



U.S. - Southeast Asian Relations:

## U.S. Pushes Security and Trade Interests in Southeast Asia

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In June visits to Singapore, Indonesia, and Vietnam, U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld emphasized the importance of a continued robust U.S. role in Asian security as well as the necessity for security collaboration with U.S. Asian partners. Arms smuggling and espionage scandals in Indonesia and the Philippines respectively revealed some strains in U.S. relations but did not weaken mutual security activities. The United States – along with Japan, India, and China (all of whom rely on the Malacca Strait for much of their seaborne commerce) – offered the littoral states of Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia assistance for improving their anti-piracy capabilities. Washington has also begun to send equipment to Indonesia’s armed forces now that the ban on such transfers has been lifted. Finally, U.S. trade negotiations with Vietnam have led to the signing of a Permanent Normal Trade Relations agreement, the final stage before Hanoi’s admission to the World Trade Organization.

### Secretary Rumsfeld emphasizes security interests

In June visits to Singapore, Indonesia, and Vietnam, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld emphasized the importance of a continued robust U.S. role in Asian security. Implicitly downplaying the military unilateralism that characterized the Bush administration’s first four years, at the Shangri-La conference of Asia-Pacific defense ministers in Singapore, Secretary Rumsfeld asserted “that in the past five years in terms of defense and security cooperation, the United States has done more things with more nations, in more constructive ways, than at any time in our history.” He went on to cite U.S. Navy visits to Vietnam, joint exercises with the Philippines, and the normalization of military relations with Indonesia following the close cooperation in the wake of the devastating tsunami.

The secretary also pointed to the effectiveness of cooperation with Thailand in delivering humanitarian aid after the tsunami and attributed it to “upwards of two decades of joint training and collaboration at the annual *Cobra Gold* exercises” that now include several other Asian nations. *Cobra Gold* has also added peacekeeping and disaster response, examples of cooperative security distinct from its more traditional military training. Nevertheless, when asked by Ralph Cossa, the president of Pacific Forum/CSIS, about U.S. attitudes toward multilateral initiatives that did not include the U.S. such as ASEAN Plus Three (China, Japan, and South Korea), the East Asia Summit (A+3 and India, Australia, and New Zealand), and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the secretary

gave no indication that Washington was about to join the East Asia Summit, stating that other countries were free to “join together as they wish” but also noted that most security problems were global in nature and could be better resolved through larger rather than smaller groups of states.

In Jakarta, the defense secretary received a mixed message. On the one hand, Indonesian Defense Minister Juwono Sudarsono praised the complete restoration of military relations between the two countries and promised to send more Indonesian officers for training in the U.S. He expressed gratitude for the early stages of U.S. resupply of military equipment to the Indonesian armed forces (TNI). On the other hand, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono urged Rumsfeld to resist criticism in the U.S. Congress that could imperil the recently restored military ties. That criticism is generated by concerns over past unpunished human rights violations by the Indonesian military, particularly related to depredations in Timor-Leste when it was still part of Indonesia.

Defense Minister Sudarsono also delivered some criticism about U.S. antiterrorism practices. Perceived in the Islamic world as anti-Muslim, Sudarsono warned Rumsfeld not to meddle with regional efforts to combat terrorism. These efforts are the responsibility of each country, and any direct U.S. action in Southeast Asia “will only create more anger and antipathy against America.” This fairly harsh and public rebuke may have been addressed as much to a domestic Indonesian audience as it was to the U.S. defense secretary. With terrorist concerns and Islamic fundamentalists on the rise in Indonesia, the Yudhoyono government probably wanted to assure its citizens that Jakarta was not a U.S. client and that its own counter-terrorist policy was home grown. In fact, there has been good cooperation between Indonesian law enforcement and the FBI as well as each country’s intelligence agencies, though these activities for the most part go unpublicized.

One new possibility emerged from the Jakarta talks: possible Indonesian participation in the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), an ad hoc group of over 60 countries that cooperate to interdict weapons of mass destruction shipments. Although last March, Indonesia’s Foreign Ministry had told Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice that Jakarta would not participate in PSI, seeing it as a threat to sovereignty, Sudarsono told Rumsfeld that Indonesia would consider the proposal and might be willing to carry out some of its activities on an ad hoc basis. Currently, the only ASEAN state that participates in PSI exercises is Singapore.

In Vietnam, Rumsfeld discussed military exchanges and two Vietnam War legacies – the effects of the defoliant Agent Orange and missing U.S. service members. Vietnam has cooperated for many years on joint searches for U.S. remains. On Agent Orange, Washington has offered technical advice but will not pay compensation to victims of exposure. America’s gradually developing relationship with Vietnam is designed to enhance friendships with countries on China’s periphery. Vietnam’s Defense Minister Gen. Phan Van Tra welcomed bilateral defense cooperation and noted that two Vietnamese military officers would be sent to a Texas air force school for English language training.

U.S. and Vietnamese officials also signed a landmark agreement May 31 that lifts remaining trade barriers between the two states and paves the way for Vietnam's application to join the World Trade Organization. Vietnamese Prime Minister Phan Van Khai urged the U.S. to support Congressional approval of Permanent Normal Trade Relations.

### **U.S. interest continues in maritime security and counter-terror cooperation**

Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia signed a formal agreement to coordinate anti-piracy patrols along the Strait of Malacca on April 20. (For background, see "Military Relations Restored with Indonesia, while U.S. Passes on the First East Asia Summit," *Comparative Connections*, Vol. 7, No. 4.) Since these patrols began in July 2004, piracy incidents have declined from more than 30 per year to only two from January through April 2006. The three littoral states have hot-line arrangements among their navies and coast guards and bilateral hot pursuit agreements. While Thailand has been invited to join the coordinated patrols and in late 2005 appeared to agree to do so, Bangkok has not yet participated and has specifically declined to join the air patrol phase known as "Eyes in the Sky," claiming that the cost would be too high. At the May 18 ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Security Policy Conference, Japan, China, India, and the U.S. pledged capability development assistance to enhance maritime security in the Strait, though no specifics were mentioned.

Indonesia and Malaysia have been wary of the prospect of U.S. patrols. They are seen by Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta as an infringement of the littoral states' sovereign rights and responsibilities in the waterway, though Singapore would undoubtedly welcome U.S. monitoring if its neighbors were to relent. The commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, Adm. Gary Roughead, assured Malaysia during a mid-May visit that the U.S. has no desire or intention of establishing a permanent presence in the Malacca Strait and would not infringe on littoral states' sovereignty in any way. He praised Malaysia's "leadership" in "providing initiatives in and around the Malacca Strait that are so important to the flow of commerce." Roughead also announced a new naval exercise scheduled for the end of May coordinated by the U.S. Pacific Fleet called *SEACAT* (Southeast Asia Cooperative For Antiterrorism) to help prepare countries in the region for terrorist challenges at sea. Additionally, Washington promised \$1 million in aid to the Indonesian navy.

India has also become active in Southeast Asian waters, undertaking coordinated patrols with Indonesia along their maritime boundary as well as with Thailand. The Indian navy conducts annual exercises with Singapore and passing exercises with other Southeast Asian navies. A proposed Indo-U.S. Cooperation Framework tabled by Roughead in his May visit to India, if initiated, will provide for joint patrolling of energy trade routes and anti-piracy cooperation. India also offered to share its naval expertise at the early June Singapore Shangri-La conference.

Antiterrorism conferences cosponsored by the U.S. are taking place in Southeast Asia. A three-day meeting in late April in the Philippines involved security officials and experts from 40 countries. It focused on the problem of interdicting Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) terrorists – the Southeast Asian terrorist organization linked to al-Qaeda – as they move

among Southeast Asian states possibly infiltrating local militant groups. Another Philippine symposium on East Asian Security sponsored by the State Department and Pacific Command convened 18 countries to study the links between transnational crime and terrorism. At the Kuala Lumpur-based (and U.S. funded) Southeast Asian Regional Center for Counterterrorism a five-day conference was held in late May on cyberterrorism and protecting information technology from cyber attack. Although there are more than 1,000 jihadist websites in Southeast Asia, so far militant groups use these sites exclusively for communication and propaganda. There is no evidence that they have developed cyber-attack capabilities. Nevertheless, Malaysia announced in May that it would establish a center to counter such attacks in partnership with the U.S. software company Symantec.

### **U.S.-Indonesia military ties strengthened**

The United States has begun to implement its support for Indonesia's military (TNI) following the lifting of the U.S. embargo last November. International Military Education and Training (IMET) programs are being offered to mid-level officers of all services, and the Army's Special Forces (Kopassus) has rejoined the Pacific Area Special Operations Conference (PASOC), which met in early April in Hawaii. PASOC focuses on developing multilateral methods and procedures in combating terrorism. Human rights groups have criticized the international rehabilitation of Kopassus because none of its officers has been called to account for human rights violations in the former East Timor as well as allegations that Kopassus members helped train the notorious Laskar Jihad Islamic militia, which was involved in extensive killings in Ambon.

While official military-to-military ties were reconnecting between Indonesia and the United States, a less savory TNI-related activity surfaced. On April 9, U.S. authorities in Hawaii arrested seven individuals for attempting to purchase and illegally export to Indonesia 245 *Sidewinder* air-to-air missiles as well as a large number of sniper rifles and submachine guns. Many of those arrested were also completing licensed transactions for the export of radar equipment to the Indonesian air force. Concerns were raised in both countries about the TNI's involvement in illegal transactions. Representatives of a small company, PT Ataru Indonesia, which has supplied military equipment to TNI, went off the books for the weapons transactions, asking U.S.-based Orchard Logistics Services to keep the purchases confidential and not to seek export licenses for them. At that point, Orchard alerted Federal authorities who posed as Orchard representatives in Hawaii and arrested seven suspects, three of whom were subsequently released, including two Indonesian air force officers who were only involved with the legal radar acquisition. Two Indonesians, a Singaporean, and a Briton were ultimately charged with a variety of federal offenses including illegal arms purchases and money laundering. Curiously, these illegal transactions occurred six months after the U.S. had lifted restrictions on military sales to Indonesia. It seems that PT Ataru had two Singapore-based subsidiaries that were reportedly set up to help the TNI maneuver around the U.S. embargo. The weapons sales were probably meant for PT Ataru's inventory, though the Indonesian air force states it intends to purchase *Sidewinders* in 2007. The whole affair reflects a lack of transparency and accountability in TNI purchasing procedures.

Finally, Jemaah Islamiyah's acknowledged spiritual advisor, Abu Bakar Bashir, was released after 26 months in prison where he served time for a "sinister conspiracy" that preceded the 2002 Bali and 2003 Marriott bombings. Bashir was not tried, however, for complicity in the bombings per se. The U.S. Embassy was "deeply disappointed" in Bashir's release. Indonesian authorities insisted that one of the reasons they could not try the radical Islamist cleric on the more serious bombing charges was that the Bush administration refused to give Indonesian government investigators access to two senior al-Qaeda operatives in U.S. custody – Hambali and Omar al-Faruq. The latter told the CIA that Bashir had provided logistical and financial support for several terrorist attacks. Their depositions were not admissible in Indonesian courts, however.

Upon his release, Bashir disavowed violence in pursuing Islamist goals, though he still praised the fugitive JI bomber Noordin Top as a misguided "Islamic hero." Analysts of JI believe the organization has been significantly weakened through leadership arrests and factionalization and that the Malaysian national Noordin Top now leads a much smaller violent breakaway faction.

### **Spy plot muddies Philippine-U.S. relations, though ties remain strong**

The Philippines is Washington's primary recipient of security assistance in Southeast Asia, having received over \$300 million since 2000. The country has also been given funds to build roads, schools, and water systems in poor communities seen as breeding grounds for communist rebels and Islamic militants. U.S. forces are regularly involved in training and exercising with their Philippine counterparts, especially in terrorist-plagued Mindanao, and U.S. law enforcement and intelligence experts work with Philippine officials on counter-terrorism. These arrangements were further strengthened in late May as the two countries agreed on a new framework for "nontraditional threats," including terrorism, piracy, drug trafficking, disease outbreaks, and natural disasters. The new framework goes beyond the Mutual Defense Treaty that is designed to defend the Philippines from external threats. President Gloria Arroyo's government insists that it is not a treaty and, therefore, does not require Senate ratification, though some senators insist that the new agreement is a modification of the original defense agreement and should be so ratified. Nor will the new framework lead to additional U.S. troops in the Philippines.

Explaining the need for the new security arrangement, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said that the mutual security treaty deals mainly with external aggression and has become obsolete with respect to the new threats enumerated above. A Security Engagement Board (SEB) will serve as the mechanism to identify and deal with nontraditional security concerns and will recommend activities that can be jointly undertaken to deal with them. While both countries' armed forces may be involved, the new arrangement is designed to be an inter-agency whole government effort. The first SEB meeting was held in Hawaii on June 9-10. It appears to formalize joint efforts in counter-terrorism, natural disaster assistance, public health, and transnational crime that have been underway between Washington and Manila for some time.

One of the nontraditional threats cited by the SEB is transnational crime, of which espionage is an example. In the U.S.-Southeast Asia *Comparative Connections* articles from July-September and October-December 2005, the case of a Filipino-American spying on behalf of Philippine opposition politicians was discussed. Ermita stated that some sort of arrangement with the U.S. government is needed “on how to handle this exchange of information...” Ermita also noted that money laundering, graft, and corruption cases in the Philippines required close cooperation with the United States, because many of those under investigation had transferred assets to the U.S.

As for the espionage case, ousted Philippine President Joseph Estrada in a deposition denied that he had either solicited or received classified U.S. government documents. Leandro Aragencillo, a former U.S. marine and FBI intelligence analyst who at one time worked in the White House, pleaded guilty to espionage for illegally obtaining classified information on Philippine leaders from White House computers, passing the documents on to a co-conspirator who, in turn, allegedly sent them to Estrada and other opposition politicians in the Philippines. Although Estrada now denies receiving classified U.S. documents, he had earlier said there was nothing classified in U.S. documents he had seen.

In the Aragencillo case, U.S. prosecutors named Estrada, ex-police chief Panfilo Lacson, and former Philippine House of Representatives Speaker Arnuflor Fuentebella as “unindicted co-conspirators.” Philippine Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez in early May stated that rebellion charges could be filed in the Philippines against Estrada and the others named by U.S. prosecutors, though no such charges had yet been filed.

### **Arms sales to Thailand and an expanded *Cobra Gold***

Unlike the Philippines where U.S. forces train Philippine soldiers in counter-guerrilla warfare against the Abu Sayyaf movement in Mindanao, the Thai government has not asked for U.S. military assistance with respect to its southern Muslim insurgency. Nevertheless, Bangkok is buying small arms from the U.S., including 20,000 new *M16A4* rifles to replace older versions used by its forces in the three southern provinces experiencing anti-government violence. In April, the Thai army also contracted to buy the latest special operations version of the *Blackhawk* helicopter for maritime defense and disaster relief. In appreciation for Thailand’s earlier commitment of forces to the Iraq war (since repatriated), in late May, the United States invited Thai companies to bid on \$18 billion worth of U.S. government procurement contracts for Iraq, Afghanistan, and the local market with respect to the annual *Cobra Gold* exercises.

2006 is the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the U.S.-Thai *Cobra Gold* training exercise, which ran from May 15-26. *Cobra Gold* is the largest U.S. war game conducted in Asia and varies annually in its country participants and scenarios. This year’s exercise included armed forces from the U.S., Thailand, Singapore, and Indonesia. Nine other countries sent observers: Australia, China, France, Germany, Laos, Malaysia, South Korea, the United Arab Emirates, and Vietnam. *Cobra Gold 2006* emphasized peace enforcement and

peacekeeping. Indonesia's first-time participation occurred because of the exercise's emphasis on simulated UN-authorized humanitarian intervention. Jakarta sent 25 officers.

### **Trade relations mark improved U.S.-Vietnam ties**

U.S. relations with Vietnam this quarter included trade talks with House Speaker Dennis Hastert looking toward Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR) between the two countries and defense talks with Secretary Rumsfeld. Vietnam's vice chairman of the National Assembly's Foreign Affairs Committee acknowledged that his country must "keep a fine balance" in its relations with the United States and China, averring that Hanoi's interactions with both have "never been so good."

Chinese and U.S. investments in Vietnam last year were about equal at a little more than \$2 billion each. Two-way trade between the U.S. and Vietnam rose from less than \$1 billion in 2001 to nearly \$8 billion in 2005. In one of the significant new U.S. investments, Intel chose Ho Chi Minh City as the site of a \$600 million microchip plant scheduled to begin production in 2008.

With the successful conclusion of a U.S.-Vietnam trade pact, the way is open for Hanoi's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO). The Congress must still approve PNTR status for Vietnam, for which there seems to be bipartisan support. Nevertheless, there is some concern in Congress about Vietnam's continued poor human rights record. In April, the House of Representatives passed a resolution calling on Hanoi to release from custody democracy and religious activists. Vietnam declared the resolution unacceptable interference in its internal affairs. Additionally, in early May, the U.S. Commission for International Religious Freedom recommended that Secretary of State Rice keep Vietnam on Washington's list of "countries of particular concern" where it has been since 2004. While Washington has acknowledged positive changes in Hanoi's treatment of religion, its name has not yet been removed.

To facilitate its WTO application, Vietnam has passed legislation on foreign investment, corporate law, intellectual property rights, and tourism to bring its legal system in line with global rules. Vietnam has also agreed to Washington's insistence that it be designated a "non-market economy" for 12 years, permitting the United States to impose quotas if it believes Vietnam is dumping garments or other products. This designation is probably designed to assuage U.S. textile manufacturers.

### **U.S. censures Burma on human rights, moves to admit refugees**

After months of deliberations with respect to provisions of the Patriot Act, the Bush administration decided in early May to move toward admitting over 9,000 Burmese refugees from minority ethnic communities sheltering in northern Thailand. Because of their indirect support for armed rebels against the repressive military junta, the refugees were in technical violation of U.S. antiterrorism law that denies entry into the U.S. to anyone supporting terrorist or armed rebel groups. Secretary Rice signed a waiver for those Burmese refugees in the Thai camps, though that waiver does not apply to a smaller

number of refugees housed in Malaysia and Cambodia. Separate waivers would be required for them. Moreover, UN officials noted that admission to the United States would still be denied to Burmese refugees who had been members of armed rebel groups.

On May 18, the Bush administration renewed financial and other sanctions against Burma after the junta extended the state of emergency under which it has ruled since 1997. At the end of the month, Secretary Rice called once again “for the immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience, including Aung San Suu Kyi, Nobel Laureate and leader of Burma’s democracy movement.” The junta’s response was to extend Suu Kyi’s house arrest for another year because, according to the national police chief, she constituted a threat to the state. Diplomatic tensions between Washington and the Burmese regime intensified in June when the U.S. announced plans to introduce a resolution in the UN Security Council that would describe the situation in the country as “a threat to regional security.” While the U.S. proposal is supported by Britain, France, and several other Council members, opposing views were reportedly expressed by Japan, China, and Russia. In December 2005, the U.S. pushed the Security Council to hold a briefing on human rights problems in Burma; and in a second briefing in late May, UN envoy Ibrahim Gambari told the UNSC about his recent trip to Rangoon where the junta permitted him to meet with Aung San Suu Kyi. (This visit occurred before the junta extended her house arrest in late May for another year.)

## **Conclusion**

Over the past quarter, the U.S. engaged in a flurry of bilateral security and economic activities with Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Vietnam, as well as multinational security conferences and the annual *Cobra Gold* exercise. All of these attest to Washington’s sustained interest in Southeast Asian affairs. However, regional concerns persist that the Bush administration remains inordinately focused on radical Islamist terrorism, perceives Southeast Asia to be of tertiary concern with the exception of terrorism, and has not accepted the prime condition for joining the East Asia Summit by signing ASEAN’s Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC). Adherence to the TAC would not inhibit U.S. military deployments in the region and would provide a U.S. voice in what could become an important regional international deliberative body. The Bush administration should reconsider.

## **Chronology of U.S.-Southeast Asia Relations April-June 2006**

**April 4, 2006:** Indonesian Trade Minister Mari Pangestu arrives in Washington to discuss economic relations and announces the revival of the U.S.-Indonesian Trade and Investment Forum with Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick. Pangestu encourages U.S. investors to come to Indonesia.

**April 4, 2006:** Indonesia’s Special Forces (Kopassus) rejoins the U.S. Pacific Area Special Operations Conference after Washington lifted its military embargo.



**April 6, 2006:** Sixth Proliferation Security Initiative exercise takes place in Darwin, Australia simulating the air interception of WMD. Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, and the U.S. participated in the three-day event, and 26 other countries sent observers.

**April 8, 2006:** Thailand contracts to buy six special operations versions of the Sikorsky *Blackhawk* helicopter for maritime defense and disaster relief.

**April 14, 2006:** House of Representatives Speaker Dennis Hastert visiting Hanoi affirms multidimensional cooperation between the United States and Vietnam and support for concluding negotiations for Vietnam's entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO).

**April 16, 2006:** The United States freezes the funds of jailed Indonesian Jemaah Islamiyah leader Abu Bakir Bashir and three other members of the militant network and is seeking to have their names added to a UN list of terrorists linked to al-Qaeda. Bashir dismisses the action because he says he has no funds in the United States.

**April 16, 2006:** An Indonesian arrested in Hawaii for smuggling weapons from the United States is a supplier of spare parts to the Indonesian army.

**April 20, 2006:** Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia signed a formal agreement to coordinate anti-piracy patrols along the Strait of Malacca.

**April 21, 2006:** Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen rejects U.S. request to send troops to Iraq in noncombatant roles.

**April 23-30, 2006:** The Fourth Indonesia-U.S. Security Dialogue takes place in Washington, D.C. U.S. technical assistance for Malacca Strait patrols is discussed.

**April 24, 2006:** Malaysian International Trade Minister Rafidah Aziz states that any free trade agreement negotiated with the U.S. would not permit encroachment on Malaysia's socio-economic goals. FTA negotiations are scheduled to begin in July.

**April 25, 2006:** The annual U.S.-sponsored Symposium on East Asia Security opens in the Philippines with most Asia-Pacific nations represented. Emphasis is on the linkages between transnational terrorism and transnational crime.

**April 28, 2006:** State Department's *Country Report on Terrorism* states that there is no evidence of al-Qaeda involvement in Thailand's southern Muslim terrorist activities.

**May 4, 2006:** Bush administration moves to resettle in the U.S. some of the Burmese refugees in Thailand, though many will remain in refugee camps because of stipulations in the Patriot Act that exclude anyone supporting terrorist or armed rebel movements.

**May 4, 2006:** Vietnam Foreign Ministry spokesperson says Hanoi has repeatedly asked the U.S. to remove Vietnam from a State Department list of “countries of particular concern regarding religious freedom,” stating Vietnam’s continued inclusion “fails to accurately reflect the situation of religious freedom in the country.”

**May 5, 2006:** Indonesian President Yudhoyono offers to mediate between the U.S. and Iran regarding the latter’s nuclear program. The offer was made during Iranian President Ahmadinejad’s Jakarta visit.

**May 11, 2006:** Pacific Fleet Commander Adm. Gary Roughead states the U.S. has no desire for a permanent presence in Southeast Asia or to infringe on Southeast Asian states’ sovereignty in any way.

**May 14, 2006:** In Washington talks, Vietnam and the United States reach an agreement on the conditions for Hanoi’s accession to the WTO, which will occur later this year.

**May 15-26, 2006:** The 25<sup>th</sup> annual *Cobra Gold* military exercise takes place in Thailand with the U.S., Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, and Japan as participants.

**May 16, 2006:** U.S. Ambassador to Thailand Ralph Boyce warns that Thailand’s political stalemate need to be resolved soon, or foreign investment could be negatively affected. The Thai Supreme Court invalidated the April election, and a new vote has yet to be scheduled.

**May 18, 2006:** President Bush renews sanctions against Burma for failing to take steps toward the restoration of democracy.

**May 18, 2006:** Japan, China, India, and the U.S. pledge capability development assistance to the littoral states for maritime security enhancements in the Malacca Strait at ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Security Policy Conference.

**May 18, 2006:** Bush administration renews financial and other sanctions against Myanmar after the junta extended the state of emergency under which it has ruled since 1997.

**May 19, 2006:** Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice asks visiting Indonesian foreign affairs minister to convey thanks to President Yudhoyono for urging Iran to be a responsible member of the international community by insuring that its nuclear energy program is entirely peaceful and that Tehran would abide by its international obligations.

**May 20, 2006:** UN special envoy Ibrahim Gambari is allowed to meet Aung San Suu Kyi, raising hopes that she would soon be released from house arrest.

**May 22, 2006:** Adm. Roughead announces that a series of joint exercises are lined up in the Philippines that will include antiterrorism.

**May 22, 2006:** The U.S. naval hospital ship *Mercy* docks in Manila to begin a four-week medical mission primarily in the southern Philippines. The *Mercy* is beginning a five-month deployment to the Asia-Pacific.

**May 23, 2006:** State Department calls on Burma to release detained democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi when her house arrest expires this week. State also calls for reengagement by the ruling junta with all political actors.

**May 24, 2006:** U.S. and Malaysia inaugurate senior officials dialogue on economic and security issues. Assistant Secretary of State Chris Hill attends the meeting in Putrajaya.

**May 27, 2006:** Aung San Suu Kyi's house arrest extended another year by Myanmar ruling junta.

**May 28, 2006:** President Bush offers \$500,000 in emergency aid to Indonesia in the wake of the devastating earthquake that struck Yogyakarta. The amount rose to \$5 million May 30 along with a promise of 100 medical personnel.

**May 30, 2006:** U.S. government gives a \$500,000 reward to two Filipinos who helped capture an al-Qaeda-linked suspect implicated in a deadly ferry bombing. The reward came from the State Department's "Rewards for Justice" program.

**May 30, 2006:** The U.S. and Singapore navies launch the 12<sup>th</sup> annual *Cooperation Afloat and Readiness and Training (CARAT)* exercise with 11 ships, a submarine, and two aircraft. This year's exercise focuses on maritime conventional warfare.

**May 31, 2006:** The U.S. and Vietnam sign a bilateral market access agreement required for Vietnam's bid to join the WTO.

**May 31, 2006:** U.S. marine medical personnel from Okinawa establish a field hospital in the Indonesian town of Bantul devastated by the Yogyakarta earthquake.

**June 3, 2006:** At the Shangri-La Defense Ministers Conference, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld declares Iran to be "one of the leading terrorist nations in the world." That coincides with State Department efforts to create a multilateral set of incentives with European partners to entice Tehran to give up its uranium enrichment program.

**June 5, 2006:** Visiting Vietnam, Secretary Rumsfeld agrees to broaden defense cooperation, though no mention is made of U.S. navy port calls at Cam Ranh Bay.

**June 5, 2006:** U.S. Pacific Commander Adm. William Fallon visits U.S. forces engaged in civic action programs in Mindanao. A few days earlier the U.S. hospital ship *Mercy* provided free medical services to local villagers in the area.

**June 5, 2006:** State Department's annual *Report on Human Trafficking* rates Myanmar and Laos at its lowest level with respect to human trafficking. Cambodia, Indonesia, and Malaysia are also placed on a watch list of states that showed a significant number of victims; and the Philippines is removed from the list for improved law enforcement.

**June 6, 2006:** In Jakarta, Secretary Rumsfeld and Indonesian counterpart Juwono Sudarsono have a testy exchange on what the Indonesian official saw as overbearing U.S. antiterrorist pressures on many countries. Secretary Rumsfeld rejected the allegation.

**June 6, 2006:** The U.S. ambassador to Vietnam announces a \$34 million grant to assist the country's efforts to combat HIV/AIDS.

**June 9-10, 2006:** The first U.S.-Philippine Security Engagement Board is held in Hawaii.

**June 12-16, 2006:** Vietnamese parliamentarians visit the U.S. to lobby Congress in support of Permanent Normal Trade Relations.

**June 13, 2006:** Jemaah Islamiyah spiritual leader Abu Bakar Bashir is released from a Jakarta jail after serving 26 months for criminal conspiracy relating to the 2002 Bali and 2003 Marriott bombings.

**June 16, 2006:** ASEAN Secretary General Ong Keng Yong says the emerging East Asian community will not exclude the U.S. even as China seeks a larger role in Southeast Asia.

**June 18, 2006:** The U.S. hospital ship *Mercy* ends its Philippine stay and continues its five-month deployment to bring medical and humanitarian assistance to Southeast Asia.

**June 19, 2006:** U.S. UN Ambassador John Bolton questions the need for UN peacekeeping forces in Timor-Leste as recommended by Secretary General Kofi Annan. Bolton claimed the fight in Timor-Leste was "among politicians with rival security forces" and did not require a UN role. Australia currently leads a multinational intervention with support from Malaysia and New Zealand among others. Subsequently, the U.S. voted to extend the UN peacekeeping presence.