



OPE-P IN BRIEF

This is the 12th and final report submitted by the Lead Inspector General for Operation Pacific Eagle–Philippines (OPE-P). This report summarizes the quarter’s key events and oversight of the U.S. mission to support the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in its fight against ISIS–East Asia (ISIS-EA) and other violent extremist organizations (VEO).

Lead IG Reporting Sunsets for OPE-P *p. 2*

- In May 2019, the DoD revised the guidance for OPE-P, **rescinding the overseas contingency operation (OCO)** designation.
- Lead IG reporting responsibilities **sunset** at the **end of FY 2020** since none of the appropriated funding for OPE-P was associated with an OCO.
- The DoD, the DoS, and USAID OIGs will **continue to provide oversight** of U.S. Government activity in the Philippines under their respective authorities.

ISIS-EA Suspected in Double Suicide Bombing *pp. 7–8*

- The August 24 attacks **killed 14**, including 8 soldiers, and **wounded 75**, including 27 security personnel.
- The first bombing, **near an AFP vehicle** outside a food market, was followed an hour later by a second that may have **targeted first responders**.
- U.S. special operations forces assisted with mass casualty **triage** and **medical airlift**.
- The AFP suspected **ISIS-EA’s** involvement, though the group **did not claim** responsibility.

AFP Activity Targets Terrorist Leaders *p. 9*

- Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan, the **acting leader of ISIS-EA**, was wounded and **likely killed** in a firefight with the AFP in July.
- Abduljihad Susukan, a senior **ISIS-EA faction leader**, **surrendered** to police in August.
- The AFP **raided a safe house** used by Sawadjaan’s nephew—a **bomb maker**—and **40 other terrorists** in September.

U.S. Advisors Support AFP Counterterrorism Targeting and Planning *pp. 19–20*

- U.S. forces provided airborne **intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR)** support to AFP ground operations.
- The AFP carried out operations against **4 of the 6 targets** that U.S. advisors helped develop.

Terrorism Threat in Southern Philippines Will Likely Persist for Years *pp. 12–14*

- VEO members’ **ties to local communities** create a permissive environment for them to **operate** and **recruit** freely.
- Poverty, poor governance, and other **root causes** of terrorism will require **whole-of-government** solutions by the Philippine government.
- **Sustained investment** in the southern Philippines is necessary to reduce the VEO threat to the point where the AFP can **contain it independently**.

Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) Discussions Continue Without Resolution *pp. 25–26*

- The Philippine government’s **suspension** of its February 2020 decision to **terminate** the VFA continued this quarter.
- The U.S. Embassy engaged with the Philippine government and military to **encourage** them to **rescind** the termination decision.
- Philippine President Duterte **pardoned a U.S. Marine** whose **murder** of a Philippine national had drawn local criticism of the VFA.

USAID Identifies Lessons Learned from its 2017 Marawi Response *p. 27*

- USAID identified a need to **more clearly define** assistance and programming objectives, such as **countering violent extremism**.
- After USAID shifted its development strategy for Mindanao in 2019, it found it had **no development objectives** related to **countering violent extremism** or **instability**.
- USAID plans to conduct a **full evaluation** of its Marawi response **next year**.

Oversight *p. 37*

- Lead IG and partner agencies completed **2** classified oversight reports this quarter: including an evaluation of **DoD ISR supply chains** and an inspection of a **DoS facility**.