



OPE-P IN BRIEF

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

ISIS-EA Remains an Active Threat Despite COVID-19

pp. 8-9, 11

- An April ambush on AFP troops killed 12 and wounded 13 in the **deadliest ISIS-EA attack in 15 months**.
- Philippine authorities disrupted an **ISIS-EA cell near Manila**, one of the first identified cells outside the country’s southern provinces.
- Several **terrorist attacks** took place during late May, while Muslims were celebrating the end of **Ramadan**.

COVID-19 Quarantines Generate Tensions and Stretch Security Resources

pp. 10, 13, 23

- AFP and police resources were **deployed for quarantine enforcement**, especially around Manila.
- ISIS-EA social media posts **called for attacks** in response to **COVID-19 restrictions** and threatened violence if mosques were not allowed to reopen.
- In May, ISIS-EA **attacked a COVID-19 quarantine checkpoint**, killing 2 AFP soldiers.
- The Philippine government’s **COVID-19 ceasefire with communist rebels broke down**, with both sides returning to active fighting.

COVID-19 Impacts U.S. Advise and Assist Efforts

pp. 15-17

- **U.S. forces interacted remotely** with AFP partners in advise and assist efforts and in providing intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR).
- The **AFP increasingly relied on its own ISR** to supplement U.S. support.
- U.S. **civil affairs efforts** focused on delivering **medical supplies and equipment** to Philippine healthcare workers.

Philippines Suspends Termination of Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA)

p. 19

- In February, the Philippine government announced it would terminate the VFA, which grants **access to U.S. military personnel and vessels**.
- The June decision to suspend termination **extended** the VFA for **at least 6 months**.
- The **COVID-19** pandemic, worsening **economic trends**, and aggressive Chinese behavior in the **South China Sea** factored into the suspension.

Philippine Government Enacts New Counterterrorism Law

pp. 20-21

- The Anti-Terrorism Act enhances law enforcement powers to arrest individuals for **planning** and **providing material support** for terrorist acts.
- U.S. advisors said they hope the law will help the Philippines transition from a military to a **law enforcement approach** to terrorism.
- The law has drawn local and international **criticism** from those who fear it may lead to abuses of power and **silencing of political dissent**.

USAID Approves \$22 Million for the COVID-19 Response

pp. 24-28

- Much of this assistance had yet to be implemented, with only **3 percent of the funding disbursed** this quarter.
- **Weak health systems** and **limited testing** hindered the COVID-19 response in the southern Philippines.
- USAID implementers adopted **remote monitoring** of programs and faced **travel restrictions** in some areas.

Oversight

p. 30-37

- Lead IG and partner agencies completed **6** oversight reports this quarter, including audits of **DoD mobile medical team training** and of the **DoS anti-terrorism program**.