



RICE NOT GUNS

GERMAN FIREARMS IN THE PHILIPPINES

by Roman Deckert

Corrected translation from the article "Heckler & Koch: G36 auf den Philippinen", published in the newsletter of the "German Action Network to Stop Small Arms" (DAKS) on April 30th, 2008

The Philippine democracy has been plagued by violent conflicts ever since the end of Fernando Marcos' dictatorship in 1986. Worst hit is the Southwest of the archipelagic nation where government troops fight against Muslim separatists and Communist rebels. All sides are blamed for gross violations of human rights. Amnesty International has documented an appalling number of extrajudicial killings, mainly of leftwing activists, by "security forces". Special units of the army and the police now increase their fire power with modern G36 assault-rifles from the gun maker Heckler & Koch (H&K), as shown on photographs of parades and training exercises (see: <http://i193.photobucket.com/albums/z138/lancero33/julho/60dcf384.jpg>).

The Philippines have been a traditional customer of the German company which is based in Oberndorf, an idyllic town near the Black Forest. The highly respected information service "Jane's Infantry Weapons" has found that the G3, the predecessor of the G36, is still one of the standard weapons of the Philippine army, along with the American M16 and the Israeli Galil. The origin of those G3 is unknown, but a limited number may have been manufactured in the Philippines itself. According to Jürgen Grässlin, the chairman of the German "Armaments Information Office" (RIB) in Freiburg, it is "undisputed" amongst experts that Marcos' regime received a licence for the production of G3-rifles, but very little is known about the details of the deal. A document of the US-embassy from 1974 suggests that the administration in Washington succeeded in promoting the production of the M16 by gun maker Colt against the German competitors from Heckler & Koch.

Furthermore, the Philippine government forces purchased H&K MP5 submachine guns from various sources. Amnesty International has reported that the "Pakistan Ordnance Factories" in 1999 announced deliveries from its own licence-production to the Philippines. A meticulous article by the "Manila Standard" gives evidence on the purchase of MP5 from English production. Heckler & Koch has been using this roundabout way systematically in order to evade German export restrictions (see "Germany's Unseen Hand in Kenya Crisis" - www.africanexecutive.com/modules/magazine/articles.php?article=2868). .

Due to corrupt elements within the Philippine army and police many of those arms have ended up in the black market. An investigative report of the "Manila Standard" from March 2007 addresses this worsening problem by highlighting the smuggling of MP5 from the depots of the "Metro Manila's Special Weapons and Tactics Team" to Taiwan. According to the Geneva based think-tank "Small Arms Survey" the Philippine government itself has estimated that there are hundreds of thousands of illegal guns in the country.

Despite these alarming facts Germany has repeatedly issued licences for the export of small arms to the Philippines during recent years. The official reports by the German government show that it approved of the sale of handguns with a total value of DM 260.000 in 1999 and of equipment for shooting exercises in 2002 to the Republika ng Pilipinas. Between 2004 and 2006 it gave green light for the export of 61 rifles, apparently G36, and 67 submachine guns, possibly the MP5-successor MP7. They may have been but sample weapons for testing purposes. With regard to the many G36 on public display (see link above) it is likely that the Philippines acquired larger numbers from its former colonial power Spain, for which the government in Manila is the closest ally in Southeastern Asia. Heckler & Koch produces the G36 not only in Oberndorf, but also in cooperation with the ordnance factory "General Dynamics Santa Bárbara Sistemas" in La Coruña. At the same time, neighbouring nations equip themselves with current H&K models too. Special units in Singapore and Thailand use the G36 as well as SWAT-teams in Malaysia and Indonesia which also rely on the brand new HK416. Since much of the region had been armed with G3 and the G3-derivative HK33 during the Cold War (<http://www.bits.de/public/articles/kleinwaffen-nl11-07eng.htm>), the proliferation now seems to continue with the "state of the art" Heckler guns. It has to be feared that the "elite" troops are just acting as the vanguard of this big business and that soon regular soldiers will be "upgraded" in the same fashion.

The German government supports those countries in their battle against terror, especially since the German family Wallert was kidnapped from their Malaysian holiday resort to the Philippine Jolo Island by the Islamist Abu-Sayyaf-rebels in 2000. However, with respect to the alarming state of human rights it must be considered utterly irresponsible to add to the escalation of those socio-political conflicts by transfers of small arms.

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