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Primer:

Oplan Bayanihan: Antipeople program of the Aquino regime

Information Bureau
Communist Party of the Philippines

Oplan Bayanihan (OPB) is the newest Internal Security Operation (ISO) plan of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). It was issued in January 2011 after approval by Benigno Aquino III, the AFP's commander-in-chief and leader of the puppet Philippine government. The AFP will be implementing OPB from 2011 to 2016, with the objective of crushing all armed threats to the state in the first half of the program (2011-2013).

OPB, in essence, is a continuation of the failed Oplan Bantay Laya (OBL) and other past ISO. Like them, OPB aims to defeat the armed resistance and mass struggles of the Filipino people. In accordance with Aquino's marching orders, the AFP has declared as its objective the decimation of the New People's Army in three years, which constitutes the first half of OPB's term.

To defeat the armed resistance and mass struggles, the AFP is undertaking a brutal suppression campaign under OPB. As in the past, its target is not only the NPA but more so, the unarmed people and their democratic, progressive and revolutionary organizations and movements.

To obscure OPB's brutality, the AFP simultaneously undertakes massive psy-war, political gimmickry and disinformation. OPB ostensibly advocates the "whole-of-nation" and "people-centered" approaches. Under OPB's guidance, AFP spokespersons

now mouth the catchphrases "respect for human rights" and "winning the peace" in order to deceive the people and cover up their brutality. The AFP derived these concepts from the US Counterinsurgency Guide.

1. What is OPB's content? What are its objectives?

OPB's main objective is to crush the people's armed resistance and defend the stability of the ruling state. In particular, OPB aims to use armed repression to defeat the NPA and utilize the peace talks with the NDFP to suppress it and effect its surrender.

Winning the peace. OPB emphasizes the use of the word "peace" to distance itself from past ISO. In fact, OPB has been dubbed by the AFP as an "Internal Peace and Security Program."

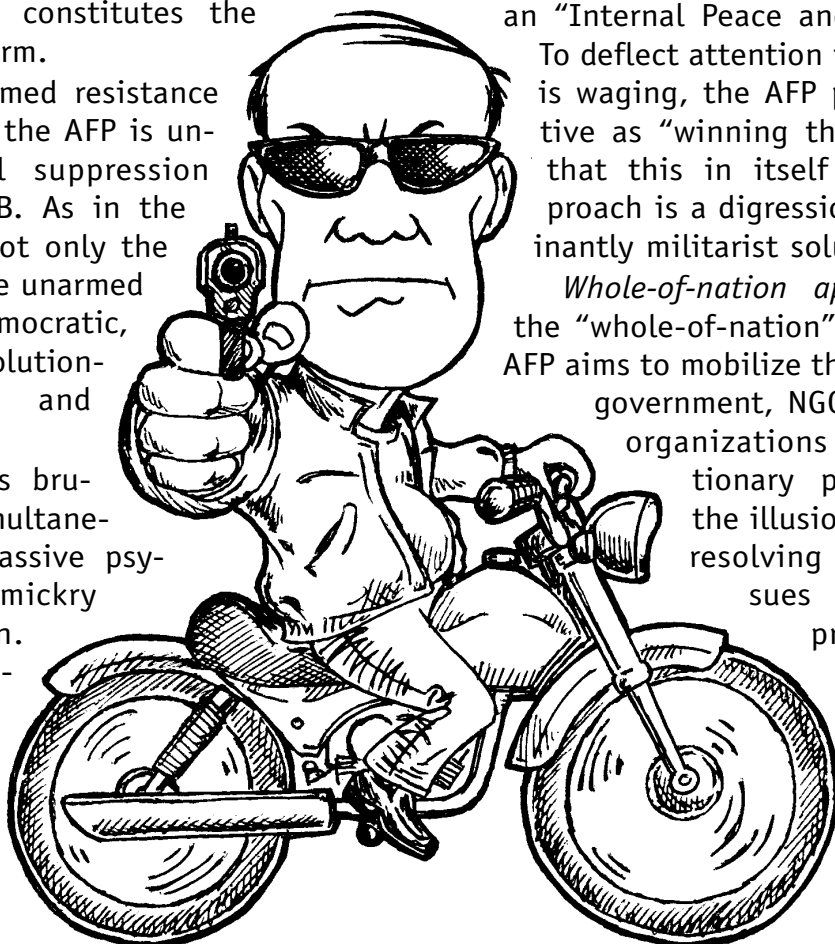
To deflect attention from the brutal war it is waging, the AFP projects OPB's objective as "winning the peace" and claims that this in itself shows that its approach is a digression from the old dominantly militarist solution.

Whole-of-nation approach. It stresses the "whole-of-nation" approach where the AFP aims to mobilize the various agencies of government, NGOs and "civil society"

organizations for counterrevolutionary purposes and create the illusion that government is resolving socio-economic issues by launching token

programs. The AFP thus arrogates unto itself the civilian government's role of directing these agencies.

Respect for human rights. The



AFP keeps on prating about "respect for human rights" but only for the purpose of changing what it claims to be a mere perception that soldiers are involved in human rights violations. To do this, the AFP stands ready to undertake showcase programs such as setting up human rights offices, in addition to other gimmicks.

Strategic concepts. OPB has four strategic concepts for the achievement of its objectives. These are to "contribute to the permanent and peaceful closure of all armed conflict," "conduct focused military operations," "support community-based peace and development efforts" and "carry out security sector reform."

Nonetheless, the AFP has not set aside its main emphasis on waging a brutal war of suppression. According to the OPB, "the military's main role is to address the armed capability of groups who threaten the security and safety of the state." At the same time, it declares that "there shall be no diminution in the importance of combat military operations in addressing the challenges posed by armed threat groups...."

According to 3rd ID commander Maj. Gen. Vicente Porto, "The AFP may enhance its civil-military work under its new six-year campaign plan, but will not lessen military operations against armed groups. The intensity of combat operations will continue."

2. How will OPB address the armed revolutionary movement?

In accordance with OPB, the AFP will be using the following methods to fight the armed revolutionary movement: (a) combat operations against the New People's Army; (b) operations against the mass base of the revolu-

tionary movement; and (c) disinformation and psywar operations and mobilization of so-called stakeholders or sectors presumed to be interested in the defeat of the revolutionary movement.

Combat operations. Said the OPB: "The AFP shall continue using legitimate force and conducting combat operations with even greater vigor but only against armed insurgents. Military combat operations shall be deliberate, accurate and precise.... Intensified and relentless pursuit of the NPA is intended to exhaust their armed capabilities and diminish their will to fight."

OPB continues to rely on the AFP's conduct of Triad Operations characterized by the simultaneous waging of combat, intelligence and civil-military operations (CMO). In conducting combat operations, the AFP will continue to utilize and develop the counter guerrilla methods of operation it has used these past years. (See AB's special issue dated June 11, 2010 on Oplan Bantay Laya) The AFP is targeting the enhancement of its maneuverability, firepower, communications and intelligence capability.

Operations against the mass base. Under OPB, the old spe-



cial operations teams (SOT) or Reengineered SOT (RSOT) will be renamed Community Peace and Development Teams (CPDT). The change in name is geared towards banishing from the people's minds the bloody record of such operations in the past ten years. Nonetheless, there has been no essential change in the tasks of the CPDT compared to those of the RSOT.

Disinformation operations to divide the people. OPB emphasizes the mobilization of so-called stakeholders. Through disinformation and psywar, the AFP wants to isolate the revolutionary forces and project OPB as a war waged by the entire country against the revolutionary movement.

The pretense of advocating human rights is designed to deodorize its image before the people, since according to the AFP, it is "the continued perception of human rights violations allegedly committed by military personnel" that is the "greatest hindrance" to "stronger civilian-military cooperation."

The AFP has been giving all-out attention to influencing the mass media. It has assembled a huge number of spokespersons and scrambles to make its presence felt in the media whenever an incident involving its soldiers arises in order to influence news development in its favor.

In accordance with OPB, the AFP will be stepping up its psywar operations in schools to distance the youth from the revolution. Within and outside campuses, the AFP launches fora that it uses to spread lies against the revolutionary movement. It maligns even progressive mass organizations, insinuating links with the armed movement.

Under OPB, the AFP has arrogated unto itself the role of leading cooperative efforts among various government agencies and NGOs for psywar purposes. The AFP will be utilizing the "Peace and Order Councils" to organize government activities and projects to deliver services to the people and gloss over the fundamental socio-economic problems of the masses such as landlessness which lie at the roots of their poverty and suffering.

3. What is COPD?

Community Organizing for Peace and Development (COPD) is what OPB calls AFP military operations focused mainly on unarmed people suspected of constituting the mass base of the revolutionary movement. COPD operations closely combine psywar tactics and repression.

Under OPB, the old SOT or RSOT is transformed into Community Peace and Development Teams (CPDT). Through this new monicker, the AFP wants to project COPD as distinct from RSOT operations which had acquired notoriety for their brutality under OBL.

The AFP describes COPD operations as "winning the people's hearts and minds." It will try to use the "soft" approach in dealing with the masses in order to win their minds, deflect attention from their fundamental problems and crush their determination to fight and wage revolution. Another objective is to camouflage what in essence is its "hard" approach of silencing and suppressing the masses and their resistance.

The "soft" approach will be used to project the military as a force "not only for war" but one that "delivers services to the people." Public relations gimmicks will be launched such

What is the US Counterinsurgency Guide?

The US Counterinsurgency Guide is a document issued by the US State Department in January 2009. It lays down the formula for a so-called new "counterinsurgency" doctrine that involves none other than launching massive psywar operations alongside brutal armed suppression. In accordance with this document, US imperialism will be directly involved in the "counterinsurgency" campaigns of various countries, depending on the level of intervention necessary.

Emphasis on "politics". The US Counterinsurgency Guide states that the key to fighting armed revolutions is "politics." In particular, it wants the ruling political system to be credible and acceptable to the people ostensibly to win them back to the folds of government and away from supporting revolutions. Thus, Benigno Aquino III's ascension to power is favorable to the US design because he has been projected as an advocate of change.

For the US Counterinsurgency Guide, the acceptability of the ruling political system is extremely important in order to render the armed annihilation of the revolutionary forces acceptable to the people. As in the past, it is the violent suppression of the people's revolutionary armed resistance that is at the core of the US' counterrevolutionary strategy.

US war, US guidance. The US has constantly guided the drafting of internal security operations (ISO). US military advisers serve as mentors and guides of the AFP in coming up with ISO. In the past, the AFP used the US' "anti-terrorism" doctrine in drafting Oplan Bantay Laya. Oplan Bayanihan, on the other hand, was drafted in accordance with the US Counterinsurgency Guide. The AFP's war is actually the US war to suppress anti-imperialist forces in the country. The US is the main supplier of weapons and war materiel to the AFP through the US Foreign Military Financing and Excess Defense Articles. US imperialism has expanded and strengthened military assistance to the Aquino government and the AFP in the form of modern weapons and equipment and intelligence and combat training.

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as "medical missions" in partnership with the Department of Health, "livelihood projects" including the Conditional Cash Transfer program (or Sagip Pamilyang Pilipino) of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), literacy programs in partnership with the Department of Education as well as other "peace and development outreach programs." It will be using civic organizations such as the Rotary Club of

the Philippines and reformist organizations like Akbayan for this purpose.

It will also be launching psywar gimmicks such as "surrenders" and "balik-baril" (return of firearms) programs. It will sow black propaganda against the revolutionary movement and spread intrigues among the masses to destroy their unity.

The "soft" approach will lose effect once it is conducted

alongside the "hard" approach. Launching armed operations in villages suspected of being part of the revolutionary movement's mass base sows fear among the people and aims to reestablish the authority of the reactionary state. This "hard" approach involves outright violence and suppression of the people's fundamental human and civil rights. Following are some examples:

a) Forcing people to sign documents stating that they have returned to the fold of the government. This is usually done after villagers are coerced into attending mass meetings.

b) "Inviting" suspected mass leaders or supporters of the revolutionary movement to go to military camps or headquarters to undergo interrogation that is often accompanied by torture. Anyone who declines the "invitation" is automatically branded a "rebel" or "enemy" by the military.

c) Witchhunting or identifying members and sympathizers of the revolutionary movement. This is done through the conduct of a census. Another tactic is to control the villagers' movements. In its severest form, this involves setting up checkpoints in the barrio where the names of everyone who comes in or goes out is listed, along with their purpose and length of their stay. The amount of food and supplies being bought per family is likewise monitored.

d) Activists, mass leaders or sympathizers of the revolutionary movement who have been identified are targeted for intimidation, pressure, beatings, interrogation and torture, incarceration or execution.

If the people are not deceived by the military's gimmickry, their courage will shine through and they will continue to stand up to assert their ba-

sic demands for genuine land reform and other fundamental democratic changes. We can expect the AFP to eventually discard its put-on benign image, reveal its true violent nature and use force to suppress the people's resistance.

4. How is OPB related to the peace talks?

For the AFP and OPB, the peace talks are an instrument for pacification and surrender. In accordance with OPB, the AFP must intensify its military operations to thoroughly weaken and render the NPA inconsequential in order to show the revolutionary forces the "futility" of armed struggle and thereby "convince" them to just engage in peace negotiations with the ruling state. While the regime engages in peace talks, the AFP views its role as that of "ensuring that the entity the government is talking to will not use violence or the threat of violence as an advantage in negotiating."

The AFP does not view the peace talks as an opportunity to resolve the political, social and economic issues that are at the roots of the civil war in the Philippines. In the AFP's eyes, the revolutionary forces must first lay down their arms before negotiating with the government. As far as the AFP is concerned, if the NPA does not silence its arms, there is no sense in negotiating.

Such is the AFP's narrow definition of "peace": the defeat of the people's resistance in order to achieve stability for

the ruling state.

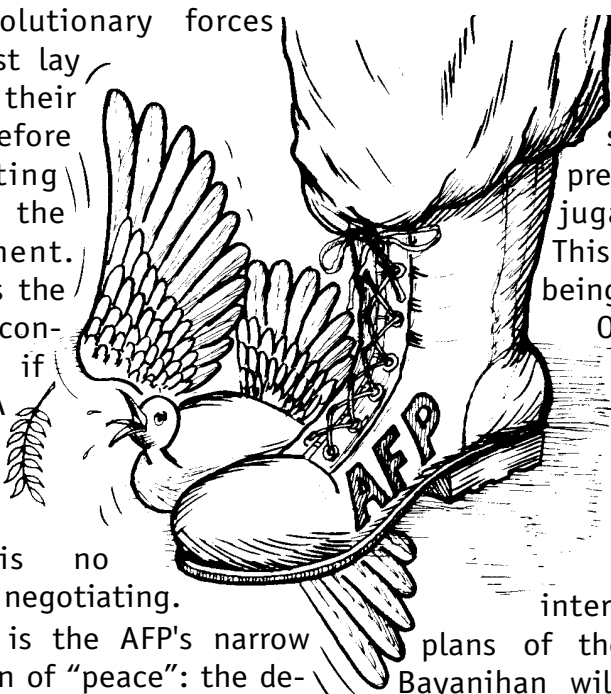
OPB turns a blind eye to the reasons why there is no peace and why people's war continues to rage in the country. For the AFP, "there is no direct causal link between low economic status and armed conflict." OPB reduces the reasons behind the civil war in the Philippines to mere "perceptions of relative deprivation." The widespread problem of landlessness is merely considered a "local problem" that is being "exploited" by groups fighting the government.

OPB turns a blind eye to the fact that the people's armed resistance currently raging is deeply rooted in problems wrought by the existence of the ruling semicolonial and semi-feudal system: landlessness among the majority of the peasantry, massive unemployment, poverty and hunger, a backward and non-industrialized economy, lack of genuine democracy and severe oppression.

Thus, it is OPB's objective to change the people's perception in the belief that this will cause their armed revolutionary resistance to subside even without fundamental changes in their poverty-stricken, oppressed and subjugated state. This is the "peace" being peddled by OPB.

5. Will OPB succeed in its objectives?

Like previous internal security plans of the AFP, Oplan Bayanihan will also fail to defeat the armed resistance and mass struggles of the Fil-



ipino people.

The Aquino regime persists in implementing its antipeople and pro-imperialist programs and shows no intention of resolving the fundamental problems of the people. Instead, in perpetuating and defending the policies of privatization, liberalization, deregulation and denationalization, it continues to exacerbate the people's poverty and suffering. This merely pushes the people to tread the path of revolutionary struggle.

OPB will not succeed in deceiving the people. The people themselves will see the difference between rhetoric and actual deeds. OPB will fail even as it brutalizes the people. The people's determination to stand up and fight will intensify as the AFP steps up its atrocities.

The people will never support OPB because it advances the interests of their oppressors. The system being defended by OPB is the system that inflicts suffering on the people. It is corrupt, moribund and cri-

sis-ridden.

Oplan Bayanihan will fail to suppress mass struggles and the armed revolution. OPB will not be able to stand in the way of the people's desire to smash and replace the ruling system. Their revolutionary struggle is rapidly advancing.

6. What are our tasks in fighting OPB?

The Filipino people and their revolutionary forces must resist and thwart Oplan Bayanihan. They must muster their courage and forge their unity to take all-out action and fight OPB.

We must raise the people's consciousness to prevent them from being deceived by OPB. Courses must be developed about OPB. We must assiduously monitor and expose the workings of OPB and mobilize the masses in order to convey cases of deception and fascism nationwide. We must thoroughly defend human rights. Mass struggles and other mass actions must be launched to resist the AFP's brutality and fascism.

We must expose every single case of deception, brutality and human rights violation by the AFP and let the cries of justice reverberate throughout the land.

We must go all-out in advancing mass struggles to fight for genuine land reform and the people's other democratic demands, and for social justice and national liberation. We must closely link these to the calls for a just and lasting peace. Demands for fundamental change must be actively advanced in the peace talks.

We must intensify armed struggle, thwart military operations and thoroughly advance people's war. We must rapidly expand and strengthen the NPA, the mass organizations and the Party. AB

Defending human rights: The AFP's hollow slogan

The AFP will fail to live up to the OPB slogan of respect for human rights. The violent suppression of civil and political rights is intrinsic to the conduct of reactionary wars.

OPB is focused on defeating the armed resistance and mass struggles of the Filipino people in order to defend the ruling system. Violence is the AFP's main instrument in suppressing the people's cry for social justice, genuine democracy and national liberation and defending the interests of big foreign companies and their cohorts in the local exploiting classes.

The AFP's human rights catchphrase and gimmickry are devoid of substance. Its much-vaunted "human rights offices" and the "human rights manual" that would supposedly guide its fascist soldiers will all come to nought.

Despite its bloody record in the past ten years, the AFP has consistently denied that it is a violator of human rights, claiming that this is merely a public perception. Thus, it comes as no surprise that neither the AFP nor the Aquino regime has done anything by way of rectification. Not a single AFP soldier or officer has been punished for the tens of thousands of human rights violations committed from the time of Marcos up to the Arroyo regime. The fascist forces have therefore continued to sow violence and terror against the people.

In the first five months alone of Benigno Cojuangco Aquino III's regime, there were at least 25 victims of extrajudicial killing perpetrated by AFP-directed death squads.

Militarization goes on unabated in the countryside, especially in villages suspected of being part of the revolutionary movement's mass base. Massacres, illegal arrests and torture of civilians continue. Soldiers conducting operations endanger civilians by using schools, barangay halls, barangay centers, chapels, private homes and other civilian facilities as military detachments. Civilians are also used as human shields, which violates Protocol II of the Geneva Conventions and International Humanitarian Law. AB

What are ISO? What were the AFP's past ISO and what was their record?

Internal Security Operations (ISO) are guides to counterrevolution. The AFP's ISO serves to guide the conduct of its counterrevolutionary war against the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), New People's Army (NPA) and other armed movements viewed as threats to the ruling state. Their objectives are to 1) maintain the current exploitative and oppressive system; and 2) suppress the people's mass struggles and armed resistance.

Failed ISO. Various ISO Plans have been implemented by the puppet and fascist regimes from that of Ferdinand Marcos down to the time of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. They all failed in their declared objective of defeating the people's revolutionary armed resistance.

a) *1968 up to the early 1970s:* "Nip in the bud" campaign that aimed to eradicate the then-nascent NPA. It was characterized by several small and big military campaigns of encirclement and suppression. Task forces comprising composite forces of the constabulary and police (PC-INP) and the military (AFP) were formed in every region and province. In Cagayan Valley, a task force composed of 7,000 troops was used against three companies of Red fighters. In Sorsogon, 1,000 military, PC and police forces were ranged against an NPA platoon with eight squads.

b) *Oplan Mamamayan (1970s-1986):* Characterized by the brutal suppression of all democratic freedoms through massacres, assassinations, saturation drives, forced evacuations, bombings and the burning of entire communities, blackmail, extortion, illegal arrests, illegal detention and torture.

Millions of people suffered the atrocities of the 14-year Marcos dictatorship.

c) *Oplan Lambat Bitag I, II, III and IV (1988-1998):* Series of ISO that were begun under Corazon Aquino's regime until Gen. Fidel V. Ramos' rule. This was implemented under the guidance of the US' Low Intensity Conflict doctrine that emphasized psywar tactics alongside the conduct of brutal and dirty wars. The AFP refurbished its image, calling itself the "New AFP". Soon after, it shed its mask when Aquino declared "Total War" in 1987. Armed vigilante groups like the Alsa Masa, Pulahan, Putian and Decolores were formed, which eventually became the Civilian Volunteer Organization (CVO) and Citizens Armed Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU). The AFP implemented the Clear-Hold-Consolidate tactic alongside combat and psywar operations.

d) *Oplan Makabayan (1998-2001):* Described as the "Total Approach" by Joseph Estrada's regime, its objective was to block the revolutionary forces' recovery efforts. The Clear-Hold-Consolidate-Develop (CHCD) tactic was implemented. Its focus was on the Southern Tagalog and Bicol regions. Its second priority was Northern Min-

danao.

e) *Oplan Bantay Laya 1 and 2 (2001-2010):* Under OBL, the AFP's objective was to crush and render the NPA irrelevant. OBL 1 and 2 were marked by their brutality and terrorism against the Filipino people. Gloria Arroyo's more than nine-year rule came close to the fascist Marcos dictatorship in terms of its bloody record. The most notorious among Arroyo's military henchmen was the butcher Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan who sowed fascist terror in Mindoro, Eastern Visayas and Central Luzon.

A campaign of extrajudicial killings was unleashed, mainly targeting activists and critics of the ruling regime. More than 1,000 persons fell victim to death squads formed and mobilized by the AFP.

Aside from military offensives, the Arroyo regime also launched a so-called legal offensive where activists, mass leaders and even the administration's harsh critics who were branded "enemies of the state" were slapped with trumped-up charges. The campaign did not distinguish between legal and illegal, open and underground, armed and unarmed elements. Thus, patrolling military troops have become a common sight in urban poor communities even in Metro Manila.

The US-Arroyo regime failed to suppress the armed revolution and mass struggles. Less than six months before its deadline in June 2010, then AFP chief of staff Gen. Victor Ibrado admitted that OBL 1 and 2 failed to decimate the NPA or even render it an inconsequential armed force. **AB**