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U.S., Philippines Special Operations Forces Train Together as Part of Flash Piston

Story Number: NNS080707-01
7/7/2008

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NAVAL BASE SANGLEY POINT, Republic of the Philippines (NNS) -- Flash Piston, a Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) program June 9-29 sponsored by the Joint Special Operations Task Force Philippines, allowed U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF) to share highly specialized training with their Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) counterparts. The program concluded at Philippine Naval Base Sangley Point.

U.S. SOF including SEALs, special warfare combatant crewmen, special forces Soldiers and explosive ordnance disposal team members with approximately 50 personnel from Philippine Naval Special Operations Group conducted the exercise.

The 18-day JCET exercise, involved a full scope of SOF capabilities, including assault tactics and small boat operations. U.S. SOF members trained the AFP Sailors in tactical combat care and medical and casualty evacuations.

According to a U.S. special boat operator, the captain of an 11-meter rigid-hull inflatable boat, the training brought the AFP SOF Sailors to a higher level of operating in a boat unit.

"The goal was to bring them to a point where they could successfully carry out a boat unit mission without any outside assistance," he said. "By the end of the exercise, it was easy to see the marked improvements in their maritime capabilities and that they were ready to operate as a fully capable unit."

The AFP SOF Sailors trained in a wide range of specialized maritime operations and small-boat unit tactics, including the use of navigational aids, boat handling, marksmanship, formation driving, beach assaults, mission planning and preparation and small boat outboard motor maintenance.

The final phase of Flash Piston included a field exercise, where the Sailors practiced assaults on enemy targets and held a shooting competition.

"While the principal purpose of the exercise was to help the AFP enhance their capabilities, it also helped us [U.S. SOF] meet our training requirements and build on the relationship we have with Philippine Navy," said the special boat operator.

The United States and Philippines often conduct training and activities that include combined exercises, subject matter expert exchanges, security assistance activities and workshops, all of which strengthen their capabilities and alliance.

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