

Panel Executive Brief: Perspectives from the Frontlines: Successes & Failures of JSOTF-Philippines

The current conflict in the Philippines is the latest development in a series of insurgencies based on religious and economic grievances. The United States has been involved since WWII, but to successfully stabilize the country, the host government and military need to have the capabilities to work productively with the populations most affected by the conflict.

Speakers

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Moderator: S. Rebecca Zimmerman - Policy Researcher, RAND

Key Issues/Problems discussed:

- In the Philippines, the major challenge is security assistance and stabilization; building military and government capacity, along with government legitimacy, will help overcome that challenge.
- Inadequately addressed by the government, historic economic grievances against Muslim minority groups in Mindanao greatly contribute to recruitment by radicalization groups, as well as other issues in the region.
- Displacement is a proxy indicator of other key issues in the region.
- Risk aversion is widespread in the international community.

Key Recommendations:

- Community-targeted initiatives to address conflicts and human rights issues.
- An increasingly holistic and wide-ranging approach is necessary.
- More focus should be on supporting the Filipino government's ability to solve domestic issues since the international community/USG has risk aversion to investing in work on the ground.
- Must support the Filipino government to solve its own problems.
- Support the people and government of Mindanao; seek out local solutions.

Significance of SAR:

The SAR is a comprehensive plan and should be utilized as such. In the Philippines, insurgencies are not the only problem, but also a visible symptom of domestic issues. A holistic, inclusive stabilization initiative that appropriately utilizes local actors within the country should help mitigate the wide array of domestic issues plaguing the Philippines.