

# China Targetted by S.E. Asia War Games

by Michael Billington

On March 15, Stratfor on-line news service reported that the United States had called on the Philippines to expand a planned U.S./Philippines military exercise, called Balikatan 2, scheduled for March in the northern island of Luzon, into a multilateral war game, implicitly targetting China. The Philippines government confirmed the request on March 20, and reported that they were considering it positively.

Officially, Philippines National Security Adviser Roilo Golez said that the exercises would “not be targetted at any particular country.” Stratfor, however, was not so coy, reporting that “Beyond Manila, Washington’s proposal demonstrates that, despite the war against terrorism, the U.S. military has not lost sight of longer-term potential challenges to U.S. security—in this case, China.” An unnamed Philippines official was just as candid, telling the *Philippines Inquirer* that the exercise was “a counterfoil to the supposed threat posed by China in the region. This would involve invasion scenarios, with China as the aggressor-nation.”

The Western press has been filled for several months with reports that the vanquished al-Qaeda terrorists are fleeing Afghanistan, many of them into Southeast Asia, and that this supposedly justifies an expansion of the American war on terrorism into the region. But *EIR* has reported that the al-Qaeda and Taliban forces have simply withdrawn into the hills, and are still very much in operation, as Afghanistan becomes a new quagmire. Lyndon LaRouche has warned that the U.S. military deployment into the southern Philippines Province of Mindanao (the Balikatan 1 “exercise,” which has U.S. troops participating in live combat operations against the Abu Sayyaf terrorist gang) is primarily intended to establish a justification for creating new U.S. military bases in the region, to the ultimate purpose of surrounding and confronting China. The announcement of Balikatan 2, targetting China, confirms that warning.

## The Philippines Smells the Skunk

The Philippines has a real—though manageable—terrorist problem, due in part to the U.S. and British 1980s training of Muslim radicals from across the globe to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan. Many came back and continued their profession in their home countries. However, even President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo admits that there have been no known al-Qaeda connections in the Philippines since 1995. Cer-

tainly there are well-meaning individuals within the U.S. diplomatic and military establishment who wish to help the Philippines fight terrorism. But since the time of President George Bush’s State of the Union Address, the U.S. policy-making process has clearly been dominated by fanatics associated with the Clash of Civilizations project—such as the “Wolfowitz cabal” around Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz—who are driving for a global religious war. With these maniacs in charge, the narrowly conceived fight against terrorism in Southeast Asia is simply a platform to prepare for Zbigniew Brzezinski’s and Samuel Huntington’s war against Islam and Confucianism.

The *Philippines Inquirer*, the leading establishment newspaper in Manila, with impeccable pro-American credentials, could not conceal the obvious implications of the new, expanded exercise in Luzon. Pointing to the more than 2,500 U.S. troops who will be involved, they wrote on March 22: “Certain lawmakers as well as militant groups have expressed alarm at that number, and the frequency of the joint military exercises, saying the United States wanted to make the Philippines a staging ground for greater military presence in the Asian region. . . . The administration [in Manila] may keep referring to year-round war games as ‘training exercises,’ but this won’t disguise the fact that the U.S. military presence is acquiring some permanence.”

Another aspect of Balikatan 2 is that several other Asian nations have been invited as observers: Australia, Brunei, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and even Mongolia. Besides the obvious omission of China (in keeping with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld’s cancellation of all Chinese participation in U.S. military exercises), there is the even more glaring fact that, combined with the new U.S. military presence in the Central Asian Republics and Pakistan, this amounts to the encirclement of China. Writes Stratfor: “This may be an underlying goal of these ever-more multilateral exercises.”

The Stratfor report suggests that the United States is proposing a linkage of the Balikatan 2 war games with the annual Cobra Gold exercises, which involves American, Thai and Singaporean forces, and 13 observers—including China. Larry Wortzel, the Director of the Asian Studies Center at the Heritage Foundation, speaking at a forum to promote the U.S. military operations in the Philippines, told *EIR* disapprovingly that the problem with Cobra Gold, was that the Thais had insisted on inviting the Chinese.

A third aspect of the Balikatan 2 proposal, revealing a serious problem facing the utopian war-hawks in Washington, is that the United States has asked the Philippines to allow four South Korean and two Japanese C-130 transport planes to move troops around during the exercise. While this serves to draw these two nations into more active involvement in U.S. military adventures, the more serious implication is that the United States simply lacks the necessary equipment to carry out the exercise. Adm. Dennis Blair,

chief of the U.S. Pacific Command, in testimony to the House Armed Services Committee on March 20, when asked if the military were prepared to fight a second war, in Iraq or elsewhere, responded that even current operations were inadequately equipped: “There are shortages of naval forces, of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance forces, in particular, that have to be made up for if we are to continue the current level of operations in the Central Command.”

## Indonesia Under Assault

The March 20 *USA Today* published a leak from U.S. Congressional sources that the Pentagon wanted to send troops into Indonesia to deal with al-Qaeda, which is supposedly running rampant throughout the country—a “fact” which has been trumpeted in newspapers and official agencies since January, when Wolfowitz first named Indonesia and the Philippines as “Phase Two” targets of the war on terrorism. The lack of proof of any al-Qaeda presence in the country is of no concern to the lords of the “only super-power.”

It is unlikely that any Philippines-style deployment of U.S. troops will be sent into Indonesia, at least in the immediate future. But the constant barrage of attacks against Jakarta for failing to arrest Islamic militants has created an environment of subversion, both economic and military. The *Washington Post*, in a March 22 editorial entitled “Facing Indonesia,” wrote: “The troubling truth is that [President Megawati Sukarnoputri’s] government is falling far short of stabilizing Indonesia, even as a new threat appears: that extremists from al-Qaeda will use this huge and predominantly Muslim country as a new haven.” They refer to a series of “half measures” which “fall well short of what the UN and the Congress have demanded.” Worst of all, President Megawati was “reluctant to accept the sort of direct U.S. military support now going to the neighboring Philippines.”

That Indonesia is the world’s largest Muslim nation is enough to explain the targeting from the Clash of Civilizations advocates. However, the China question is also a factor. In early February, the Indonesian Coordinating Minister for the Economy, Dr. Dorodjatun Kuntjoro-Jakti, speaking in Washington, surprised the U.S. diplomatic and business community by praising the role of China in Indonesia. He said that China is interested in building basic industry—not process factories for quick profit—and basic infrastructure, including bridges, between Java and its adjoining islands. The obvious contrast with the International Monetary Fund approach to the Indonesian economy did not need to be drawn out.

President Megawati travelled to China on March 24 for a four-day visit. Even worse (to some eyes in Washington), she is then travelling to both North and South Korea. The Indonesian government is not hiding the fact that the President is attempting to overcome the damage done by President Bush’s teleprompter attack on North Korea as part of an



*Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz pushed the ongoing U.S.-Philippine military exercises as the first step in an “imperial” American buildup in Asia; they are now expanding with new exercises clearly aimed at the “encirclement” of China.*

“axis of evil,” an attack which was aimed not only at the North, but at the “Sunshine Policy” of South Korean President Kim Dae-jung as well, and, of course, at China.

Indonesia is standing its ground, however, proudly insisting that it has ended the era of police-state measures associated with the 30-year rule of President Suharto, and will not arrest anyone on the basis of unproven accusations from abroad. In a remarkable event held on March 26 in Jakarta, the two mass-based Muslim organizations in Indonesia, the Nahdlatul Ulama and the Muhammadiyah, together with Islamic political parties, and even the supposedly “terrorist” Laskar Jihad, met with ambassadors and envoys from the United States, Britain, Germany, Australia, and Malaysia, in a “Dialogue Forum: Islam and the West, Working Together for a Peaceful World.”

Such rare goodwill is valuable, but not adequate to stem the tide of war. As the global economic collapse gathers steam, those who are plotting war have many means of creating provocations. Provocations, in fact, are practically inevitable in the U.S. military operations in Mindanao, where several armed separatist and leftist organizations are active in the same region. Such a compromise on national sovereignty as Manila has made, can quickly escalate into disaster.