

What's at stake with U.S. bases

If the current drive by liberal Democrats and the self-proclaimed "peace movement" to force a U.S. abandonment of the Clark Field and Subic Bay military bases in the Philippines succeeds, the principal remaining outpost of American military power in the entire region will have been toppled, opening up Southeast Asia for Soviet political and military domination. Without the facilities in the Philippines, the U.S. Navy will have no military-qualified drydock and refueling capabilities anywhere in the Far East.

Since the end of the Vietnam War, the United States has withdrawn slowly but steadily from Asia. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, has tripled its ground-troop strength in Siberia since the mid-1960s, along with its naval and air strength. The Soviet Pacific Fleet ranks first of the four main Soviet fleets, and in 1979, the Soviet Union established a theater headquarters at Chita, near China's Manchuria province, to create a centralized command and control facility for the entire region.

A particular goal of the Soviet military buildup in Asia, stretching along an arc from Afghanistan to Kamchatka, is

control of the trade lifelines through the area. The Malacca, Sunda, and Lombok straits bear the traffic of 50% of the West's oil supplies and 80% of its other strategic materials. Naval facilities at Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam have vastly upgraded Soviet maneuverability from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific.

The Carter administration started the process of stripping U.S. forces in Korea, and thereby increased the strategic burden on Clark Field (Air Force) and Subic Bay (Navy) in the Philippines. U.S. capabilities were stretched even thinner by assigning Clark Field as one of the command posts for the Rapid Deployment Force to protect Mideast oil supplies.

The Soviets have gained a critical margin of strategic superiority in the region, which includes:

- at least 135 SS-20 missiles reportedly stationed in three locations: central Siberia, east of Lake Baikal and along the northeastern border of China;

- 52 divisions of highly mechanized and highly trained troops. Since the 1979 invasion of Afghanistan, Moscow has substantially increased its forces in Western Asia to 100,000 troops and air bases guarded by SAM missiles, strength on a par with the Far Eastern Command;

- a Soviet Pacific fleet, the largest in the Soviet Navy, that numbers 765 ships, including 120 ballistic missiles and the largest component of nuclear submarines;

- base facilities at Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam that can service 12 Soviet warships at one time. Large depots, communications facilities, including radar navigation and radio monitoring equipment and bombproof submarine pens have also been built at Cam Ranh Bay.

Guerrilla groups unite to overthrow Marcos

One of the most dangerous recent developments in the Philippines is the armed collaboration between units of the Muslim Moro National Liberation Front and the communist New People's Army against government troops in Mindanao. If the three principal guerrilla movements ever joined forces on a national level, they could seize control of nine of the rural provinces and hold them for several weeks against government troops, according to a report in *Worldview* magazine (fall 1983). They are now capable of taking on platoon-sized units.

Moro National Liberation Front: the largest of the three groups with 15-20,000 members, the MNLF is said to be armed with short-range missiles. There are two factions within it, one allied to Saudi Arabia, the other to Libya. In December 1983, the head of the Libyan-backed

faction, Nur Misuari, was replaced by Dimas Pundato, whom government sources describe as a "new, more dangerous" entity. In early March, 400 MNLF guerrillas waged a two-hour battle against government troops on Basilan, an island off Mindanao.

New People's Army: membership in the communist-backed grouping is reported at 5-7,000, with a mass base of about 1 million. There are three dominant factions in the NPA: one pro-Soviet, one pro-Chinese, and one other; the Soviet faction is said to be particularly active now. The NPA, in alliance with other groups, may now have the capability of eliminating the top leadership of the government, "either through assassination or armed insurrection," according to one source.

Social Democrats: the smallest of the three guerrilla movements, estimated at 3,000 members, priest named Intangan. The Social Dems are trained camps on the island of Borneo and then smuggled back into the Philippines by MNLF underground networks, our sources report.