



(S//SI) Australian SIGINTers Surge to Protect US Troops in Philippines

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(S//SI) DSD worked 24/7 to tip off US forces to the location of terrorists who might attack them.

(S//SI) BALIKATAN 2006 (BK06) was a two-week long joint exercise conducted from mid-February to early March 2006 between the military of the United States and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). The exercise was held in the Philippines, including the southern island of Jolo, a poor and predominantly Muslim island. Jolo is known to be a stronghold of two major terrorist groups, Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG). In the SIGINT division-of-effort, NSA/CSS Hawaii works the ASG, while our Australian partner, the Defence Signals Directorate (DSD), works the JI.

(S//SI) While there are normally fewer than 50 US military on Jolo to advise the AFP on how to combat the terrorists, during BK06 that number swelled to about 400. The all-source analytic component of US Pacific Command (PACOM) was concerned that the extra US and AFP troop presence could present a tempting target for the JI, ASG, or even both working together. Even though there had been intelligence indicating that at least the JI had attack plans in the works, the consensus was that the groups would probably not risk an attack during BK06.

(S//SI) However, those assumptions changed rapidly just after BK06 began, when SIGINT detected that JI had just transported two suicide-bombing volunteers from Malaysia to Jolo. The last piece of a current threat stream was now in place, with the increased US military contingent as the likely target. Special Operations Command, Pacific (SOCPAC) and USPACOM requested help from the SIGINT Community to provide increased vigilance and expedited reporting to help ensure protection of the forces deployed for BK06.

(S//SI) Since DSD has the lead for SIGINT on JI, they were contacted to see what they could do. Their response was immediate and comprehensive. Leveraging their assets, they launched a 24/7 effort that included compressing processing and reporting timelines to provide outstanding force protection and tracking of High Value Targets (HVTs) on Jolo. On several occasions during BK06, their SIGINT enabled PACOM operators to plan and conduct operations against HVTs on Jolo.



(U) Suspected member of rebel group Abu Sayyaf escorted away from reporters in Manila Court (Reuters)

(S//SI) The PACOM Command element, the Joint Intelligence Operations Center (JIOC) and SOCPAC passed along kudos on DSD's work on a near-daily basis. DSD's work also helped the JIOC to better analyze HVT locations and possible future movement, in addition to allowing another layer of analysis that filled existing intelligence gaps and provided analysts with a better understanding of relationships between terrorists, their capabilities and intent.

(S//SI) **The bottom line is that DSD's response probably saved lives.** Once again, DSD demonstrated the key role that our partners play in SIGINT collection in general, and specifically, the Global War on Terrorism.

(U//FOUO) See a related SID *today* article: [\(U\) Quarterly Update: What's Happening in Hawaii](#)

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