

**Remarks by Ambassador Harry K. Thomas, Jr.**  
**JSOTF-P Change of Command Ceremony**  
**As Prepared for Delivery**  
**July 2, 2010**

Good morning. I want to express my appreciation to the Joint Special Operations Task Force – Philippines, known as “JSOTF-P,” for offering me the opportunity to be a part of this change of command ceremony. I am humbled today because I feel myself in the presence of heroes. I admire and respect all of you.

First, let me salute the heroes of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, and in particular:

- Lieutenant General Dolorfino (Dolor-fino)
- Brigadier General Guerrero (Guer-rair-ro)
- Rear Admiral Pama and (Paa-maa)
- Brigadier General Danilo

You are, as we like to say, the tip of the spear protecting Mindanao from threats, and we thank you for your courage and sacrifice.

Let me thank another hero – Mrs. Sherrie Coultrup. We have had the good fortune to work with Bill for the last three years – but you are the one who has made it possible for him to leave home and focus on his duty. Thank you for your understanding. It is certainly time that we give him back to you.

Men, women of JSOTF – you are heroes too. From Hawaii, from Guam, from many states in the union you have left home and hearth to answer your nation’s call. You work hard, take risks, and make sacrifices every day to ensure that our partnership with the Armed Forces of the Philippines is strong as they confront terrorist threats.

Your mission continues to have the interest and support at the highest levels of our government. Never doubt that the work you do contributes greatly to the security of our homeland and the common interests of our allies throughout the region.

Bill, you are truly a hero. It is an honor to be here recognizing three years of leadership, of courage, of vision and of sheer tenacity. Most importantly, three years of achievement. You are an extraordinary leader who has developed JSOTF-P into an enabling force for peace, for improvement, and for progress in Mindanao.

On the military side the record is impressive indeed.

JSOTF-P has not only supported the AFP in relentlessly pursuing transnational terrorists, but has:

- Saved the lives of 91 critically injured soldiers and Marines through medical evacuations.
- Disposed of over 64,000 pounds of explosive materials.
- Implemented over 150 construction programs totaling 900 million pesos.
- Treated thousands of medical and dental patients that may have not received care otherwise.

Equally important, you have worked with AFP to build partnerships that make the impossible possible. Thanks to those partnerships, civil-military operations can take place in isolated areas once hostile to government elements.

Those partnerships make possible livelihood projects for rogue fighters willing to turn in their guns. Those partnerships make it possible for USAID to build infrastructure, train children, open businesses and create new futures. We are grateful for our civilian guests here who make

those projects possible – Mayor Lobregat (Lobe-reh-ghat) and Police Chief de Ocampo. Your support has been essential.

Finally, let's not forget the main focus. Abu Sayyaf, JI and RSM are weaker today than they were three years ago, without a doubt. That's an accomplishment we can all celebrate. So, Bill, on behalf of the entire Embassy team, you have my sincerest appreciation for your tireless and incredibly successful efforts.

Gus, you inherit a thriving command and an excellent relationship with the AFP. We are delighted to welcome you to the Embassy team as well. Working together we will all continue to build success upon success. You can count on us, and I know we can count on you.

Thank you.