Republic of the Philippines

DODIG-2019-004; November 2, 2018

The DoD OIG evaluated whether the DoD Joint Staff Directorate for Logistics had proper oversight of logistical support provided through a bilateral agreement with the Republic of the Philippines.

The DoD OIG determined that the Directorate for Logistics did not have visibility of the logistical support sold to the Republic of the Philippines through the use of the bilateral agreement. Specifically, the Directorate was unaware of 76 of the 77 transactions, valued at \$13 million, that were executed with the Republic of the Philippines from October 1, 2016 through May 31, 2018. Additionally, the Directorate did not request that USINDOPACOM provide quarterly summary reports of all Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) transactions within its area of responsibility. As a result, the Directorate did not have assurance that the ACSA transactions for logistic support, supplies, and services with the Republic of the Philippines were accurate and were reimbursed. For example, as of June 5, 2018, only \$882,880 was reported as reimbursed by U.S. Army Pacific.

The lack of visibility in logistical support occurred because ACSA officials for U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Pacific; U.S. Pacific Fleet; and Pacific Air Forces did not understand how to build, track, and manage transactions in the ACSA Global Automated Tracking Reporting System (AGATRS), and did not designate a primary ACSA Finance Program Manager to assist in the processing transactions in AGATRS.

The DoD OIG made the following recommendations.

- The Director for Logistics, Joint Staff, update Joint Knowledge Online-Training to reflect the most recent updates to AGATRS. Also, USINDOPACOM report to the Directorate for Logistics all of the ACSA transactions with the Republic of the Philippines from October 1, 2016, through July 31, 2018.
- The Commanders of U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Pacific; U.S. Pacific Fleet; and Pacific Air Forces designate an ACSA Finance Program Manager and complete the proper ACSA training.
- The Commanders of U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Pacific; U.S. Pacific Fleet; and Pacific Air Forces input and track all ACSA transactions from October 1, 2016, to present and future transactions in AGATRS.
- The Commanders of U.S. Pacific Fleet and Pacific Air Forces develop service component-specific training programs for all ACSA command officials.
- The Commander of Pacific Air Forces designate an ACSA Program Manager and ensure that the individual completes the proper ACSA training.

Management agreed with the recommendations.

The Directorate was unaware of 76 of the 77 transactions, valued at \$13 million, that were executed with the Republic of the Philippines from October 1, 2016 through May 31, 2018.

Table 2.

Ongoing Oversight Projects by Lead IG Agency and Partner Agency, as of December 31, 2018

| Project Title | Objective |
|--|---|
| DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL | |
| <i>Evaluation of Efforts to Train, Advise, Assist, and Equip the Armed Forces of the Republic of the Philippines</i> | To evaluate U.S. train, advise, assist, and equip efforts to build and sustain the capabilities of the Armed Forces of the Philippines to counter the expansion of violent extremist organizations. |
| <i>Audit of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Ranges to Support Aviation Unit Readiness</i> | To determine whether ranges in the USINDOPACOM area of responsibility effectively support aviation unit readiness. |
| DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL | |
| <i>Audit of Foreign Assistance to the Philippines</i> | To determine whether DoS-funded foreign assistance programs executed in the Philippines are monitored and evaluated in accordance with Federal and DoS requirements. |
| GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE | |
| <i>Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreements</i> | To review various aspects of DoD use of acquisition and cross-servicing agreements, including 1) a list of current agreements signed by the United States; 2) the criteria and processes used to determine the need for acquisition and cross-servicing agreements; 3) the DoD's accounting of support provided under these agreements and receipt of reciprocal support or reimbursements from partner nations; 4) notifications to Congress of the DoD's intent to sign an acquisition and cross-servicing agreements with a non-NATO member country; and 5) the use of these agreements as mechanisms for transfers of logistics support, supplies, and services to third-party countries for which there is no current agreement. |

Table 3.

Planned Oversight Projects by Lead IG Agencies, as of December 31, 2018

| Project Title | Objective |
|--|--|
| DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL | |
| <i>Audit of DoD Management of Wholesale Equipment in Korea</i> | To determine whether the Army accounted for wholesale equipment in Korea and established maintenance cycles that ensured equipment was available and deployable if needed. |
| DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL | |
| <i>Audit of Antiterrorism Assistance Program in the Philippines and Jordan</i> | To determine whether 1) the DoS has developed specific, measurable, and outcome-oriented objectives for the Antiterrorism Assistance programs in Jordan and the Philippines; 2) the DoS is effectively monitoring and evaluating Antiterrorism Assistance program participants' progress toward attaining program goals; and 3) the DoS has established program sustainment goals. |

Investigations and Hotline Activity**INVESTIGATIONS**

The investigative components of the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies continued to conduct investigative activity related to OPE-P during the quarter, with some USAID investigators located in Manila. The DoS and USAID OIGs experienced a lapse in appropriations beginning in December 2018 and were unable to provide information on their offices' investigative activities during the quarter.

The Lead IG agencies and partners coordinate their investigative efforts through the Fraud and Corruption Investigative Working Group, which consists of representatives from the Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS, the DoD OIG's investigative division), the DoS OIG, the USAID OIG, the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command, the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, and the Air Force Office of Special Investigations. The investigative components of the Lead IG agencies initiated one new investigation and coordinated on two open investigations.

HOTLINE

Each Lead IG agency maintains its own hotline to receive complaints and contacts specific to its agency. The hotlines provide a confidential, reliable means for individuals to report violations of law, rule, or regulation; mismanagement; gross waste of funds; and abuse of authority for independent review. A DoD OIG investigator coordinates the hotline contacts among the Lead IG agencies and others as appropriate. This quarter, the investigator did not receive any complaints related to OPE-P.







U.S. Marines conduct an amphibious raid during Kamandag 2 at Philippine Marine Corps Base Gregorio Lim, Philippines. (U.S. Marine Corps photo)

APPENDIX

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APPENDIX

Methodology for Preparing this Lead IG Quarterly Report to Congress

This report is issued pursuant to sections 2, 4, and 8L of the Inspector General Act of 1978, which requires that the designated Lead IG provide a quarterly report, available to the public, on each overseas contingency operation. The DoD Inspector General is the designated Lead IG for OPE-P. The DoS Inspector General is the Associate Inspector General for OPE-P.

This report covers the period from October 1 through December 31, 2018.

To fulfill the congressional mandate to produce a quarterly report on OPE-P, the Lead IG agencies gather data and information from Federal agencies and open sources. Data and information used in this report are attributed to their source in endnotes to the text or notes to the tables and figures. Except for references to Lead IG and oversight partner agency audits, inspections, evaluations, or investigations, the Lead IG agencies have not independently verified and assessed all the data provided by other sources and included in this report.

DATA CALL

Each quarter, the Lead IG agencies direct a series of questions, or data calls, to agencies about their programs and operations related to OPE-P. The Lead IG agencies use the information provided by their respective agencies for quarterly reports and to determine where to conduct future audits and evaluations.

Due to the partial government shutdown, the Department of Defense responded to the data call for this quarter, but personnel from the Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development were unavailable.

OPEN-SOURCE RESEARCH

This report also draws on current, publicly available information from reputable sources. Sources used in this report include the following:

- Information publicly released by U.S. Government departments and agencies
- Congressional testimonies
- Press conferences, especially DoD and DoS briefings
- United Nations (and relevant branches)
- Reports issued by non-governmental or research organizations
- Media reports

Materials collected through open source research also provide information to describe the status of OPE-P and help the Lead IG agencies assess information provided in their respective agency data call. However, in light of the operational realities and dynamic nature of OPE-P, the Lead IG agencies have limited time and ability to test, verify, and independently assess the assertions made by these agencies or open sources. This is particularly true where the Lead IG agencies have not yet provided oversight of these assertions through audits, inspections, or evaluations.

REPORT PRODUCTION

The Lead IG is responsible for assembling and producing this report. As the Lead IG, the DoD OIG coordinates with the DoS OIG and the USAID OIG, which draft sections of the report related to the activities of their agencies. Each of the three OIGs participates in reviewing and editing the entire quarterly report.

The DoD OIG, DoS OIG, and USAID OIG provide the agencies who have responded to the data call with two opportunities to verify and comment on the content of the report. During the first review, agencies are asked to correct any inaccuracies and provide additional documentation. The three OIGs incorporate agency comments, where appropriate, and send the report back to the agencies for a final review for accuracy. Each OIG coordinates the review process with its own agency.

However, this quarter, due to the lapse in Federal appropriations and the resulting partial government shutdown, the OIGs of the Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development did not participate in the production of this report, and the Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development did not review this report or provide input.

Acronyms

| Acronym | |
|------------------|---|
| ACSA | Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement |
| AFP | Armed Forces of the Philippines |
| AGATRS | ACSA Global Automated Tracking Reporting System |
| ASG | Abu Sayyaf Group |
| BIFF | Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters |
| DoD | Department of Defense |
| DoS | Department of State |
| FY | fiscal year |
| ISIS | Islamic State of Iraq and Syria |
| ISIS-Core | The core ISIS organization in Iraq and Syria |
| ISIS-P | Islamic State of Iraq and Syria–Philippines |
| ISR | intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance |
| Lead IG agencies | DoD OIG, DoS OIG, and USAID OIG |
| Lead IG | Lead Inspector General |
| MILF | Moro Islamic Liberation Front |
| OCO | overseas contingency operation |

| Acronym | |
|-------------|--|
| OIG | Office of Inspector General |
| OPE-P | Operation Pacific Eagle-Philippines |
| UN | United Nations |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| USINDOPACOM | U.S. Indo-Pacific Command |
| USSOCPAC | U.S. Special Operations Command Pacific |



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TO REPORT FRAUD, WASTE, OR ABUSE RELATED TO
OVERSEAS CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS
AND PROGRAMS, CONTACT:



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE HOTLINE

dodig.mil/hotline

1-800-424-9098



DEPARTMENT OF STATE HOTLINE

oig.state.gov/hotline

1-800-409-9926 or 202-647-3320



**U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL
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