



U.S.-Southeast Asia Relations:
Better Military Relations and Human Rights Concerns

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Military-to-military ties with Indonesia were significantly enhanced this quarter as plans were made for joint training that included counterterrorism for the first time. Jakarta also supported UN Security Council sanctions against Iran's nuclear program despite negative domestic reactions for opposing a fellow Muslim country. Regarding the Philippines, a U.S. Congressional hearing condemned extra-judicial killings and the impunity with which some elements of Philippine security forces have been treating political opponents and journalists. U.S. economic aid to the southern Philippines was praised by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, currently in autonomy negotiations with Manila. U.S. Special Forces continue to train Philippine soldiers in the south to suppress the Abu Sayyaf terrorists with recent significant successes. Thailand rejected a U.S. offer to provide assistance to Bangkok's counterinsurgency efforts in the Thai south. U.S. officials regularly remind the Bangkok military caretaker government about the importance of restoring democracy by the end of the year. The two countries are also in a dispute over patent protection for pharmaceuticals needed for public health in Thailand. ASEAN leaders have urged the U.S. to strengthen its Southeast Asian ties and not hold them hostage to U.S. Burma policy. Vietnam President Triet's June visit to the U.S. led to new economic arrangements, but the visit was marred by Congressional complaints over human rights violations in Vietnam.

Indonesia: military warmth, political differences, and major terrorist captures

U.S. relations with Indonesia covered a wide range of events from military-to-military cooperation and praise for Indonesia's counterterrorism successes to political differences over human rights practices. At the annual June Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, Indonesian Defense Minister Juwono Sudarsono summed up Jakarta's view of U.S. armed forces by noting that the U.S. "remains the security provider" with "the largest number of ships, planes, and missiles" in the Asia Pacific. That presence keeps the region secure for international commerce, though Juwono also pointed out that China and Japan were developing capabilities "to codetermine the terms and conditions of western Pacific security ..." Earlier in mid-April, the Indonesian defense minister expressed hope that the U.S. will resume training for special forces for all three Indonesian services.

At this year's April Indonesia-U.S. Security Dialogue, U.S. delegates explained Washington's Iraq strategy and discussed global counterterrorism, while the Indonesians described their peacekeeping mission in southern Lebanon. U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense James Shinn emphasized that Indonesia remained an important partner in fighting terrorism. And, Brig. Gen. John Toolen, director for the Asia-Pacific at DoD, stated that Indonesia's experience in handling natural disasters provided good lessons for the U.S. Indeed, U.S.-Indonesian cooperation in responding to natural disasters is an important component of their military relationship. Brig. Gen Toolen also looked forward to future joint military activities to counter terrorism and promote maritime security. If implemented, these last two categories would constitute an expansion of Indonesian-U.S. military ties. Counterterrorism cooperation has been limited to police and intelligence assistance till now, and U.S. maritime security has been primarily technical support.

In late March, the Indonesian and U.S. Marine Corps signed an agreement on joint military training followed a month later by an Indonesian army (TNI) and U.S. Army in the Pacific (USARPAC) accord to engage in joint training at the brigade level with an emphasis on UN peacekeeping operations. The focus is to help Indonesia's next deployment to the UN Peace Operation in Lebanon. At the end of May, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia Christopher Hill met Indonesia's Vice President Jusuf Kalla and stated that Washington hopes to expand its training and joint military operations with the TNI. He also took the opportunity to deny allegations made by some in the Indonesian political opposition that the U.S. government had channeled funds to President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's 2004 election campaign.

Closer ties between the two countries may also be found in the foreign policy arena where Indonesia backed a UN Security Council resolution filed by the U.S. in late March, tightening sanctions over Iran for its nuclear development. As the world's largest Muslim country, Indonesian opposition politicians launched a stream of criticism at President Yudhoyono in April for opposing Iran, another Muslim country. He was accused of making Indonesia seem a pawn of the U.S. Indonesia's Foreign Minister Wirajuda replied that the government supports nuclear development for peaceful purposes only but objects to nuclear proliferation, implying that Jakarta does not believe Tehran's protestations that its nuclear development is exclusively peaceful. Perhaps in part to balance the Iran criticism, as host of the 116th Inter-Parliamentary Union conference in Bali that same month, Indonesia urged the U.S. to leave Iraq immediately, saying that the U.S. presence constituted a violation of Iraq's sovereignty. (Indonesia's position on Iraq puts it at odds with its neighbor Singapore, which has supported U.S. actions as essential for Middle East stability.)

Another political problem arose in June when U.S. Congresswoman Nita Lowey introduced legislation to cut some of the \$10 million military assistance appropriation moving through the U.S. legislature because of the TNI's failure to sell its business holdings as promised, as well as human rights violations related to those businesses. Additionally, she noted that no senior TNI officers responsible for the 1999 violence in East Timor have been prosecuted. While the proposed 25 percent cut in funds might make it through the House of Representatives, they are unlikely to be passed by the

Senate. Nevertheless, U.S. Congressional criticism of the TNI strengthened those in the Indonesian armed forces who are calling for more diversification in arms suppliers.

In the realm of maritime security, U.S. officials have praised the anti-piracy cooperation of the littoral states abutting the Malacca Strait (Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore). Piracy in Southeast Asian waters has significantly declined since 2004, and Lloyds Maritime Insurance has acknowledged the favorable change by lifting its “war risk” rating on commercial shipping. In April, U.S. Pacific Commander Adm. Timothy Keating stated that the U.S. shares maritime security information to boost regional security. Coordinated sea and air patrols in the Malacca Strait have also been supported by the U.S. provision of 10 radar systems being installed along the Indonesian island of Sumatra. The radars enhance Indonesia’s ability to monitor traffic in the waterway. Broadening the prospect of other maritime states’ assistance, on June 4, Indonesian Defense Minister Juwono called on Japan, South Korea, and China also to provide technical assistance for security in the Strait.

The U.S. additionally praised Indonesia’s significant counterterrorism achievements this quarter in arresting two top Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) militants. The capture of the group’s overall leader, Zarkasih, and the military commander, Abu Dujana, was described by International Crisis Group expert Sydney Jones as “a body blow” to JI. The arrests were the work of an elite counterterrorism unit of the national police, Detachment 88, established in 2003 with assistance from the U.S. and Australia. The U.S. State Department hailed Indonesia’s success and promised to continue U.S. assistance to bolster Jakarta’s counterterrorism capabilities. Authorities are still searching for Malaysian-born JI bomb specialist Noordin M. Top, who some analysts believe has started a splinter group that may be responsible for several bombings in Indonesia.

Philippines: human rights concerns and counterterrorism successes

As with Indonesia, Philippine-U.S. relations this quarter were characterized by counterterrorism successes but human rights concerns. The government-funded U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP) in late March testimony before a U.S. Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee provided a pessimistic assessment of Philippine President Gloria Arroyo’s administration. USIP predicted the Philippine president, seen as politically weak, would not be able to stop the extra-judicial killings that have been plaguing the country. USIP Philippine director Eugene Martin stated that ever since her controversial reelection in 2004, Arroyo has relied on military and provincial leaders to prevent her impeachment and in exchange has given them a green light to deal with the communist New People’s Army (NPA) however they choose. Extra-judicial violence against political opponents and journalists has been reminiscent of the martial law period under the late Ferdinand Marcos. Martin recommended that the Philippine desire to qualify for the Bush administration’s Millennium Challenge Grant be used as leverage to demand rigorous action against the killings. Following up in its April Human Rights Report, the State Department explicitly blamed “some elements” of the Philippine security forces for the killings, disappearances, arbitrary arrests, and illegal detentions.

In hopes of encouraging best practices by Philippine security forces, the U.S. sent 111 Philippine National Police (PNP) and other law enforcement personnel to the International Law Enforcement Academy in Bangkok for courses in human rights, ethics, rule of law, and anti-corruption. U.S. law enforcement specialists came to Manila to conduct seminars on similar topics. The U.S. government has also provided grants to assist Philippines NGOs on voter education and to finance election monitors.

A delegation from the U.S. House of Representatives visited the Philippines in mid-April and met with PNP leaders to press American concerns about the officially acknowledged killings of 116 leftwing militants and 26 journalists. (Unofficial figures for both categories are much higher.) In response, the PNP cited a new executive order from the Philippine president's office that creates a system of prosecutors who can initiate investigations and work with the PNP from the outset in tracking the perpetrators of these crimes. Despite the fact that the Philippines has received more military assistance since 2001 than any other Southeast Asian country, its human rights record remains a serious concern for the U.S.

On a more positive note, U.S. efforts to assist development programs in the southern Philippines elicited praise from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Manila has been negotiating with the MILF for several years on the establishment of an autonomous region in Mindanao where *sharia* law could be practiced. The U.S. has been funding a Growth With Equity project in Mindanao that was extended in April for another five years. The MILF has asked Washington to involve the MILF directly in the Growth With Equity project so that it helps the peace negotiations. The U.S. aid pledge is approximately \$145 million.

A contingent of some 200 U.S. special operations forces has been stationed in Mindanao for several years training Philippine forces in counterinsurgency and civil-military relations. In late April, a three month counterterrorism exercise began in two Central Mindanao provinces focusing on small unit tactics. These exercises also offer a chance for U.S. and Philippine forces to visit rural villages and provide medical and dental services as well as constructing wells for potable water and repairing schools and roads.

This year's *Cooperative Afloat and Readiness Training (CARAT)* exercise for the Philippine and U.S. navies was held for the first time in southwestern Mindanao where Philippine forces have been battling the al-Qaeda-linked Abu Sayyaf (AS). Beginning on May 31, the exercise focused on maritime terrorism with Philippine and American forces operating together in teams. The current exercise is also designed to improve the Philippine navy's capability in securing southern waterways. Coincidental with the *CARAT* exercise was an agreement signed by the Philippines and Australia to train Philippine forces in anti-terrorist tactics in the south. The Australia agreement includes the provision of 28 high-speed gunboats for the Philippine navy. This emphasis on southern waterways by both the U.S. and Australia is probably motivated by the movement of pirates and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) terrorists from Malaysia and Indonesia to the southern Philippines. Western and Philippine intelligence officials believe there are 30 to 40 Indonesian, Malaysian, and Singaporean Muslim militants hiding in the

Philippine south. Nevertheless, U.S. and Australian military aid adds only a limited capability to a weak Philippine armed force that has no fighter jets, a navy whose vessels date back to World War II, and an air force with propeller-driven planes and aging helicopters, most of which cannot operate at night.

U.S. forces in Mindanao have been assisting their Philippine counterparts in tracking AS militants. In April, the U.S. rewarded two Filipino informants \$85,000 for providing the information that led to the death of two AS leaders, Jumdan Jamalul and Bisang Sali, by Philippine soldiers. The rewards were provided by the State and Defense Department's "Rewards for Justice" program. (For background, see "Military Support and Political Concerns," *Comparative Connections*, Vol. 9, No. 1, April 2007.) In their hunt for AS personnel, the primary source of U.S. support has been Predator drones that have been instrumental in locating militants' camps and following their movements.

While the Philippines has had some significant successes in its anti-terrorist campaign, the effectiveness of the judicial system is another matter. U.S. officials complain that evidentiary and procedural obstacles have thwarted suspect detention and that anti-money laundering procedures remain weak. The Philippine Anti-Money Laundering Council cannot freeze assets for suspected terrorists without first obtaining a court order – a procedure that could take several months, giving suspects the opportunity to remove the funds in question.

Thailand and Laos: southern insurgencies, *Cobra Gold*, and IPR

The southern Thai Muslim insurgency has caught Washington's attention. On April 18, the U.S. Special Operations commander in the Pacific, Maj. Gen. David Fridovich, offered to help train Thai forces in counterinsurgency, emphasizing how to use a "softer touch" to win over local populations. (U.S. and Filipino troops have had some success isolating insurgents with "soft power" tactics in the southern Philippines.) Critics of the U.S. offer worry that it could have the opposite effect of involving foreign jihadis who, so far, have not been evident in the three Muslim-dominated southern Thai provinces. The Thai government immediately rejected the offer, saying that the southern unrest was an internal affair. More than 2,000 lives have been lost over the past three years to the insurgency. Though refusing U.S. training, Thailand's Army Commander Gen. Sonthi Boonyaratglin said he would appreciate access to U.S. intelligence, especially in tracking foreign financial contributions to the insurgents. Thai Army officials have also stated that captured insurgents believe that some of their number had been trained by Indonesians present in Thailand. None have been found, however.

Concerned about the future of democracy in Thailand since the September 2006 military coup, U.S. officials have been urging the ruling military to keep its promise to hold elections by the end of the year. Brig. Gen. Toolen pointed out that Thailand was a "key spoke" in the U.S. "hub and spokes" Asian security arrangements. The U.S. general in charge of Southeast Asian affairs at the Pentagon stated: "Only a fair and legitimate government can defeat the terrorism that threatens our way of life, and we must regain our close relationship..." Gen. Toolen was referring to the fact that after the Thai coup

U.S. law required Washington to freeze several military programs, including \$24 million in aid.

Nevertheless, two important programs were unaffected by the military aid disruption: one in counterterrorism cooperation that primarily involves Thai police and intelligence, the other is the annual multinational *Cobra Gold* that began on May 8 and ran through May 18. Over 3,000 Thai forces trained with 2,000 Americans. Japan sent 47 troops, 70 came from Singapore, and 27 from Indonesia. Personnel from the latter three countries only participated in computer simulations, not the field exercises. *Cobra Gold's* scale has diminished in recent years because of the demand for U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. In past years, some 20,000 personnel participated in the exercise. This year's focus was on UN-type peacekeeping operations. China, Japan, France, Germany, and the Philippines sent observers.

Also noteworthy is that the *Cope Tiger* air force exercise involving Thailand, Singapore, and the U.S. went forward in February and the *CARAT* Thai-U.S. naval exercise is being held this summer. These military-to-military activities suggest that the security dimension of Thai-U.S. relations dominates political differences. Even after the Thai military coup in September 2006, Thailand remains a "major non-NATO ally." The U.S. has also responded positively to a 2007 Chinese proposal for joint exercises with ASEAN. The U.S. Marine Corps commander in the Pacific Lt. Gen. John Goodman welcomed the Chinese overture, saying these help avoid miscalculations, adding he would like to see U.S. forces take part in a China-ASEAN exercise.

Pharmaceutical products became a problem in U.S.-Thai relations in May. Thailand announced it plans to import some generic versions of AIDS drugs and a popular heart disease medicine because Thai citizens cannot afford the prices posted by the U.S. patent holders. The U.S. Trade Representative's (USTR) office charged that Thailand's intellectual property rights (IPR) protection had deteriorated to such a degree that Washington demoted it to the same category of IPR violators as China, Russia, and India under the annual Priority Watch List of the USTR. Although there has been no immediate sanction against trade in Thai products, if Bangkok does not become more transparent and does not honor pharmaceutical protection, the U.S. could take action under the World Trade Organization rules. Interestingly, former U.S. President Bill Clinton has applauded Thailand's decision to obtain lower prices on life-saving generic drugs and on May 9 in Bangkok announced that his foundation had negotiated deep price reductions for generic versions of these products that will particularly benefit Thailand and Brazil.

On the broader issue of IPR protection in Thailand, in mid-May, Washington offered to provide FBI agents to train and support Thailand's law enforcement agencies in investigating illegal Thai manufacturers of fake products. The U.S. cites Malaysia and the Philippines as examples of effective IPR protection whose practices the FBI could assist Thailand to adopt. The U.S. Embassy has also offered to broker talks between the Thai government and U.S. pharmaceutical companies. Nevertheless, when the Thai public health minister visited Washington in late May to press his government's case for generic drugs, he received no support from the U.S. Commerce Department or the USTR, who

argued that large numbers of fake products in Thailand would jeopardize future foreign investment.

The IPR imbroglio was followed in late May by the signing of a Sino-Thai Joint Strategic Plan of Action in Beijing which would lead to closer security cooperation. Thai analysts noted the timing and said the pact could give Thailand more leverage in dealing with the U.S. Surachi Sirikai, a political scientist at Thammasat University, stated: "Apart from long-standing military cooperation, the U.S. does not seem interested in anything except its own economic interests. Therefore, the image of a closer partnership with a major power like China should help boost our morale in light of the dispute with the U.S. ... and the downgrading of Thailand's trading status to the Priority Watch List."

In June, a bizarre plot involving Hmong refugees in the U.S. and possible arms smuggling through Thailand to overthrow the Laotian government was disrupted. A six-month investigation by anti-terrorism authorities in the U.S. led to the arrest of 10 people, including the legendary anti-communist Hmong leader Vang Pao, a retired U.S. Army officer, and a former Wisconsin state senator. Attempting to purchase arms and explosives from an undercover U.S. government agent, the plan involved smuggling the arms through Thailand to blow up buildings and assassinate Laotian officials in the country's capital, Vientiane. For the exposure of the plot and arrest of its principals, the Laotian government praised the U.S., and the Foreign Ministry emphasized the good relations that prevail between their countries.

Vang Pao, 77, a former general in the Royal Lao Army, had been a leader of the upland Hmong who assisted the CIA in America's "secret war" against the Pathet Lao during the Second Indochina War. He was resettled in the U.S. after fleeing Laos to Thailand in 1975. Thailand stated it had a clear policy not to allow any party to use its territory against its neighbors. Thailand currently shelters just under 8,000 Hmong refugees and plans to repatriate many if other countries will not take them. Refugees in Thai camps are protesting that they will resist being forcibly returned to Laos where, they believe, they face discrimination and arrest. The U.S. State Department expressed concern about Thai plans for the Hmong, especially since Laos will not permit monitoring of the returnees. Amnesty International reported in March that several thousand ethnic Hmong remain in the mountainous Laotian jungles experiencing shortages of food and medicine. They are harshly treated if apprehended by the Laotian army.

ASEAN-U.S. ties and other Southeast Asian states

In early May at the ASEAN-U.S. Business Council meeting in Washington, Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong used the occasion of the 30th anniversary of ASEAN-U.S. relations to urge that the relationship be raised to a higher level. He praised the quick U.S. response to regional natural disasters and implored Washington not to hold its relations with ASEAN hostage to the single issue of Burma (or Myanmar as it is called in ASEAN). A few weeks later, on a Southeast Asia tour, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill once again called on Burma's government to free the country's political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi, Burma's opposition leader who has been under

house arrest for 11 of the past 17 years. President Bush announced that the U.S. would continue economic and political sanctions against Burma. In mid-May, Washington also expressed concern over a possible Russian deal with Burma to provide the junta with a nuclear research reactor. The State Department warned that Burma lacks a regulatory framework and safeguard provisions for nuclear power research and that the U.S. has “no idea” what Russia’s motivation was for the agreement.

Malaysia has trod a tightrope in its relations with the U.S. with strong commercial and defense ties alongside political differences over U.S. Middle East policy. Kuala Lumpur works to keep these domains independent of each other. In mid-April, Malaysia defense chief Gen. Abdul Aziz Zainal stated his country would strengthen defense ties with the U.S. despite criticism from Malaysian Muslim groups. Gen. Abdul Aziz praised the long cooperation between the two countries in training, joint exercises, and intelligence sharing and went on to say that Malaysia would welcome even more U.S. navy port calls. The Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Peter Pace visited Malaysia in June and confirmed the close military to military relations. He invited Malaysian military leaders to Washington to meet with the U.S. Joint Chiefs about Malaysian defense plans to establish a joint force headquarters. Gen. Pace also underlined Malaysia’s important role in international peacekeeping, citing the “10 or so peacekeeping operations Malaysia is involved in” along with its “world-class peacekeeping center.” Pace also noted that Washington would like to continue peacekeeping cooperation with Malaysia. Nevertheless, Malaysian Defense Minister Najib Razak on April 17 once again declined to join the U.S.-formulated Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), stating Kuala Lumpur felt uncomfortable with the legal implications of boarding and searching suspicious ships in international waters. Malaysia has sent observers to PSI exercises but has not participated.

In mid-June Malaysia’s human rights commission objected to the State Department’s demotion of Malaysia to the worst human trafficking category, “Tier Three.” Malaysia was cited for failure to improve its performance on punishing acts of trafficking, providing adequate shelters and social services to victims as well as protecting migrant workers from involuntary servitude. Malaysia admitted that more needs to be done, but its human rights commissioner stated the Tier Three designation was unfair. The commission has highlighted the concerns listed by the U.S. but has no enforcement powers. Prime Minister Abdullah noted that the Parliament passed an anti-trafficking bill with severe penalties, and the U.S. Embassy promised to strengthen cooperation on anti-human trafficking with Malaysian authorities.

In contrast to Indonesian and Malaysian criticisms of the U.S. Iraq occupation, Singapore’s prime minister praised U.S. efforts in the Middle East. In a speech at the April ASEAN-U.S. Business Council in Washington, Lee Hsien Loong declared that a U.S. retreat from Iraq that looks like a defeat will put Southeast Asia at risk, emboldening extremists and harming U.S. credibility. In a May meeting at the White House with President Bush, Singapore’s prime minister stated that ASEAN countries want the U.S. to maintain good relations with both China and Japan because Southeast Asian states do not want to “choose sides.”

Human rights concerns mar U.S.-Vietnam relations

The Vietnam-U.S. Bilateral Trade Agreement that became effective in December 2001 has so successfully promoted trade and investment that two-way trade reached almost \$10 billion in 2006, making the U.S. Vietnam's largest export market. More than 1,000 U.S. businesses are operating in Vietnam with \$2.3 billion in foreign investment. The U.S. side is also providing information on Agent Orange, engaged in land mine clearing, and assisting Vietnam in reforestation, environmental protection, and health care.

These favorable markers have been challenged, however, by Vietnam's crackdown on domestic dissent, which began not long after the SRV's WTO December 2006 that was admission backed by the U.S. The jailing of an outspoken Catholic priest in March 2007 led to the introduction of a resolution in the U.S. Congress condemning Hanoi's crackdown on political free speech. The resolution warned that continued arrests and detentions could result in Vietnam being put back on the State Department's list of Countries of Particular Concern. Congressman Chris Smith of New Jersey stated: "This is a case worthy of particular attention as the Vietnamese government audaciously resumed its past oppression of human rights after Congress agreed to Vietnam becoming an official member of the WTO in December."

On April 8, the State Department issued a statement saying that the U.S. was "deeply troubled" by the increase in "harassment, detention, and arrests of individuals peacefully exercising the legitimate right to peaceful speech." By the end of May, the White House entered the discussion when National Security Council spokesman Gordon Johndroe said Vietnam's detention of peaceful protestors and democracy advocates was "anachronistic and out of keeping with Vietnam's desire to prosper, modernize, and take a more prominent role in world affairs." Cognizant of these reprimands, Hanoi decided less than two weeks before President Nguyen Minh Triet's June 18-23 visit to the U.S. to release a prominent government critic who had been convicted of spying in 2003 and sentenced to serve seven years. Pro-democracy advocates who were sentenced this year, however, remain in prison.

President Triet stated that he would focus on trade and investment during his late June visit to the U.S. A strong motivation for both sides in cementing their relationship is to balance China's growing economic and political influence on its southern neighbor. Indeed, one of Triet's first stops was the New York Stock Exchange where he expressed the hope that the "stock markets of the two countries would set up strategic partnerships in the near future." Triet also met with Citigroup, noting that Vietnamese enterprises were going to launch "a series of bond issuances and shares abroad, so they are in need of assistance from major banking institutions such as Citigroup." Following this meeting, Citigroup opened a \$500 million credit line with three Vietnamese electricity, coal, and shipping corporations.

The Vietnamese president's encounter with Congress and his meeting with President Bush did not go as smoothly, however. While the U.S. president promised assistance on the impacts of Agent Orange from the Vietnam War era on Vietnamese health as well as support for Hanoi's HIV/AIDS efforts, he also raised human rights concerns in their discussions following pressure from members of Congress and activist groups. On the Hill, a bipartisan group of lawmakers led by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi condemned Hanoi's crackdown on dissidents, religious leaders, and pro-democracy activists. Nevertheless, President Triet's visit accomplished his economic goals: more private U.S. investment for Vietnam and the inking of a trade and investment framework agreement that constitutes a necessary step toward a full blown free trade agreement.

U.S. future in Southeast Asia

America's Southeast Asia profile reveals a robust military/security presence that is welcomed by all, especially with respect to sea-lane protection and assistance in counterterrorism law enforcement as well as military modernization. However, Washington's relations with ASEAN at this 30th anniversary of formal ties seem to be treading water. Unlike China and Japan which have significant aid programs, the U.S. lacks an overall strategy that coordinates its trade, aid, and investment with larger political goals. The recently signed U.S.-ASEAN Trade and Investment Framework Agreement could be the base for expanding economic relations while bypassing political controversies. Southeast Asia's interest in human security could also be a peg for enhanced U.S. relations, especially given the goodwill generated by U.S. tsunami aid and the U.S. Navy's humanitarian medical and civic action ship visits. Broadening the U.S. agenda could mitigate Southeast Asian views that Washington's attention to the region is exclusively focused on counterterrorism. Enhanced engagement is essential if the U.S. is to continue to be a major ASEAN partner.

Chronology of U.S.-Southeast Asia Relations April-June 2007

April 2, 2007: A Burmese student who taught English at the American Center in Rangoon is released after three months in jail. He had been arrested after accepting a U.S. Embassy offer to visit the U.S. and accused of being involved in a U.S.-sponsored political training program in Washington.

April 3, 2007: The U.S. amends its International Traffic in Arms regulations to permit the sale of non-lethal defense equipment to Vietnam on a case-by-case basis.

April 4, 2007: First U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer program to Cambodia officially begins with 28 U.S. volunteers who will be teaching English in villages in six provinces.

April 4, 2007: At a DoD hearing to determine "enemy combatant" status, Southeast Asian Jemaah Islamiyah leader, Hambali, held at Guantanamo, denies that he was an al-Qaeda member.

April 5, 2007: U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam Michael Marine and visiting U.S. Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez criticize the physical prevention of wives of Vietnamese dissidents from visiting the ambassador's Hanoi residence.

April 5-7, 2007: U.S. House of Representatives Armed Services Committee delegation visits Vietnam to discuss the search for MIA remains.

April 8-17, 2007: Malaysian International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz leads a delegation to the U.S. to urge U.S. firms to set up service-based operations in Malaysia, a country with "a well-developed infrastructure, relatively low cost of doing business, as well as an educated and multilingual workforce."

April 10, 2007: Indonesian Defense Minister Juwono Sudharsono asks that the United States consider providing training to Indonesia's Special Forces.

April 11, 2007: Philippine National Police Deputy Director Avelino Razon, Jr. assures a House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee delegation that his country has "strong resolve" to uphold human rights amid the spate of extra-judicial killings in the Philippines.

April 16, 2007: The U.S. government advises its citizens not to use Indonesian airlines after a series of deadly accidents this year.

April 16, 2007: Indonesian Defense Minister Juwono visits the Pentagon.

April 16, 2007: New PACOM Commander Adm. Timothy Keating in Malaysia praises vastly improved security in the Malacca Strait and says sharing maritime security information is an important U.S. goal.

April 16-19, 2007: Counterterrorist officials from throughout Asia gather in Honolulu to compare experiences in fighting Islamist terrorism. They agree that much terrorist funding comes from Saudi Arabia.

April 18, 2007: About 80 U.S. soldiers are in Indonesia for *Garuda Shield 2007*, a joint exercise with Indonesian forces that signifies the resumption of brigade-level, army-to-army exercises that had been terminated in 1999. Washington restored full military relations with Indonesia in 2005.

April 18, 2007: The Fifth Indonesia-U.S. Security Dialogue takes place in Jakarta with both sides committing to strengthen cooperation.

April 18, 2007: Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong is quoted in *The Wall Street Journal* urging the U.S. to refocus on Asia or risk losing influence to China.

April 18, 2007: U.S. Special Operations commander for the Pacific Maj. Gen. David Fridovich states that his troops, if asked, are prepared to train Thai forces in counterinsurgency. Fridovich cited rising violence in southern Thailand. Thai Army Commander Gen. Sonthi Boonyaratglin declines the offer.

April 25, 2007: Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill, meeting with Cambodian National Police Commissioner Gen. Hok Lundy, urges the Cambodian police to combat trafficking in persons, a serious problem in Cambodia.

April 25, 2007: Two Indonesian citizens are sentenced to more than a year in U.S. federal prison for conspiracy to smuggle sophisticated military devices to the Indonesian military. They will be deported upon completion of their sentences.

April 25, 2007: The Indonesian Army and U.S. Army in the Pacific agree to create joint training at brigade level for UN peace operations. Indonesian troops coming from this program would replace troops assigned to the UN Peace Operation in Lebanon.

April 26, 2007: Lt. Gen. Daniel Leaf, deputy commander of PACOM, visits Hanoi to discuss cooperation potential with Vietnamese military officials.

April 27, 2007: Some 120 Philippine and 50 U.S. soldiers begin a three-month anti-terrorism exercise in Mindanao.

April 27, 2007: U.S.-based East Timor human rights organization condemns the participation of Indonesian Maj. Gen. Noer Muis in a joint “command post” exercise with the U.S. military. Muis has been indicted for crimes against humanity in East Timor.

April 30, 2007: U.S. rewards two Filipino informants \$85,000 for providing information leading to the deaths of two leaders of the Abu Sayyaf terrorist group.

April 30, 2007: In its annual report, the office of the U.S. Trade Representative expresses concern over Thailand’s enforcement of intellectual property rights with a particular emphasis on generic drugs.

May 1, 2007: State Department’s annual terrorism report says Cambodia is vulnerable to a terrorist presence because of weak law enforcement and corruption.

May 2, 2007: The United States announces it will donate 11 Vietnam War-era *UH-11* “Huey” helicopters to the Philippine military to help fight communist and Muslim rebels, according to the chief of the Philippine air force.

May 2-8, 2007: Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong’s U.S. visit includes Washington, D.C. and San Francisco.

May 3, 2007: Speaking at the 116th Inter-Parliamentary Union meeting in Bali, Malaysia calls upon the U.S. to leave Iraq and stop being the “world’s policeman.”

May 8-18, 2007: Annual Thai-U.S. *Cobra Gold* exercises begin in Pattaya. Of a total of almost 5,000 personnel, 1,900 are from the U.S. with smaller contingents from Singapore, Japan, and Indonesia. *Cobra Gold* is the largest U.S.-led multilateral exercise in Asia.

May 9, 2007: Bangkok announces that former U.S. President Bill Clinton's foundation had negotiated deep price reductions for generic versions of these products that will particularly benefit Thailand and Brazil.

May 16, 2007: The State Department expresses concern over the prospect of a Russian deal to provide a nuclear research reactor for Burma which has "neither the regulatory nor the legal framework or safeguard provisions" to handle a nuclear program.

May 22, 2007: U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill on a Southeast Asia visit urges Burma to free Nobel laureate and opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi. However, the Burmese junta extended her house arrest for another year.

May 23, 2007: Assistant Secretary Hill meets Vietnam President Nguyen Minh Triet.

May 29, 2007: The White House expresses concern over the arrest of political dissidents in Vietnam, saying the detentions were out of character for the country's modernization.

May 30, 2007: At an Indonesian press conference, Assistant Secretary Hill states that the U.S. seeks to expand training and joint operations with Indonesian armed forces. He denied allegations in Indonesia that the U.S. contributed funds to President Yudhoyono's 2004 election.

May 31, 2007: U.S.-Philippine naval *CARAT* exercise begins in the Muslim militant region of Basilan. Some 1400 U.S. forces are participating with a focus on anti-terrorism, counter-smuggling, and humanitarian activities.

May 31, 2007: A U.S. maritime training ship, *Golden Bear*, docks in central Vietnam to distribute medical supplies as prelude to a training agreement between the California Maritime Academy and the Vietnam Maritime University.

May 31, 2007: Visiting Washington, top U.S. diplomat in Burma Shari Villarosa states that the new constitution being drafted in that country is a sham meant to solidify the military's power once a supposedly civilian government takes over.

June 1-3, 2007: U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates, Director of National Intelligence Mike McConnell, PACOM head Adm. Timothy Keating, and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Peter Pace attend the annual Shangri-La Dialogue of Asian-Pacific defense and foreign affairs officials in Singapore.

June 2, 2007: Defense Secretary Gates meets Singapore PM Lee to discuss bilateral defense cooperation and regional security. Gates expressed appreciation for Singapore's reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan.

June 4, 2007: Gen. Peter Pace visits Kuala Lumpur to discuss cooperation between the two countries' militaries. He also addresses students at the Malaysia Armed Forces Staff College.

June 5, 2007: Laos commends the U.S. for arresting Hmong leader Vang Pao and eight others for plotting to overthrow the Lao government.

June 7, 2007: Through its Rewards for Justice Program, the U.S. pays out over \$10 million to four former Abu Sayyaf terrorist group members who provided information that led to the death of two top Abu Sayyaf leaders in Sulu.

June 9, 2007: Vietnam release Nguyen Vu Binh, a prominent government critic, before the trip of President Nguyen Minh Triet to the U.S.

June 11, 2007: Indonesia and the Hawaii National Guard announce an agreement to collaborate on non-lethal equipment maintenance and disaster relief operations.

June 12, 2007: State Department releases its *2006 Human Trafficking Report* which blacklists Malaysia (with a Tier Three designation) for the first time for failing to prevent thousands of young women and children from falling victim. The Philippines is also listed as not fully complying with minimum protection standards.

June 13 and June 16, 2007: The two top leaders of the Southeast Asia al-Qaeda-linked Jemaah Islamiyah are apprehended by the elite U.S.-trained Detachment 88 of the Indonesian National Police, significantly weakening the terrorist group's leadership.

June 18-23, 2007: Vietnam's President Nguyen Minh Triet visits the U.S., emphasizing enhanced economic relations but encounters human rights concerns in Congress.

June 19-21, 2007: A U.S. Navy delegation led by Adm. Mike Mullen, Chief of Naval Operations, visits Vietnam for talks with the Vietnam Navy High Command.

June 26-28, 2007: Chief of the U.S. Pacific Command Adm. Timothy Keating visits the Philippines for high-level military and political discussions.