Conflict Factsheet

U.S. Military Base and Toxic Waste Dumping in the Philippines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of conflict</th>
<th>Intensity</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1993 – ongoing</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict Locality</th>
<th>Resources</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Eastern Asia</td>
<td>Fish, Water</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
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<tr>
<td>United States of America, Philippines</td>
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Conflict Summary

The closure of U.S. military bases and the lack of responsibility for the U.S. to clean up toxic waste that contaminates the site and surrounding environment has been a source of conflict between civil society and both the Philippine and U.S. governments.
Conceptual Model

Climate Change

Social and Economic Drivers

Increased Water Scarcity

Pollution / Environmental Degradation

Environmental Change

Livelihood Insecurity

Public Health Risks

Intermediary Mechanisms

Interstate Tensions

Anti-State Grievances

Fragility and Conflict Risks

Context Factors

Fish, Water

Power Differential
Conflict History

Former U.S. military bases at Clark and Subic Bay leaked toxic waste into the surrounding environment. The environmental effects on water quality, aquatic life and human health led to civil society pressure on both the Philippine government and U.S. government to clean up the site. However, the lack of contractual obligation for the U.S. to clean up the site has meant that no comprehensive clean-up project has been initiated.

Disputed responsibilities

In 1993, a WHO report found that toxic dumping, accidental spills, and environmentally destructive practices had made numerous sites at Clark Airbase and military base at Subic Bay unsafe and detrimental to human health (Asis, 2011). Toxic waste included lead, aviation fuel, underground storage tank leaks, sewerage contamination, unexploded materials and radioactive materials (Kemmiya, 1997). The responsibility of the clean-up was disputed. The military bases agreement did not impose any well-defined environmental responsibility upon the U.S. to clean up after the withdrawal (Asis, 2011).

Various NGOs and environmental watchdog organizations, such as the People’s Task Force on Bases Clean-up, have placed pressure on the Philippine government to hold the U.S. accountable and responsible for the cleanup but no success has been observed. The sites remain contaminated and a danger to ecological and human health.

Resolution Efforts

U.S. involvement in the clean-up

After the closure of the base in 1992, the WHO conducted an evaluation report on the site in 1993 (Kemmiya, 1997). In 1994, the People’s Task Force for Bases Clean-up started a public outreach and advocacy campaign at the local and national levels seeking to hold the U.S. responsible for the removal of toxic wastes in their former military installations (Asis, 2011).

In 2000, the U.S. donated $5 million under a global climate change program that was intended to assist the Philippines to foster a cleaner and more productive environment. The U.S. signed a joint statement with the Philippine government committing to shared information and assistance to enhance institutional and technical capabilities of the country to address public health and environmental concerns caused by toxic waste (Bayanihan Foundation, 2011).

However, this has remained the extent of the U.S.’s participation in addressing public grievances over the toxic waste. Following this agreement the Philippine government formed a task force to address the issue but this quickly dissolved with a change in presidency. More action has come from civil society groups.

Legal actions

In 2000, the People’s Task Force for Bases Clean-up evolved into the Alliance for Bases Clean Up (ABC) - a broader campaign that includes national and international alliances (Asis, 2011). In 2000, the ABC filed a case in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit in San Francisco, which was rejected from the court in 2003 (Tritten, 2010). The ABC has pursued a variety of local, national, and international campaigns...
in conjunction with other NGOs, such as the Bayanihan Foundation, to expose the liability of the U.S. Individual cases have also been filed against the government of the Philippines for compensation for their health complications and death of their family members (Regencia, 2014).

The failure of the Philippine government to address civil society concerns has been attributed to the lack of motivation by the government to confront the U.S. Although the Philippine government even considered taking the issue to the International Court of Justice none of these steps were undertaken. The Philippines rely on the U.S. to support them in defending their claims to the Scarborough Shoal and Second Thomas Shoal - two territorial disputes with China, which has been suggested to be the trade off for accepting toxic waste dumping (Regencia, 2014).

**Next steps**
To resolve this conflict, the central government of the Philippines will need to take greater responsibility to address the environmental problems in the area and place pressure on the U.S. to contribute.

### Intensities & Influences

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<tr>
<td><strong>INTENSITIES</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>International / Geopolitical Intensity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Human Suffering</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>INFLUENCES</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Environmental Influences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Societal Influences</td>
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**Diplomatic Crisis**
Note of diplomatic crisis in case history, conflict purely verbal

**Violent Conflict**
No

**Mass displacement**
None

**Cross Border Mass Displacement**
No

### Resolution Success

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<tr>
<td><strong>Reduction in geographical scope</strong></td>
<td>There has been no reduction in geographical scope.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Increased capacity to address grievance in the future</strong></td>
<td>There is no increased capacity to address grievances in the future.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Grievance Resolution</strong></td>
<td>Grievances have been mostly ignored.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Causal Attribution of Decrease in Conflict Intensity</strong></td>
<td>There has been no reduction in intensity</td>
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Entry Points for Resilience and Peace Building

Cooperation
The U.S. donated $5 million under a global climate change program that was intended to assist the Philippines to foster a cleaner and more productive environment. The U.S also signed a joint statement with the Philippine government with the aim of enhancing institutional and technical capabilities of the country to address public health and environmental concerns caused by toxic waste. However, no actionable response has been initiated by the Philippine government.

Mediation & arbitration
Individual cases have also been filed against the government of the Philippines for compensation for their health complications and death of their family members.

Resources and Materials

References with URL
Tritten, T. (2010). Decades later, U.S. military pollution in Philippines linked to deaths

Further information