

# TAKING GUNS TO A KNIFE FIGHT: EFFECTIVE MILITARY SUPPORT TO COIN

BY

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**TAKING GUNS TO A KNIFE FIGHT: EFFECTIVE MILITARY  
SUPPORT TO COIN**

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*Disclaimer*

*The views expressed in the academic research paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the US Government, the Department of Defense, or any of its agencies.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

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The qualities and structures of a state's internal security forces have a significant impact on reducing the risks and overall casualties from insurgent violence. To test this argument, I introduce a new micro-conflict dataset on counterinsurgency operations in the Philippines between 2001 and 2008 and measure the relationship between conflict deaths and the capacities of small military units tasked with suppressing rebel threats at local levels. My empirical tests isolate qualities of security forces not directly tied to aggregate state resources. I find that small units possessing superior leadership, training, and access to local information are more likely to conduct effective and discriminate counterinsurgency. Deploying locally recruited soldiers with specially trained elite forces is particularly effective at achieving this potent combination of capabilities. These findings demonstrate that variation in the qualities of the military forces tasked with combating insurgent threats affect important conflict outcomes. Significantly, they indicate this variation is not fully determined by factors such as state wealth and level of development and that there is thus a major role for professional training of militaries in reducing the damage from, and possible prospects for, protracted insurgencies and civil wars.

## TAKING GUNS TO A KNIFE FIGHT: EFFECTIVE MILITARY SUPPORT TO COIN

“The best weapon for killing is a knife, but I’m afraid we can’t do it that way. The next best is a rifle. The worst is an airplane and after that the worst is artillery. You have to know who you are killing.”

Colonel John Paul Vann Vietnam 1962

Combating insurgency and other internal threats is multifaceted politico-military challenge requiring the dynamic integration and synchronization of multiple assets and resources available to the state. History and contemporary experience underscore the maxim that there is no purely military solution available for addressing such threats.<sup>1</sup> However, experience also indicates no state can succeed in combating active rebels using defensive measures alone.<sup>2</sup> A state’s real and perceived ability to protect its citizens and discriminately interdict belligerents taking up arms against it is a necessary albeit not sufficient component of any successful campaign to quell insurgent threats and one that its security forces are relied on almost exclusively to perform.

Traditional realist theories posit that a state’s capacity to raise and employ military forces effective in carrying out conventional operations against external threats is well predicted by aggregate wealth and resources. Selection effects within the anarchic international system will theoretically drive states to field the best military forces possible given their available resources in order to survive and prevail relative to their peers.<sup>3</sup> Scholars have identified a variety of factors not directly tied to state wealth and material advantages, however, that may help explain military effectiveness in the context of inter-state conflicts. Highlights of these factors include culture (Posen 93; Pollack 2002); patterns of civil military relations (Biddle & Zirkel 96), polity (Reiter & Stam 98), and force employment (Biddle 2006).<sup>4</sup>

Military effectiveness assessed in the context of counterinsurgency, however, is more difficult to assess and relies on far less developed theories to do so. Strict realist explanations for a state's military power focus on material advantages and do not readily translate into its expected capacity to address the complex nature of threats posed by insurgency where the enemy operates, recruits, and competes with the state from within its own population.<sup>5</sup> There are no selection effects at play in the domestic context that encourages states to raise and employ forces optimally configured to prevail against insurgents. The factors identified as impacting outcomes in conventional interstate conflict manifest themselves differently under the markedly different challenges states face in addressing insurgency.

What does explain a state's military effectiveness in the context of insurgent conflict?<sup>6</sup> Are generalized explanations possible given the variation in the sources and nature of the threats rebels pose to governments across cases of insurgency and within cases over time? Empirically supported answers to these elusive questions are limited by the dearth of publicly available information on the characteristics and readiness of states' internal security forces, the rebels they confront, as well as the details of the individual operations they conduct.<sup>7</sup>

This study strives to address these enduring questions by comparing individual incident level performance of qualitatively distinct internal security forces employed against various types and intensities of insurgent threats. I begin by highlighting the critical challenges states face when deploying forces to combat internal threats of insurgency and rebellion. Next I introduce a theory of the characteristics of state internal security forces I believe best explains their potential and capacity to address the

challenges of combating insurgent threats. I test this theory with a new micro-dataset compiled from detailed descriptions of over twenty-one thousand individual conflict related incidents reported during counterinsurgency operations in the Philippines from 2001-2008. The results of this analysis indicate that fielding internal security forces with an efficient combination of superior small unit leadership, training, doctrine and access to local information is key to effectively and discriminately interdicting threats posed by insurgents and assisting the government in gaining and maintaining control of its territory.

#### Imperatives of Effective Military Support to Counterinsurgency

There are stark contrasts between employing military force effectively against foreign based threats and those posed by internal enemies of the state. Conventional military campaigns directed at external opponents focus on attacking their enemy's center of gravity<sup>8</sup> which often leads to the occupation of a major city, seizing or gaining control of key terrain and/or the destruction of the enemy's army in the field. Conventional militaries achieve these ends by generating superior "relative combat power" at decisive times and places in order to destroy, disrupt and dislocate the enemies they confront. Under these conditions, relative material advantages of states are more readily manifested in the quality and effectiveness of their militaries.

The centers of gravity in the unconventional environment of insurgency and civil war, however, are rarely, if ever, defined in the comparatively discrete, combatant focused, and measurable terms applicable to interstate conflict. Under these complex conditions, a state's internal security forces, as well as any foreign forces supporting the government, must work seamlessly with law enforcement and other agencies of the state

to both reduce incentives and raise the costs for supporting and participating in the insurgency. Security forces are often the vanguard of the state's efforts to prevail in states' zero sum competition with insurgents for control and legitimacy. Achieving these complex and difficult ends requires states to field forces capable of employing a dynamic mix of security, service provision, and information oriented activities tailored to unique local conditions where the optimal combination and degree of these efforts will vary significantly over space and time.

The requirements placed on the forces of the state tasked with executing this optimal mix of counterinsurgency activities are extraordinary and challenge the capacity of even the most advanced military and security forces. In this dynamic threat environment, it is difficult to leverage the material advantages enjoyed by most government forces relative to their rebel opponents. A premium is placed on the capacity of states to employ forces able to attract and sustain popular support as well as to generate the coercive capability needed to identify and discriminately separate guerrillas from the population. Achieving these ends hinges on the degree to which these forces can assess and respond to the local threat environment they are deployed.

Successful counterinsurgency requires a "whole of government" approach with multiple institutions and agencies of the state playing critical roles in the effort. Ideally, military forces are tasked with complementing a coordinated interagency approach to the challenges of defeating insurgents and not assigned the lead role in all aspects of these efforts by default. Internal security forces must maintain several core capacities to effectively support their government's dynamic, complex, and population focused effort



to triumph over insurgents threatening the state. These include the capability to accomplish the following key COIN imperatives:

**1. Maintain and employ forces capable of striking targets of opportunity decisively with minimal collateral damage.** When government counterinsurgency efforts are successful in separating rebels from the population, a fleeting opportunity exists to bring the superior resources of the state to bear on these targets. The COIN force must seize such opportunities decisively. However, applying firepower with the precision needed to avoid non-combatant casualties is especially challenging for the COIN force and even a few failures to enforce this discrimination can have severely debilitating effects on the legitimacy of government COIN efforts. Rebels understand this and will strive to bait the government into committing indiscriminate operations that generate civilian casualties. A military unit capable of attacking fortified enemy positions may be less adept at identifying and selectively engaging an enemy that lives among and blends in with the local population and avoids direct confrontation with government forces.<sup>9</sup>

**2. Gain access to local information without becoming co-opted or embroiled in local fights.** COIN forces must develop the rapport and relationships with the local populace needed to illicit accurate information about the identity, disposition and intentions of the rebels. The COIN troops most capable of this are those recruited from among these same groups of potential informants and denouncers. However, these militia are extremely vulnerable to the temptation to redress various prejudices, animosities, feuds and rivalries they possessed prior to enlisting and being issued a firearm. Insuring

locally recruited forces fight the government's fight and do not abuse their position to settle personal scores is a challenge requiring disciplined leadership and supervision.

**3. Conduct operations that credibly signal government control and ultimate victory.** COIN operations must demonstrate government capacity and commitment to enforcing order and the legitimate authority of the government. Government COIN forces must gain and maintain the initiative in order to coerce as well as attract the cooperation of those on the margins of support of the rebel cause. Tactical ineptitude, ineffective and/or indiscriminate actions on the part of the government COIN force reveals weaknesses and vulnerabilities that suggest eventual defeat. This emboldens rebel activities, increases its recruitment ability, and discourages cooperation of those on the margins of support for the government. The local population will not back the government if they suspect it is on the losing side- independent of whether they support the rebel cause. Importantly, gains made by outside forces involved in the counterinsurgency campaign are ephemeral at best if they do not bolster the perceived legitimacy and sustained commitment of the government they are supporting.

**4. Hold areas cleared by government forces without placing the forces assigned these tasks at unacceptable risk of annihilation by the rebels.** The insurgent influence and bases of support are often far from areas of consolidated government control. Denying rebels sanctuary, freedom of movement, and the active and passive support of the populace in these remote areas requires persistent government presence. A broad blanket of security in recently cleared and other at risk areas is needed and ideally provided by government forces familiar with their locale and the people that inhabit it and can identify and respond to emerging threats rapidly and discriminately. The

advantages of broadly dispersing COIN forces must be balanced against over extending resources, force protection vulnerabilities and a reduced ability to mass on rebel targets elsewhere in the country. The discipline and commitment needed to carry out the arduous tasks associated with effective counterinsurgency is difficult to enforce among these small units with little supervision and oversight from higher headquarters.

### ***Characteristics of Forces Best Able to Address the Imperatives of Effective COIN***

The ability to address the select counterinsurgency imperatives identified here is not readily “purchased” by states confronting such internal threats. Raising and employing well led forces optimally trained and configured for combating insurgents requires a disciplined focus on empowering the small units and individuals that carry out the government’s interests and commanders’ intent at local levels. Pervasive institutional norms ingrained in the culture of many militaries around the world value hierarchical control, application of superior firepower, and large scale operations designed to kill, capture and clear enemy forces in the field. Effective counterinsurgents must replace these norms with an emphasis on developing the human capital within their ranks required to effectively protect the local population, exercise responsive and discriminate use of force, and support the broad range of activities aimed at raising the costs and reducing the incentives for joining and supporting the insurgency. Several critical qualities of effective COIN forces include:

**Small Unit Leadership.** Officers and non-commissioned officers empowered to make decisions and exploit opportunities at the small unit level are critical to the success of units fighting insurgents. Leaders at the company level and below provide the bulk of

the individual soldier level training and supervision. Small squads and teams -a half dozen soldiers- and smaller elements tasked with enforcing order and maintaining control in remote areas are often the only representatives of government the local population has contact with. It is at this level that the hearts and minds are won- or lost- and the verdict on support for the government is de facto determined. Leadership at this level plays a significant role in the COIN force's capacity to protect the population from rebel threats, exert control, and signal eventual triumph.

**Relevant Training and Doctrine.** A small unit cannot conduct an operation they are not trained to do. A seemingly simple security patrol requires a high degree of training and expertise to conduct effectively. Tough, realistic training is the hallmark of effective military units and a significant predictor of success in all operational activities. Formal military training and professional development for soldiers and officers provides the base of expertise needed to perform under the stress and uncertainty of COIN operations. From this baseline, deployed units must tailor a training regimen that supports the particular missions and responsibilities of the areas they are operating in. Quality training can be expensive to conduct, however, and can also detract from the immediate mission requirements placed on units deployed against real insurgent threats.<sup>10</sup>

Training levels vary across and within military organizations for a number of reasons. In countries relying heavily on conscription, for example, training is challenged by the turnover of personnel and the shortage of career soldiers providing continuity of expertise. Within the same military, some units are provided greater resources for training or get more out of the budgets provided them. Organizational norms within certain military units affect training levels as do the priorities individual

commanders place on the planning and execution of tough mission focused training plans. The type of training provided, including the operational and strategic level professional development of officers, can affect the performance of soldiers deployed against insurgent threats.

Militaries that fail to prioritize training and to incorporate doctrine reflecting the real nature of the threats they face will not be able to efficiently defeat them.

**Decentralized Command and Control Structures.** Combating insurgents demands agile forces that are able to anticipate, create and exploit opportunities at local levels while insuring their actions are coordinated by and support the broad objectives of the State. The ideal force can flexibly respond to emerging local opportunities at small unit levels all the while keeping its actions consistent with the overall intent of the government's broader counterinsurgency campaign.

Small units led by a professionally competent cadre and well trained in the array of operations and tactics needed to address insurgent threats are ineffectual if they fail to initiate operations or tailor their operations to local conditions due to restrictions placed on their freedom of action by a micro-managing senior chain of command or by self-imposed unwillingness to act on fleeting opportunities without clearance from superiors. Acting on such opportunities in dynamic threat environments requires agility and decisiveness at tactical levels. The hierarchical nature of conventionally trained and employed military organizations can be detrimental to these ends and encourage dysfunction at the small unit level. Organizational norms that inhibit subordinate freedom of action exacerbate this effect. An effective counterinsurgency force must be able to

enforce centralized intent and monitoring without inhibiting decentralized execution and responsiveness to unique local conditions.

**Access to Local Information.** Sound leadership, high levels of training and decentralized control are of little value to military units combating insurgency if they do not have the timely and credible information about the threat needed to gauge and initiate effective responses. Units can gain access to the locals' knowledge and human intelligence sources by recruiting militia and auxiliaries from the area of operations, integrating effective intelligence assets into planning and operations, and fostering the conditions needed to convince the local populace that it is safer to cooperate with the government than not. It is far easier to lose access to local information than to gain it. A reputation for acting indiscriminately – intentionally or unintentionally- is a sure way to shut down valuable communications channels and needed popular support. Discrimination is best exercised by units that know who the rebels are, where they are, and better yet, where they will be at a certain time and place in the future. It takes good intelligence and information from local sources to gain this knowledge and navigate the rough physical and human terrain that characterizes counterinsurgency's operational environment.

Close integration of local information enhances a unit's ability to execute responsive and discriminate COIN operations. This credibly signals government capacity and control which helps attract greater support from individuals on the margins of support for the government and deters those inclined to support the rebel cause. In a contested area, both government and rebels compete for access to local information. The

side that edges its opponent in this struggle can build momentum and reach the all important tipping point where it is able to persuade and coerce popular support.

### A Theory of Effective Military Support to COIN

Insurgent motives and grievances are numerous – socio-economic, ideological, identity based, criminal, revenge, and many others. The combination of these factors inspiring insurgent activities can vary at the most local level and shift over space and time. Given this, effective counterinsurgency strategies, operations and even tactics must reflect these local conditions and adapt quickly to changes in this environment generated by a learning enemy aggressively competing for popular support.

Civilian leaders or senior military commanders that attempt to centrally direct the security operations of a state's counterinsurgency campaign and apply a uniform approach to responding to the diverse conditions and threats that characterize insurgencies are doomed to fail. Instead, effective military support to broader state counterinsurgency efforts is best provided by raising and deploying competent forces able to rapidly assess these local conditions, formulate and execute an effective and discriminate mix of internal security operations tailored to the locale, and proactively adjust this mix and tempo as the nature of the threat environment evolves over time.

The internal security forces most likely to prevail under these conditions are the well trained, well led, and disciplined small units that understand the unique character of the insurgency in the locale they are deployed and have the capacity, motivation and autonomy to exploit these conditions. Succinctly, providing effective military support to counterinsurgency requires training and deploying small units that possess a high state of

readiness defined in terms of training, discipline and leadership, along with access to critical information about the threat from the population in the locality they are operating.

Figure 1 describes the potential effectiveness of state COIN forces varying along these dimensions of readiness and local information:

**Figure 1**

		<b>COIN Force Readiness</b>	
		Low	High
<b>Local Information</b>	High	<b>II</b>  Lost Opportunities/ “Family Feuds & Vendettas”	<b>I</b>  Potential for Effective Military Support to Counterinsurgency <sup>11</sup>
	Low	<b>III</b>  Indiscriminate COIN/ “Behind the Wire”	<b>IV</b>  Inefficient COIN/ “Shooting in the Dark”

I: High COIN Force Readiness with Access to Local Information

Security forces that possess high quality leadership, training, and significant autonomy at the small unit level are more likely to take advantage of emerging opportunities and proactively conduct operations displaying high levels of initiative. When a small unit that maintains a high state of readiness is complemented with access to in depth knowledge of the community they operate in, government forces have the greatest opportunity to conduct effective counterinsurgency. Such units are able to interdict threats discriminately and initiate operations proactively especially when their



access to local information provides them with the predictive intelligence that only a developed human intelligence network can provide.<sup>12</sup>

## II: High Local Information/Low COIN Force Readiness

In cases where security forces have access to local information yet are unable – or unwilling- to act on it, they miss opportunities to contribute to effective government counterinsurgency. For example, locally recruited soldiers with knowledge of the physical and human terrain they are deployed in will not be able to leverage this critical information if their leadership is unprepared or uninterested in initiating counterinsurgency operations that incorporate it. At best such forces can provide information and intelligence to other operating units that may solicit it from them although this increases the “sensor to shooter gap” considerably and the increased response time limits the chances of this information translating into more successful operations. A worse outcome occurs when local forces possessing information regarding the threats in an area are targeted more aggressively by rebels because of it.<sup>13</sup> An even worse outcome occurs in cases where poorly led and supervised security forces abuse their position and access to government issued firearms to engage in personal feuds and vendettas with expected violent and criminal results.

## III: Low COIN Force Readiness/Low Local Knowledge

Security forces with poor or ineffective leadership and training, along with limited access to knowledge of the threats and opportunities present in the communities they are employed in, contribute little to government sponsored internal security efforts. These forces will at best spend their time “behind the wire” in their bases or compounds adding little to no value to the government’s counterinsurgency campaign. At worst, their

perceived apathy sends negative signals to the local populace that the government is either unable or unwilling to make efforts to understand their local level concerns or to take actions to enforce order within their communities. These units offer easy targets for rebel initiated attacks and ambushes and the resulting government casualties contribute further damage to the reputation of the government in the eyes of the local populace as well as eroding the morale of the government forces suffering this attrition.

#### IV: High COIN Force Readiness with Limited Local Knowledge

When small units with quality leadership and training initiate operations without a clear picture of the threat environment they are working in, or with imperfect information regarding their targets, they are much less likely to succeed. In conventional operations against known enemies, crack troops can literally drop onto an enemy strong hold and shoot anyone that wears a different uniform, poses a visible threat, or carries a weapon and be reasonably assured they are engaging a combatant.<sup>14</sup> The fact that nobody in the aggressing unit can speak the language, appreciate the customs, or have contacts with individuals native to the area is not likely to detract from the demands of missions with narrowly defined objectives and of limited scope and duration. The application of lethal force against threats operating among the populace in protracted insurgent conflict is much more challenging and the value of local information and rapport with the community is of paramount importance. Operationally ready internal security forces operating with limited information are in the best case merely ineffective and prone to wasting scarce resources. More dangerous outcomes under such conditions include increased risks of collateral damage and non-combatant deaths that significantly

undermine the credibility and legitimacy of the government sponsored counterinsurgency campaign.

#### Assessing the Impact of COIN Force Readiness and Access to Local Information

An important component of a state's ability to address insurgent and other internal threats is the demonstrated capacity of its internal security forces to interdict and deter insurgent threats at local levels. We see considerable variation in these capabilities across states at similar levels of development and within states over time. Military units operating under similar resource constraints and threat conditions can have vastly different incident level experiences. Differences in the qualities and structures of the internal security forces as well as how they are employed at local levels, are significant predictors of important measurable conflict outcomes. Numerous studies of military effectiveness link the unit level qualities described above- leadership, training, decentralized control and other traits- to important battle outcomes in interstate conflict.<sup>15</sup> Absent in the publicly available literature to date, however, are systematic tests of how small units deployed to combat insurgent threats fare against rebels at the incident level and what explains these outcomes. The following tests provide this fine grained incident level analysis using micro-conflict data compiled from recent counterinsurgency experiences in the Philippines.

#### Philippines Insurgency- A Case for Generalized Study of Insurgency and COIN

The Philippines is home to some of the most protracted insurgencies in the world. Today, three distinct insurgencies are active in the country. In its southern provinces, members of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) continue the Bangsa Moro<sup>16</sup>

struggle for independence from what they perceive as the unjust Christian government in Manila. The Communist Peoples Party and its armed wing the New Peoples Army have fought a classic Maoist revolutionary war since 1968 and have influenced villages across the country. The notorious Abu Sayyef Group (ASG) known to have linkages with international terrorist groups, including Al Qaeda, has been active in kidnap for ransom and other illegal and terrorist activities since the mid 1990's. Multiple criminal groups operate in the Philippines that seek to legitimize their kidnap for ransom, extortion, piracy, and other illegal activities by claiming membership or an association with one of these active insurgent groups.

#### Government Troops Combating Multiple Insurgent Threats in the Philippines

The Armed Forces of the Philippines consists of approximately 126,000 soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines have the lead mission for providing internal security and combating the multiple insurgent threats active in the Philippines<sup>17</sup>. These forces vary in terms of leadership, training, and employment. I divide these forces into three broad qualitative categories Elite, Regular, and Indigenous for incident level comparisons of their performance. These three categories are described in greater detail here.

Regular Forces. Primary COIN responsibility falls to the 80,000 strong Philippine Army organized around nine regular Infantry Divisions with three Infantry Brigades assigned to each as well as three marine infantry brigades from the Philippine Marine Corps.<sup>18</sup> Soldiers volunteer for service in the military through a competitive selection process and have the opportunity to pursue careers in the service beyond their initial enlistments as Non-Commissioned Officers. The Philippine Military Academy, Reserve Officers Training Corps, and Officer Candidate School Programs provide commissioning

sources for the officers. While internal security is the primary mission of the Philippine military, much of the training and doctrine for its regular forces is geared towards preparing to wage conventional operations against external threats.<sup>19</sup>

Elite. Elite units around the world are known for their high esprit de corps, training, discipline and for an organizational culture that promotes a level of professionalism and commitment that surpasses those in non-elite units. The special operations units from the Philippine armed forces are no exception. These elite units include the First Scout Ranger Regiment and the Special Forces Regiment of the Philippine Army Special Operations Command. Also included in this category are units assigned to the Philippine Navy's Special Warfare Operations Group and the Philippine Air Force's Special Operations Wing. Army Special Forces and Scout Ranger Units are all assigned to Special Operations Command Headquarters at Fort Magsaysay, Nueva Ecija in north central Luzon and deployed all over the country based on operational requirements.<sup>20</sup>

Indigenous Forces. The nature and scope of the insurgent threats facing the Philippines demand the extensive use of territorial based militias and local auxiliaries. Operations against insurgents place a premium on local information and cultivating cooperative and responsive means of gathering information about the enemy. Soldiers recruited and employed in the areas they live in have a distinct advantage in their potential to develop and exploit this all important local information. The Citizen Armed Forces Geographical Units Armed Auxillaries or CAA's are the bulk of this force drawn from and employed locally to combat insurgency and other threats to internal security.<sup>21</sup> As of early 2004, the Armed Forces of the Philippines records accounted for 3246

detachments of CAA's with a total of 52,748 personnel deployed around the Philippines.<sup>22</sup> Of these detachments, 290 were led by a cadre assigned to the Special Forces Regiment specially trained in unconventional warfare that places heavy emphasis on the employment of indigenous forces. The remaining units were supervised by cadre drawn from regular infantry units.

Figure 2 describes select characteristics of these three broad categories of internal security forces and their strengths and limitations relative to each other.

**Figure 2: Comparing Forces Available for Combating Insurgency<sup>23</sup>**

Unit	Strengths	Weaknesses/Limitations
<b>Elite</b> -Special Forces Regiment -First Scout Ranger Regiment -Navy Special Warfare Groups -Police Special Action Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better led/ trained/ equipped/ motivated</li> <li>• Higher officer to soldier ratio at the small unit level</li> <li>• Easier to deploy because of smaller operating size</li> <li>• Command relationships affords the commander more freedom of action than regular units</li> <li>• Better disciplined</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly dependent on good intelligence to succeed</li> <li>• Ineffective when not deployed/employed according to its capabilities</li> <li>• Dependent on local forces for logistical support</li> <li>• Limited organic firepower e.g. no dedicated artillery support</li> <li>• More expensive to support</li> </ul>
<b>Regular</b> - Army Divisions - Army Brigades - Army Battalions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better knowledge/grasp of terrain and environment including populace</li> <li>• Can deploy large troop formations with organic firepower support</li> <li>• Because they are territorial, they can easily establish rapport with the locals</li> <li>• Many of the troops are from their area of deployment which makes it easier to establish rapport and gain trust of locals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extended deployments in same area breeds complacency among soldiers</li> <li>• Units must compete with other organic units for support from higher headquarters</li> <li>• Low officer to soldier ratio at small unit level e.g. typical Company only has 1 officer</li> <li>• No regular retraining cycle</li> <li>• Poor career management for enlisted which dilutes quality of NCO corps</li> </ul>
<b>Indigenous</b> -Citizen Armed Forces Geographical Units/Armed Auxiliaries -Civilian Volunteer Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intimately familiar with the area they are deployed-it is their home</li> <li>• Best source of local intelligence information of the area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poorly trained, equipped and paid</li> <li>• Highly dependent on the leadership provided by regular army cadre</li> <li>• Prone to develop sympathies towards insurgents especially if relatives are in the movement</li> <li>• Favorite "source" of firearms for the insurgents</li> <li>• Numerous reports of abuse</li> </ul>

Elite, Regular, and Indigenous forces vary in terms of the number of junior officers and NCO's assigned at company levels, the quantity and quality of the training they receive, their access to knowledge of the local area and community they operate in as well as in their ability to operate independent of higher headquarters control.

Figure 3 compares the relative quality of Elite, Regular, and Indigenous forces across the key dimension described earlier.

**Figure 3: Comparing Qualities of COIN Forces**

Unit	Leadership	Training	Local Knowledge	Decentralized Control
<b>Elite</b>	High	High	Low	High
<b>Regular</b>	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low
<b>Indigenous</b>	Low	Low	High	Low <sup>24</sup>

Measuring the Impact of COIN Force Quality with Incident Level Data

The impact of these unit level qualities on effective COIN can be tested from data drawn from the details of nearly 21,493 operational incidents involving the Armed Forces of the Philippines from 2001-2008.<sup>25</sup> This data is compiled from the original field reports of every operational incident reported to the Armed Forces of the Philippines' Joint Operations Center by deployed military units conducting internal security operations against ongoing insurgent and terrorist threats around the country. Highlights of the information coded from these incident level reports include the date, location, participating units and description of each incident along with measurable results in terms of government, rebel and civilian casualties; fire arms recovered/lost; and the number of rebels surrendered, captured, and apprehended as a result of the operation.<sup>26</sup> The micro-

level details of this data set support comparing the performance of various types of government units under varying conditions at the operational incident level.

During these years, the Armed Forces of the Philippines reported 2,550 government troops, 2,852 rebel combatants, and 1,725 non-combatants were killed<sup>27</sup> for a total death toll of a result of operational incidents for the four years studied.<sup>28</sup> Combat operations most often involved small government dismounted patrols making contact with similarly sized enemy units.

### Comparing Counterinsurgency Performance at the Operational Incident Level

How do differences in quality, structure and employment of state counterinsurgency forces manifest themselves in individual operations against insurgents? The following series of tests compares the operational counterinsurgency experiences of elite, regular and indigenous units within the Armed Forces of the Philippines' at the operational incident level.

**Figure 5: Mean Conflict Deaths per Reported Combat Incident 2001-2007<sup>29</sup>**

Type	Govt Killed	Rebels Killed	Civilian Killed	Loss Exchange Fraction
Elite (589)	.11	.38	.03	.80
Regular (5566)	.14	.20	.05	.63
Indigenous (907)	.30	.17	.06	.47

### Government Casualties

Combat operations conducted from 2001-2007, resulted in considerably fewer mean government killed per combat operation for Elite and Regular units on average (.1 and .14 respectively) than were suffered by Indigenous units.<sup>30</sup> In the 907 combat



operations indigenous forces participated in, an average of .30 government forces were killed per operation which is approximately double and triple the mean government killed for the 589 combat operations involving elite forces and 5566 operations that involved regular forces respectively.

I argue that the significantly higher casualties suffered by indigenous forces in combat operations can be attributed to a tactics, force protection and operational security story best explained by variation in small unit leadership, discipline and training. Limiting friendly casualties from operations demands high levels of vigilance at the small unit level especially under the conditions and protracted threats facing the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Enforcing strict security and force protection measures e.g. aggressive patrolling in their assigned area requires hands on leadership and close supervision at the squad level. Sound standard operating procedures, immediate action drills and contingencies for reacting to enemy contact must be reinforced through demanding and realistic training. Indigenous forces are killed at relatively higher rates in the incidents they are involved in because of inferior force protection measures, a comparatively mediocre operations tempo and poor tactics all stemming from inferior discipline, leadership and training.

A number of other factors, however, might explain why indigenous forces suffer such higher casualties per incident than their regular army and elite counter parts. Other possible explanations-inconsistent with my theory- can be argued. I consider three of the most contentious counterarguments and test them with data from this case.

One explanation for why indigenous units take more casualties per combat incident than regular and elite forces stems from the fact that indigenous units operate in smaller numbers which makes them more attractive targets and easier prey for rebels planning attacks against the government. This is a plausible explanation but not borne out convincingly in the data. The mean reported size of government forces involved in operations in the sample from 2001-2003 is 17.<sup>31</sup> Figure 6 reports the size of the government elements percentage of operations by government force size from 2001-2003 by unit type.

**Figure 6: Size of Government Units Involved in Incidents 2001-2003**

Unit	Individual	Team (2-5)	Squad (6-10)	Section (11-15)	Platoon (16-30)	Co. (31-90)	>Co. 90+
Elite	1.5%	38.3%	13.7%	15.3%	20%	9.1%	1.2%
Regular	3%	22.5%	10.4%	25.3%	29%	9%	.8%
Indig	8.9%	39.4%	11%	24%	14.6%	2.1%	0%

The mean reported size of elite units involved in security operations was 19; regular units 22; and indigenous forces 13.<sup>32</sup> Almost one in ten operations reported by indigenous forces alone involved only one individual on the government side and virtually no indigenous unit operations involved greater than platoon sized elements. However, for nearly 90% of all reported operations, government forces operated at the Team, Squad or Platoon level regardless of the type of unit that was involved.

Another possible explanation for the considerably higher casualties suffered by indigenous troops in combat operations relates to the location indigenous troops are employed. These units are typically deployed in more remote areas further from military bases and support. This challenges the ability of these units to call on reinforcements,

employ fire support assets, call on medical evacuation and benefit from other types of support from higher headquarters. Again, the data does not support this alternative explanation. Figure 7 reports the mean government killed in action per operation broken down by unit type and distance the incident occurred from the nearest brigade headquarters.

**Figure 7: Mean Govt KIA/ Incident Based on Proximity to Brigade HQ**

Unit Type (#Incidents)	< 25 Miles from Brigade HQ	25-50 Miles from Brigade HQ	50-75 Miles from Brigade HQ	75+ Miles from Brigade HQ
All AFP	.12 (1863)	.19 (1453)	.15 (1599)	.13 (5024)
Elite	.08 (155)	.04 (46)	.16 (155)	.11 (317)
Regular	.10 (825)	.19 (564)	.14 (560)	.11 (1866)
Indigenous	.25 (181)	.40 (127)	.29 (101)	.36 (398)

Indigenous forces suffer higher mean casualties in combat operations than do regular and elite forces regardless of the distance to higher headquarters. In this sample, government units suffered close to the same mean killed in action per incident whether it occurred within 25 miles of the brigade headquarters or over 75 miles away. Elite and regular forces do not experience a major difference in expected casualties for operations very close or very far from the brigade headquarters either.

The most plausible alternative explanation for indigenous forces higher casualty rates per combat operation is based on the fact that indigenous forces are employed in the villages they come from which puts them at greater risk of being killed as a result of personal feuds, vendettas and for the variety of other typical reasons young armed men die in the communities they live in. This makes it difficult to distinguish whether they are

killed as a representative of government authority or in their personal capacity. This is in contrast to regular infantry units and elite special operations forces that are more likely to redeploy to more secure base areas after conducting operations thus presenting harder targets to rebels and reducing exposure to insurgent threats. Elite and regular forces sent to the area are less likely to get involved in personal disputes than are the local militia members given they have less unofficial interaction in the communities they deploy to.

The data from 2001-2003 does support this explanation. Figure 8 compares the mean number of government deaths suffered as a result of operations targeting specific individuals versus more impersonal operations such as raids and ambushes. From 2001-2003, 474 government troops were killed as a result of these individually targeted attacks.<sup>33</sup> This is a mean of .24 for the 807 incidents involving indigenous CAFGU operating elements. This is three times greater than the mean number of deaths per operation due to targeted killings suffered as a result of operations by regular forces and four times greater than the mean number of targeted killings per operation by elite forces for the same time period. A summary of Personal Attacks by unit type is at Figure 8.

**Figure 8: Personal Attacks 2001-2003**

Unit	% Incidents Personal Attacks	Government Deaths from Personal Attacks	Mean Govt Killed /# Personal Attacks	Mean Civilians Killed/# Personal Attacks
All AFP	15.4% (1327/8612)	474	.36 (1327)	.43 (1327)
Elite	6.1% (39/633)	12	.30 (39)	.25 (39)
Regular	7.7% (297/3815)	110	.37 (297)	.35 (297)
Indigenous	<b>24%</b> (194/807)	120	<b>.62</b> (194)	<b>.12</b> (194)

The data indicates indigenous forces are involved in proportionally greater numbers of incidents that meet the criteria for personal attacks than are regular and elite units. During this time period, nearly a quarter of all incidents that indigenous forces engaged in were coded personal attacks which is four times more than elite forces and three times the proportion for regular forces. Interestingly, the mean number of government killed in personal attacks for indigenous units is .62 - approximately twice the mean government killed in personal attacks for other government forces.

Another interesting result from the 2001-2003 data is the variation in mean civilian deaths resulting from personal attacks. Given personal attacks are only coded from rebel initiated incidents, the battle deaths that result are generally either government or civilian.<sup>34</sup> Government soldiers and civilians are killed in similar proportions in personal attacks involving regular and elite forces. By contrast, in incidents involving indigenous forces, the mean number of civilians killed per personal attack incident is considerably smaller than the mean number of government soldiers killed- .12 versus .62. However, the sum of the mean number of government soldiers and civilians killed in personal attacks for indigenous forces is almost identical to the same sum for regular forces and the AFP as a whole- .74 for the combined government and civilian mean killed for indigenous units, .72 for regular forces and .79 for the AFP as a whole. When a militia member is killed in a personal attack he or she may be targeted based on their identity as a civilian member of the community but their death recorded based on membership in the militia. These results lend support to the alternative explanation that mean government deaths per operational incident for indigenous forces are higher

because they are more likely to get targeted in the communal violence that occurs in the home villages they are employed in.

These additional tests suggest that some external factors impact the relative casualties suffered by elite, regular and indigenous forces. They do not, however, effectively refute explanations consistent with my hypothesis that government fatalities suffered by indigenous forces compared to regular and elite forces are higher because they are qualitatively inferior. These forces may be considered easier prey and are targeted by rebels because of this but the vulnerability stems from poor employment techniques and lax enforcement of standard operating procedures not the size element they operate in. For example, over half of the elite forces' incidents from 2001-2003 (52%) involved squad sized elements or smaller - a dozen men or less - which is nearly the same percentage for indigenous forces at 59%. Despite operating in roughly equally small numbers, elite forces suffer far fewer casualties on average than do indigenous forces. I suspect that poor leadership and training increases the likelihood that indigenous forces are more lax and ill-disciplined in the field. Higher casualties result from the failure to follow basic force protection and security measures. Proximity to higher headquarters is shown not to be a discriminator for predicting mean government casualties which discounts the alternative explanation- that CAFGU's die at higher rates due to lack of access to logistics and support from higher headquarters.<sup>35</sup>

Indigenous forces do, however, appear much more likely to be targeted individually and for reasons related to their "off-duty identity" as well as their official role. I would argue, however, that this could be interpreted as a problem with leadership and supervision not anticipating and mitigating the risks associated with arming "local

boys” and employing them among their domestic rivals and personal enemies. That said, this finding suggests indigenous forces may operate under increased occupational hazards by working in the villages they grew up in and the feuds and disputes that persist there.

### Rebel Battle Deaths

Elite forces inflict higher mean casualties on rebels during combat operations than regular and indigenous forces in that order. Rebels suffered an average of twice the number killed when they met members of an elite unit in combat than when they faced a regular or indigenous force.

I argue these Special Forces and Scout Ranger units inflict higher mean casualties on rebels in combat operations because their individual soldiers and teams are qualitatively superior than their counterparts in the regular army and indigenous forces. Elite units have more experienced junior officers and NCO’s providing leadership at the team, squad and platoon level. Elite forces receive more intense training in small unit tactics and other skills prior to being accepted into these units. Additionally, the organizational culture of these elite units encourages effective and more aggressive execution of operations in the field. Elite units are characterized by higher moral and esprit de corps and a self selection effect results in better quality entry level soldiers and officers.

Skeptics of COIN force quality explanations for these incident level results might argue that elite forces inflict greater rebel casualties because they are sent to “target rich areas” where the opportunity to kill the enemy is greater. The lower priority assignments are given to the regular infantry units and even lower priority areas relegated to indigenous CAFGU responsibility. If regular and indigenous units were sent to the same

high priority areas and elite units sent “out to pasture”, units in the areas with more rebels would also inflict greater average per incident casualties.

Two tests assess whether differences in mean enemy killed per operation is determined more by where units are deployed than the by the internal capacities and structures of the units themselves. The first test compares the percentage of operations conducted by elite, regular and indigenous units under different threat conditions. These threat conditions are determined by proximity to rebel centers of activity and control and include the following five divisions: Operations conducted within 50 miles of the location of an MILF base; Operations conducted between 50-100 miles from an MILF base, operations that occurred in municipalities where at least one village is assessed by the Philippine military intelligence service as being affected by the communist insurgency; those villages that are not considered affected by the communists and lastly, operations that occurred in the southern islands of Basilan, Jolo, Tawi—Tawi where the Abu Sayyef Groups activities and support network are concentrated. The second test looks at the mean enemy killed in these same areas.

**Figure 9: Location of Incidents by Proximity to Rebels 2001-2003**

Unit	Less than 50 Miles from MILF Base	50-100 Miles from MILF Base	CTM Presence In Area <sup>36</sup>	No CTM Presence	Abu Sayyef Areas <sup>37</sup>
Elite	15.3% (97/633)	23.6% (150/633)	23.2% (147/633)	76.4% (484/633)	19.9% (126/633)
Regular	19.5% (766/3912)	13.5% (529/3912)	23.5% (923/3912)	73.6% (2881/3912)	12.9% (506/3912)
Indigenous	27.6% (223/807)	15.4% (125/807)	21.4% (173/807)	78.3% (632/807)	12.7% (103/807)

Highlights from the data presented in Figure 9 indicate indigenous units are involved in comparatively greater numbers of operations within 50 miles of the nine established MILF bases with 27.6% of their incident occurring within this 0-50 mile arc



compared to 19.5% and 15.3% for regular and elite forces respectively. Regular and indigenous forces are both involved in more operations within 50 miles of MILF bases than in the 50-100 mile arc from MILF bases while elite forces are engaged in more operations in the 50-100 mile arc than they are within 50 miles of MILF bases. Elite forces participate in a higher proportion of operations in the southern islands of Basilan, Jolo, and Tawi-Tawi where the Abu Sayyef Group operates with nearly 20% of the total incidents they are involved in occurring there compared to 13% for regular and indigenous forces.

Figure 10 compares the mean number of enemy killed per combat operation pooled into categories determined by distance between the operational incident and the nearest centers of rebel activity.

**Figure 10: Mean Rebels Killed/Operation and Proximity to Guerrillas 2001-2003**

Unit	Operations Total	Less than 50 Miles from MILF Base	50-100 Miles from MILF Base	CTM Presence In Area	No CTM Presence	Abu Sayyef Areas
All AFP	.16 (9939)	.16 (1733)	.18 (1399)	.18 (2439)	.15 <sup>38</sup> (7396)	.22 (1169)
Elite	.30 (633)	.20 (97)	.23 (150)	.37 (147)	.27 (484)	.35 (126)
Regular	.17 (3815)	.16 (766)	.17 (529)	.21 (923)	.16 (2881)	.16 (506)
Indigenous	.12 (807)	.12 (223)	.03 (125)	.10 (173)	.13 (632)	.20 (103)

Operations in the southern islands where the ASG operates do appear to kill more rebels on average than other parts of the country for all units involved. This, combined with the fact that elite forces have a somewhat larger percentage of operations in these provinces than do regular and indigenous (20% versus 13%) lends some support to claims that elite forces have higher mean rebels killed per operation than other units

based on the opportunities to engage the enemy. However, elite forces kill more enemy per operational incident under all threat conditions. In operations in municipalities with a communist guerrilla presence, for example, rebels suffer a mean of .37 killed in actions against elite forces which is over three times the mean rebels killed against indigenous forces and nearly twice the mean for regular forces. These additional tests lend greater support to explanations attributing the higher mean rebels killed by unit type to internal variation in quality and effectiveness.

#### Civilian Deaths Resulting from Combat Operations

Mean reported civilian deaths resulting from operational incidents during 2001-2007 were-encouragingly- much lower than the average battle deaths for combatants. Overall, incidents involving indigenous forces were responsible for a greater average number of civilians killed with a mean of .06 dying in each of the combat operations indigenous forces participated in. Regular forces were involved in 5232 combat operations with a mean of .04 civilian deaths followed by elite forces whose mean civilian killed per incident they were involved in was .03 – approximately half the mean number of civilian deaths per operational incident experienced by regular and indigenous troops.

Fewer mean numbers of civilians were killed in combat operations involving elite forces than those involving regular units and militia units in that order. My explanation for these outcomes-and for government and rebel casualties- is that elite units' are more disciplined, better trained, and possess superior leadership at the small unit level compared to their comrades in regular and indigenous units. Discriminate use of force at the operational incident level requires supervision and control by NCO's and junior

officers as well as trained troops possessing effective small unit tactics and individual marksmanship skills. These qualities increase the demonstrated ability of these more elite troops to exercise control in the areas they operate and reduce the estimated risks of cooperation and support at the local level.

#### Relative Performance at the Incident Level- Loss Exchange Fraction

Elite forces suffered substantially fewer casualties than their opponents in combat operations. Regular forces suffer slightly fewer than rebels and indigenous units significantly more. During the 2001-2007 timeframe 80% of the deaths resulting from clashes between elite forces and the rebels were suffered by the rebel group. In clashes involving only regular forces, 63% of the battle deaths were suffered by the rebels. Indigenous forces fared much worse than their active duty comrades; only 47% of the deaths reported as a result of clashes between indigenous and the rebels were from the enemy side meaning the majority of these deaths – 53% - were inflicted on the government forces.

The explanations provided earlier for the variation in both mean government killed and rebels killed per incident combine to explain this measure as well. Elite forces possess better quality troops and small unit leaders than regular forces and indigenous forces. This explains why they suffer comparatively fewer casualties and inflict greater mean casualties on their opponents at the operational incident level.

Figures 11 and 12 compare the loss exchange fraction by type of government unit during the 2001-2003 time frame under different threat conditions and within varying distances from higher headquarters. The results posted in Figure 11 indicate elite forces achieve a higher loss exchange fraction regardless of proximity to threat. The loss

exchange fraction for elite and regular forces is relatively consistent across areas of threat. Elite forces achieve a relatively more favorable loss exchange fraction under all threat conditions as coded here. Regular forces have better exchange ratios than indigenous forces under each threat environment.

**Figure 11: Loss Exchange by Unit Type and Proximity to Threat 2001-2003**

Unit	Operations Total	Less than 50 Miles from MILF Base	50-100 Miles from MILF Base	CTM Presence In Area	ASG Area of Operations
Elite	.72 (633)	.71 (97)	.63 (150)	.71 (147)	.79 (126)
Regular	.60 (3815)	.57 (766)	.48 (529)	.60 (923)	.61 (506)
Indigenous	.28 (807)	.34 (223)	.10 (125)	.23 (173)	.32 (103)

An interesting anomaly is presented in the data measuring the loss exchange fraction for indigenous forces. In the 50 mile arc around MILF bases, indigenous forces fare slightly better than their average for all operations while regular and elite forces slightly worse. Even more interesting is the drastic drop in the loss exchange ratio, in both real and relative terms, for indigenous forces in operations conducted 50-100 miles from MILF bases. Assuming the 50-100 mile arc is a more contested area of control than the 50 mile arc, this result could support the explanation relating higher indigenous deaths to the indigenous forces being caught up in violence with communal roots.

**Figure 12: Loss Exchange by Unit and Proximity to Govt. Control 2001-2003**

Unit Type	< 25 Miles from Brigade HQ	25-50 Miles from Brigade HQ	50-75 Miles from Brigade HQ	75+ Miles from Brigade HQ
Elite	.69 (125)	.62 (46)	.47 (155)	.78 (317)
Regular	.55 (825)	.45 (564)	.59 (560)	.62 (1866)
Indigenous	.26 (181)	.30 (127)	.23 (101)	.28 (398)

Figure 12 indicates elite forces have more favorable loss exchange fraction than regular and indigenous units with the exception of those that occurred in the 50-75 mile arc from brigade headquarters in the 2001-2003 sample. Interestingly, elite and regular units operating further than 75 miles from brigade headquarters' had the most favorable loss exchange fractions. This may indicate that small units willing-and able- to pursue rebels into the more remote areas are the types most likely to be rewarded with higher enemy killed. Elite units killed a mean of .50 rebels per combat operation that occurred greater than 75 miles from the nearest brigade headquarters during the sample period. This is over twice the mean rebel killed per combat operation reported by regular forces operating the same distances from brigades.

The consistent rankings of loss exchange fractions when controls for enemy presence and proximity to higher headquarters are introduced help refute the alternate explanations provided above for the comparative superior performance of elite units followed by regular units when compared to indigenous forces. The better trained and led units tend to inflict more casualties on rebels than they suffer themselves.

### Interacting Local Information with COIN Force Quality 2001-2003<sup>39</sup>

Integrating local information into all aspects of operations at the lowest level possible is an imperative of effective military support to counterinsurgency. Indigenous forces are well suited to provide this knowledge given they are recruited from and deployed in the vicinity of their home villages. This advantage is gained, however, with the accompanying risk of these local forces becoming involved in feuds, grudges and other personal conflicts inconsistent with government objectives. The operational data collected and analyzed in this sample suggests that combining high quality COIN forces with the access to local information provided by indigenous forces yields the most potent and cost effective COIN force states can employ.

The data depicted in figures 12-15 suggest there is a significant performance boost observed for the government when elite troops and indigenous forces operate together.

Figure 12

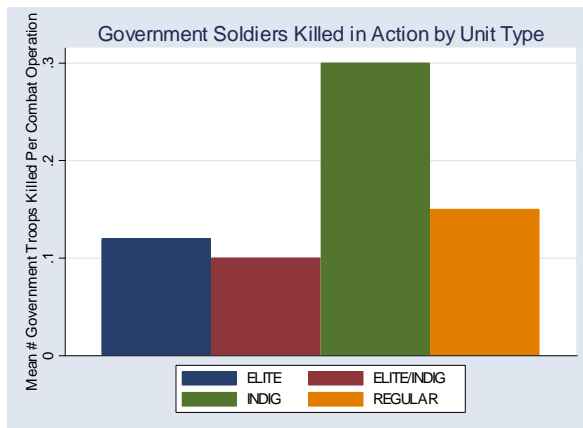


Figure 13

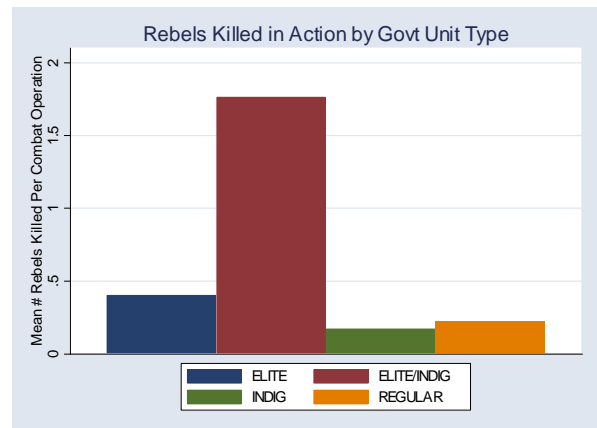


Figure 14

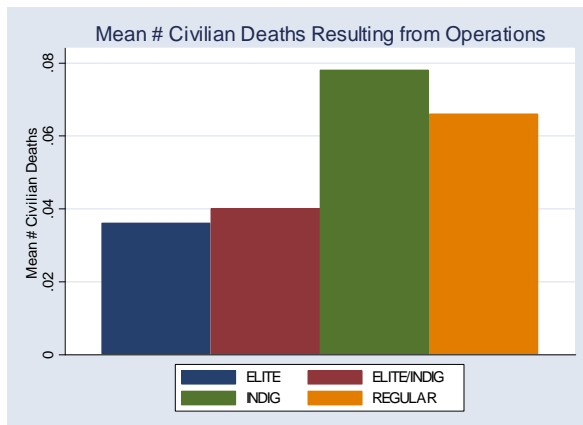
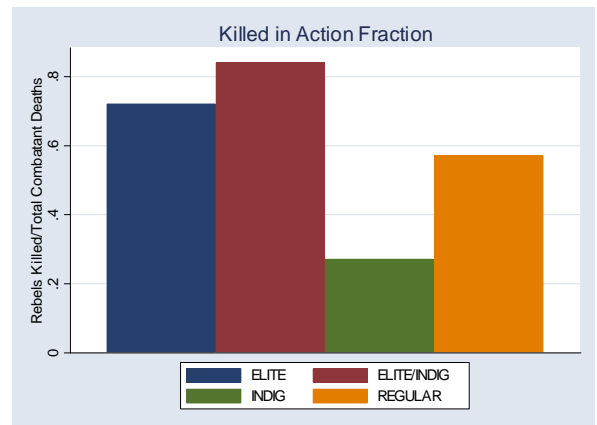


Figure 15



**Government Killed in Action (Figure 12).** At the incident level, government forces operating with a combination of elite and indigenous elements fared better in terms of their ability to limit government deaths and maximize those inflicted on the enemy than either force experienced operating unilaterally. The mean number of government troops killed per combat operation when indigenous troops engaged rebels on their own were .30 and .13 for when elite units operated unilaterally. This mean dropped to .10 in the reported incidents where elite units and indigenous forces operated together which is a three fold decrease for indigenous forces and a slight decrease for elite forces as well.

**Rebels Killed in Action (Figure 13).** This potent combination of high quality elite forces working with locally recruited indigenous forces resulted in an average of 1.76 rebels killed per combat operation. This is a major increase over the mean rebels killed when elite troops engaged rebels on their own and a huge boost to the mean number of rebels killed per operation by indigenous troops operating unilaterally.

**Civilian Deaths (Figure 14).** Fewer mean civilian casualties were experienced by elite forces as well as regular forces when they operated with indigenous forces than when they operated alone. In cases where elite forces operated with indigenous forces, the average number of civilian fatalities per incident dropped to .04- nearly half of what it was when the indigenous forces operated on their own.

**Loss Exchange Fraction (Figure 15).** When elite forces and indigenous units operated together, the loss exchange fraction for government forces jumped to .84. This is a highly significant increase for indigenous forces - up nearly 300% from what they experienced in combat operations on their own. The performance of elite forces relative to their rebel opponents also increased - up 14% from .72.

#### **Beyond Battle Deaths-Additional Indicators of Effective COIN**

Comparing the mean number of government, rebel and civilian battle deaths from internal security operations by qualitatively distinct government forces provides significant insights into the effectiveness of these forces. Other indicators of effective counterinsurgency can also be tested with the same data from Philippines counterinsurgency operations. Figure 16 compares the mean number of firearms lost and rebels apprehended/captured per operational incident recorded from 2001-2003. The



results lend greater support to the role that COIN force quality plays in important conflict outcomes at the incident level.

**Figure 16: Non-Battle Death Proxies for Effective COIN 2001-2003<sup>40</sup>**

Unit Type	Firearms Lost	Rebels Apprehended	% Incidents Government Initiated
Elite (633)	.03	.32	72%
Regular (3815)	.07	.19	62%
Indigenous (807)	.15	.08	46%
Indigenous w/Elites (45)	.06	.27	56%

**Firearms Lost** . A unit’s propensity to lose fire arms in the course of operations can proxy a number of characteristics of the unit that are important in predicting overall COIN effectiveness. Lack of training, discipline and supervision by small unit leaders can explain this – accountability of firearms and other sensitive items is one of the hall marks of effective non-commissioned officers and junior officers. Alternatively, lost weapons could be indicative of corruption and rebel collusion at the small unit level. In the data from this sample, the mean number of firearms lost per operational incident for indigenous forces was five times greater than the mean for elite forces and over twice the mean for regular forces. In the limited number of operations where elite and indigenous forces worked together, the mean number of firearms lost was significantly lower than when indigenous forces operated unilaterally.

**Rebels Apprehended.** The capacity to apprehend and capture rebels in the course of internal security operations is another appropriate proxy for effective and certainly for discriminate counterinsurgency. Elite units were able to apprehend or capture four times

more rebels than indigenous forces and over 50% more than their comrades serving in regular units. When elite and indigenous forces operated together the mean number of rebels apprehended or captured jumped 300% when compared to indigenous forces operating on their own but slightly which is slightly less than the mean for elite forces conducting unilateral operations.

**Fraction of Operational Incidents Initiated by Government .** Seizing and maintaining the initiative in counterinsurgency operations is critical to gaining control of a local area and credibly signaling government commitment and capacity to prevail. The type of forces most capable of contributing to the government's ability to sustain operational initiative, I argue, are those that conduct operations at a higher relative rate than their rebel opponents in the field. The data posted in Figure 16 indicates elite forces initiate over 72% of the operations they are involved in; regular forces 62% and indigenous forces less than half at 46%. When elite troops join indigenous forces in operations, they boost the fraction of operations indigenous initiate relative to the rebels to the government's favor at 56%.

### Recommendations

Evidence from the incident level tests conducted in this study indicate the qualities, structures and activities of COIN forces at the small unit level of insurgent conflict are significant predictors of the overall deaths and scope of the insurgency. Unit level attributes such as leadership, training, and relationships with local populace are important determinants of individual conflict outcomes as well for aggregate counterinsurgency operations in local areas over time. These findings reinforce a number

of policy relevant recommendations for states addressing their own insurgent threats as well as for those interesting in assisting other states to do the same.

#### Organize Domestically for Unconventional Warfare.

Many militaries around the world have an institutional bias towards preparing for and conducting conventional operations even when the prevailing threats are decidedly unconventional in nature.<sup>41</sup> This bias impacts how resources are allocated, the type and extent of training that is conducted and the doctrines followed. For states confronting insurgent threats, the security forces they should “want” in the field are those that have the capacity to discriminately interdict and deter local threats. The incident level tests of counterinsurgency in the Philippines conducted here suggest this capacity is achieved by fielding military units possessing, superior leadership, training, and motivation combined with the local knowledge and access to the community provided by indigenous forces.

The relatively better trained and led Special Operations Forces operating unilaterally excel in “killing and capturing” rebels while limiting their own casualties and collateral damage. States cannot afford to raise and deploy such forces in large enough numbers to perform the manpower intensive and lengthy “hold” missions throughout the countryside. The indigenous militia detachments native to these areas given these missions often lack the discipline and oversight required to conduct active versus passive defenses of their areas of responsibility.<sup>42</sup> Deploying these local forces without sufficient oversight increases the risk they will leverage their rapport and access to the communities they are tasked for personal gain and not to support the government’s objectives of effectively denying these areas to resurgent rebels. Clearing without holding is like stabbing sand. Indigenous forces can prevent rebels from reclaiming villages once

regular forces conduct sweeps to clear the area but need some representative “adult supervision” and oversight that more professional government units and cadres can provide to do so.

Evidence from the Philippines’ case demonstrates one efficient way of achieving this optimal combination of quality leadership, training, and initiative, along with an intimate knowledge of the area of operations, is to employ a highly trained, disciplined and professional force as cadres that leverage the potential of dispersed local forces while at the same time mitigating the associated risks.<sup>43</sup>

Past successful counterinsurgency efforts by states combating insurgent threats abroad have harnessed the value added of local knowledge combined with quality COIN forces. The Combined Action Program (CAP) implemented by the United States Marine Corps during the US war with North Vietnam, for example, demonstrates the performance boost local knowledge provides even the best trained, equipped and led troops. Under this program, a US squad of Marines operated jointly in Vietnamese villages with a platoon recruited from the village itself. These CAP platoons were particularly well suited to collect information from the local populace. By living in the villages, and not simply passing through on unilateral sweeps, these US Marine squads were able to protect cooperative villagers from denunciations and subsequent reprisals by the Viet Cong. The relationships forged under these conditions led to significant increases in locally provided intelligence and information. Statistics compiled on the performance of the Marines assigned to CAP units show they were responsible for inflicting nearly 8% of enemy casualties while consisting of only 1.5% of the total number of Marines deployed to Vietnam.<sup>44</sup>

Many other historical cases support this. Kitson (77) describes this dynamic with his example of well trained and led British troops fighting the Mau Mau in Kenya and how the British forces decision to incorporate knowledge gained from the locally recruited “pseudo gangs” eventually led to the Mau Mau’s demise. The shift in US counterinsurgency tactics in Baghdad in 2007 where US embedded more extensively with Iraqi forces and deployed to conflict ridden and at risk neighborhoods throughout the city reflects this historical precedent. Successful reduction in violence in Anbar province that same year can be largely attributed to great access to local information provided by former insurgents turned US collaborators as part of the “Anbar Awakening”.

States will be more effective combating their own internal threats if they apply classic unconventional warfare doctrine in a domestic context. A sustainable counterinsurgency capability is better achieved by raising a highly trained and disciplined cadre internally by the state and not through the intervention of another party to the conflict. Fielding such forces may require structural reforms and doctrinal shifts within a state’s military as well as a reallocation of resource priorities to make this possible- e.g. from expensive high tech weaponry needed for external defense to the investments in human capital needed to prevail against insurgent threats.

### **Provide incentives to reward effective COIN**

The ability to field a force likely to prevail in the unconventional environment of insurgent struggle is made more possible if career advancement criteria, measures of effectiveness, doctrines and tactics reward and support effective counterinsurgency - not detract from it as conventionally organized militaries can be prone to do. Ironically, the

Philippine Army Special Forces, despite their superior record of performance while serving as cadres for territorial forces, prefer to hand over this mission to regular infantry units. In fact, the number of Special Forces Battalions in the Philippine Army was drawn down in 2005 in an effort to “right size” the forces. A recent commander of the Special Forces Regiment of the Philippine Army acknowledged Special Forces performed much better as indigenous CAA cadres than regular units based on their training but this was not a mission they relished as it took them away from the more “glamorous” strike operations assumed by their intra-service rivals the Scout Rangers.<sup>45</sup>

The aversion by the Philippine Special Forces to support missions with indigenous CAA militia units is predictable given the types of experiences rewarded in the Philippine military. In the Armed Forces of the Philippines, as in many other militaries, performance is evaluated using conventional metrics such as enemy killed and number of combat engagements.<sup>46</sup> Successfully performing the “Hold” missions that indigenous forces are often given is critical to the long term prospects of success for the COIN effort. An officer in the AFP is more likely to advance his career, however, if he serves in assignments that put him in the best position to inflict casualties on the enemy and not by serving as CAA militia cadre in a remote village tasked with deterring rebel attacks and securing the population. If a state wants to maintain and employ an effective COIN force, it must insure the institutional incentives and rewards are in place to encourage such outcomes.<sup>47</sup>

### Conclusions

A state’s military can be part of the solution or the problem in prosecuting an effective COIN campaign. Poorly led, inadequately trained, sub-optimally employed COIN troops are prone to indiscriminate and ineffective counterinsurgency. Such forces

erode the credibility, legitimacy and perceived capacity of the State at local levels. Prevailing at the tactical level does not assure the ultimate success of the government - military and security forces are but one component in what requires a multi-faceted interagency effort. Consistent failure of government forces to prevail at this level, however, will invariably lead to defeat regardless of the complementary efforts from other agencies.

This study identifies opportunities to reduce the scope of insurgent violence through more effective military support to counterinsurgency. Micro-Comparative evidence from the Philippines case strongly indicates that troop readiness and the ability to incorporate local information into operations at the tactical level is key to achieving effective and efficient success measured at the incident level. Honing the effectiveness of military support to counterinsurgency increases state capacity to address such threats with a greater range of options, flexibility, and efficiency. Improving the COIN force's ability to interdict insurgent threats is a practical approach to enhance state capacity to prevent nascent threats from crossing the threshold of rebellion and reduce the scope of on-going and established insurgencies.

States cannot simply increase resources and troop number and expect to reap these positive externalities from more effective military support to counterinsurgency. Military budgets and troop levels alone are misleading benchmarks to assess and predict the effectiveness of the COIN force. *How* these resources are spent and prioritized and the *kind* of military capacity generated by the state are key to predicting state COIN capacity. Counterinsurgency forces will be part of the government's solution to quelling

insurgent threats to the degree they possess the qualities and characteristics that effective military support to counterinsurgency requires.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>General David Petraeus admonished that “We cannot kill our way out of this endeavor” in his commander’s guidance to Coalition Forces serving in Iraq in 2008. See “Multi-National Force Commander’s Counterinsurgency Guidance” dated June 21, 2008 available at [http://www.mnf-iraq.com/images/CGs\\_Messages/080621\\_coin\\_%20guidance.pdf](http://www.mnf-iraq.com/images/CGs_Messages/080621_coin_%20guidance.pdf). David Galula is often cited for his concurrence of Mao’s assessment, “A revolutionary war is 20 percent military action and 80 percent political’ as a formula that reflects reality,” David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1964, Rpt. 2006), 63.

<sup>2</sup> Leites & Wolfe in their seminal work *Rebellion and Authority* RAND 1971 highlight the importance of reducing supply – as well as demand- for insurgency.

<sup>3</sup> Kenneth Waltz *A Theory of International Politics*, 1979 provides the core realist assessment of how a state’s resources and relative material advantages predict its ability to prevail in conflict between states.

<sup>4</sup> Risa Brooks provides an excellent review of much of the literature on military effectiveness in “Managing Military Might: Why do States Succeed or Fail” *International Security* Fall 2003.

<sup>5</sup>James Fearon & David Laitin identify GDP as the most significant predictor of a state’s risk of experiencing civil war in “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War”, *American Political Science Review*, Feb 2003. These authors admit

<sup>6</sup> Scholars have identified a variety of factors that explain military effectiveness in the context of inter-state conflicts that are not directly tied to state wealth . These factors include culture (Posen 93), (Pollack 2002); civil military relations (Biddle & Zirkel 96), polity (Reiter & Stam 98), and many others. Risa Brooks provides an excellent review of much of the literature on military effectiveness in “Managing Military Might: Why do States Succeed or Fail” *International Security* Fall 2003. However, military effectiveness assessed in the context of conventional inter-state conflict is an inherently different enterprise requiring different assets and skills compared with combating insurgent and rebel threats within state borders and among its population.

<sup>7</sup> Aggregating data beyond the individual conflict incident at the smallest unit level possible loses the granularity needed to account for the impact that characteristics such as leadership, training, and intelligence support have on conflict outcomes.

<sup>8</sup> US Military Joint Doctrine modifies Clausewitz’s definition and describes center of gravity as “those characteristics, capabilities, or localities from which a military force derives its freedom of action , physical strength or will to fight.” See Joint Publication 5-0. *Doctrine for Joint Planning Operations*.

<sup>9</sup> Arregon-Toft posits that states employing a direct strategy against rebels who respond with an indirect defense will in most cases fail. “How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict “ *International Security* , Summer 2001.

<sup>10</sup> Deployed units often have a difficult time incorporating training into their schedules given the all-consuming requirements of their mission. (Describe Posen “Sources of Military Doctrine’)



<sup>11</sup> This force also has an increased potential to inflict greater harm on the local population. Military capability combined with local knowledge has led to more effective ability of the government to commit atrocities.

<sup>12</sup> Multiple author interviews with US Special Forces commanders in Afghanistan and Iraq 2006-2008 support this assessment.

<sup>13</sup> This targeting could take the form of violence or coercion resulting in being intimidated to tolerate rebel activities or forced to surrender their issued firearms and equipment.

<sup>14</sup> Rules of engagement for conventional operations are often defined in such terms and are comparatively straightforward relative to those governing counterinsurgency warfare.

<sup>15</sup> See Millet's study on military effectiveness.

<sup>16</sup> Bangsa Moro refers to Muslims in the Philippines who have resisted Christian domination for centuries- literally since Magellan landed on Mactan Island in 1532 and the subsequent Spanish colonial efforts followed by Philippine government efforts to Christianize these areas.

<sup>17</sup> The Philippine National Police plays a critical role in the Philippine government's internal security plans and counterinsurgency campaign. The Armed Forces of the Philippines has the lead responsibility for addressing insurgent threats in the Philippines, however, and are the focus of this study.

<sup>18</sup> Infantry Divisions are assigned supporting artillery, light armor, engineer and other support assets based on operational requirements. Brigade sized task forces are stood up and deployed in response to specific threats such as the Abu Sayyef Group's hostage taking incident in 2000. These task forces are usually organized around an organic brigade and augmented with additional assets as needed.

<sup>19</sup> The US Military has played an influential role in developing the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Many Philippine officers have attended professional schools in the United States to include service academies and other professional development courses from junior officer to senior levels. The conventional focus of US doctrine and training imbued on Philippine military officers attending US sponsored training were less relevant to the actual threats they were confronted by when they returned to their own units. Exchange training provided by US SOF is an important exception.

<sup>20</sup> The Philippine National Police plays a critical role in combating insurgency. They maintain a Special Action Force (SAF) which is drawn from a competitive selection among the police force and trained and employed to operate independently in much the same way as military special operations units. They are included in this sample as "elite" forces.

<sup>21</sup> Also included in the category of indigenous forces are the Special CAFGU Armed Auxiliaries (SCAA's) which are partially supported by private businesses who receive additional security and protection in return for providing subsistence allowances. Another indigenous security force are the Civilian Volunteer Organizations (CVO's) which are more closely aligned with the Philippine National Police. Significantly, CVO's are not armed by the state.

<sup>22</sup> This data was compiled from records maintained at the General Headquarters, Armed Forces of the Philippines and is accurate as of August 2004. New data from 2005-2008 was obtained by author during December 2008 and January 2009. Coding is ongoing.

<sup>23</sup> This chart was developed from the subjective assessments of multiple mid-grade to senior grade Philippine Army officers with experience as operations officers, platoon leaders, company and battalion commanders in the Philippine Army Special Operations Command (SOCOM). These assessments were

drawn from interviews with multiple officers in the Philippines July- August 2004 and updated during subsequent interviews at Headquarters Philippine Army in December 2008 and January 2009.

<sup>24</sup> Indigenous detachments often have little oversight but this is due to their deployment far from higher headquarters and poor communications ability rather than deliberate efforts to provide them greater flexibility to act on fleeting opportunities.

<sup>25</sup> The author is indebted to the Chief of Staff Armed Forces of the Philippines and the staff in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations J3 for providing unprecedented access to this data. The data used for this study is in its unclassified form.

<sup>26</sup> Each individual incident is assigned a unique location identification number which allows it to be plotted down to the Philippine village level using maps that interface with software from the Geospatial Information System. This enables the data to be presented visually on an integrated map of the Philippines and to analyze the operational incidents along several physical and spatial dimensions of interest.

<sup>27</sup> Civilian deaths are based on 2001-2007 totals. Data on civilian fatalities for 2008 is forthcoming.

<sup>28</sup> These figures were compiled from the results of all operational incidents reported by the armed forces during that time. Deaths that resulted from non-operational incidents such as vehicular accidents, disaster assistance, unexploded ordinance, and other types of incidents were not included.

<sup>29</sup> Data on type of unit participating in individual combat operations for year 2008 is forthcoming.

<sup>30</sup> Comparing only combat operations was done to reduce the impact that different overall mission profiles could have on the results. For example, regular units are tasked with considerably more non-combat missions than Scout Rangers and Special Forces.

<sup>31</sup> Much of the subsequent tests rely on data coded from 2001-2003. Data from 2004-2008 is forthcoming after coding is complete. Not all field reports identified the size of the government unit involved-many provided the parent battalion unit name but not the element in contact's size. In cases that did provide information on the size of the force, the sub-unit designator e.g. TEAM, SQUAD, SECTION, PLATOON, COMPANY was used versus a numeric count estimate. Based on personal field experience in the Philippines and interviews with multiple Armed Forces of the Philippines officers, an estimated size of the typical sub-unit was coded in the data. All sub-units are assumed to be under the doctrinal strength, an assumption that applies even to many developed countries militaries. In the Armed Forces of the Philippines' case, I assigned the following numeric values for sub-units: TEAM-5; SQUAD-10; SECTION 15; PLATOON 30; COMPANY 90; BATTALION 270.

<sup>32</sup> Regular units have more cases of COMPANY sized operations which drive up the mean value for size of force. Take for example, the largest reported government unit at the operational incident level was 150 during a battalion sized attack against communist insurgents in Agusan del Sur on April 11, 2003.

<sup>33</sup> Personal attacks, are coded when field reports describe the incident as ASSASSINATION, KILLING, LIQUIDATION, SHOOTING, SNIPING, STRAFFING and STABBING. Many cases required subjective assessment of how "personal" the killing was e.g. a shooting incident could be premeditated or random. Additionally, not all targeted attacks result in deaths but this is often a result of poor planning, marksmanship, or luck on the part of the intended victims. Targeted attack measures incidents where rebels intended to kill government soldiers and/or civilians. It assumes a value of "1" based on the nature of the attempt not the result.

<sup>34</sup> Government forces undoubtedly initiate personal attacks in some cases. However, these are not reported accurately in the field reports this data is compiled from. For example, if a CAFGU member plans and shoots an individual for personal reasons it could hypothetically be reported as an "AMBUSH" with

the claim that the victim was a rebel. Predictably, few rebels die as a result of personal attacks they initiate. In the 2001-2004 sample, 66 rebels died as a result of incidents coded as personal attacks or a mean of .05 rebel deaths per incident. Intended victims and others present often times shoot back and the perpetrators of personal attacks are sometimes the victims in the end.

<sup>35</sup> Interviews with Philippine military personnel, however, often mention that indigenous CAFGU deployments to distant and remote villages is in fact a risk factor and contributes to the higher likelihood they will meet their demise in operations.

<sup>36</sup> This is measured using a dummy variable that takes a value of "1" if the number of CTM affected villages in the municipality where the incident occurred is greater than zero and "0" otherwise. Data on CTM village affectionation is provided by the Armed Forces of the Philippines Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence (J2). In the 9939 incidents recorded in the 2001-2004 sample, 7,396 incidents occurred in villages with no CTM affected in that municipality and 2,439 incidents occurred where at least one village in the municipality was assessed as affected by the communist insurgency. Obvious limitations exist with this dummy variable e.g. an incident at the border of a municipality may be close to a communist affected village located within the boundaries of the neighboring or far from a communist affected village at the other end of the same municipality. Additionally, this dummy does not account for the degree of communist affectionation.

<sup>37</sup> Operations against the Abu Sayyef Group and other groups in the same vicinity accounted for a substantial number of incidents-11.7% of the total in this sample. The ASG threat is limited to the island province of Basilan and the islands making up Sulu Province-namely Jolo-, and Tawi-Tawi Province all of which are located off the southwestern tip of Mindanao. The ASG has no "bases" and do not organize or infiltrate villages in the manner the communists insurgents do. Numerous forces were deployed to this area as part of TASK FORCE COMET following the 2000 Sipidan Island international hostage crisis followed shortly after by other hostage crises that included American citizens. Operations against the ASG remained an AFP priority throughout the sample period. A dummy for "ASG Incident" does not capture numerous other incidents that occurred in these provinces given the large gray area between lawless elements, MILF, MRLF, and groups reported and coded as "KFRG" or Kidnap For Ransom Groups. The dummy variable coded here takes a value of "1" if the incident occurred in the province of Basilan, Sulu, or Tawi-Tawi which is more inclusive than limiting it to only those coded as "ASG" incidents.

<sup>38</sup> This mean includes operations against the MILF and ASG in the areas of central and western Mindanao Island and the southern islands of Sulu where CTM presence would not have much impact except in the few areas where both MILF and CTM threats are present.

<sup>39</sup> The enhanced effectiveness of internal security operations combining indigenous forces native to the area of operations with high quality government forces observed in incident level comparisons is borne out in multivariate tests as well. In 2003-2004, 41% of all 1620 Philippine municipalities had at least one indigenous CAFGU detachment assigned with over 3,000 deployed around the country. Of these, 290 had Special Forces cadres with the remaining assigned cadre from regular infantry units.<sup>39</sup> The deployment of indigenous detachments supervised and led by Special Forces cadres predicted much more discriminate counterinsurgency operations than indigenous detachments led by lesser trained regular forces. In the 1620 Philippine municipalities from 2003-2004, the deployment of indigenous forces led by Special Forces cadre predicted fewer government casualties, higher rebel casualties, and fewer civilian deaths relative to their peer indigenous units led by regular infantry cadre. These same elite cadre led detachments also predict a killed in action fraction much more favorable to the government at local levels. The superior discrimination and overall performance of these elite led indigenous forces remained consistent across different threat conditions as well as proximities to both government and rebel control.

<sup>40</sup> Initial results from testing additional data from 2004-2008 is consistent with findings from 2001-2003. A full coding of these years and earlier years is forthcoming in final draft.

<sup>41</sup> Thompson, p.60. points out this fault in an example from South Vietnam's military in the early 1960's, "What in effect was happening was that the army, organized on conventional lines to defeat a foreign invader and to occupy and administer a foreign country, was attempting to do almost exactly that in its own country. This created a completely wrong attitude and led to operations and actions which might just have been excusable as acts of war if carried out in enemy territory."

<sup>42</sup> Thompson, p. 115 warns of the limited long term return on investments in "search and clear" missions that are typical assignments to elite units such as Scout Rangers operating unilaterally as compared with the "clear and hold" missions where the less glamorous "hold" portion of the mission is assigned to the CAFGU Armed Auxiliaries.

<sup>43</sup> A seasoned Special Forces officer from the Philippine Army remarked in an interview, "When Special Forces were managing the CAFGU's (indigenous militias) we had more scores than when we were given specific AOR's (areas of responsibility). In fact, most guys in SF would say that SF was more effective when they were leading indig (indigenous forces/ CAFGU's). Special Forces were able to utilize them (the CAFGU's) much better than the infantry leading them because of our training." Another Special Forces officer recalls the performance boost he observed in the indigenous CAFGU detachment's under his command when he allowed them to wear the prestigious Special Forces tab on their uniforms. The officer claimed that the pride that being associated with an elite force was responsible for greater cohesion and commitment to mission performance among his indigenous CAFGU troops. Interviews with select officers at Philippine Army Senior Leaders Conference March 12-14, 2009 Fort Bonifacio, Makati City, Philippines.

<sup>44</sup> These statistics are cited by Robert Cassidy in "Winning the War of the Flea: Lessons from Guerrilla Warfare" *Military Review*, September-October 2004 p.45.

<sup>45</sup> Some Special Forces soldiers do not feel the cadre mission is appropriate for their level of training claiming they do not want to be the "paymasters of the CAFGU's". In February 2009, however, the Commanding General Philippine Army – a former Special Forces Regiment Commander- initiated a plan to double the size of the Philippine Army Special Forces and return the territorial militia advisory mission back to the Special Forces after an unsuccessful effort to deploy regular army cadre battalions from 2005-2008.

<sup>46</sup> The "Combat Scoreboard" system was used by the Armed Forces of the Philippines throughout the 1980's and 1990's. Commanders were evaluated relative to their peers using "scores" – rebels killed- along with firearms recovered as a metric for comparison. The Combat Scoreboard system is not officially in place today but the residual effects of this are still felt in the Philippine military.

<sup>47</sup> John McCuen points to one example of how states can institutionalize incentives for employing effective COIN forces from Greece in the 1980's. The Greek National Guard Defence Battalions (*Tagmata Ethnofylakha Amynhs*) or "T.E.A." units have regular army cadres at battalion and company level and at one point, notes McCuen, Army officers graduating from the senior officer War College were required to serve with the T.E.A. as a prerequisite for promotion.