

## **The AFP-PNP Relationship in Internal Security Operations**

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All countries strive to preserve and secure peace in their territories. However, conflicts arising from internal and external security threats are not an unfamiliar phenomenon. In the local setting, the Philippines has already been experiencing these security threats which lead to violence and armed conflicts. Given this, there is certainly a need for the state to establish an institution that will take charge in defending the state's national security and maintain its peace and order. The two (2) institutions that were vital in shielding us against these threats are the military and police forces.

In the Philippines, it is the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) who were tasked to fulfill such duties. These two security forces fight against threats and disturbances that will cause harm to the state and the people. As they perform their specific roles based on their mandates and functions, they also work together to counter threats against internal security such as insurgency and terrorism. They go hand in hand in conducting various operations, programs, and initiatives to attain peace and security within the state. Undeniably, the nature of the work of the AFP and the PNP are interrelated. Hence, there is a need for a well-maintained and grounded partnership between these two forces. Such partnership will ensure stability, unimpaired coordination, and unity that will lead to a strong security force that will defend us against threats.

### **AFP and PNP: As State Security Forces**

The existence of the AFP and the PNP are both rooted in the mandates defined under the 1987 Philippine Constitution. The mandate of the AFP can be seen under [Article II, Declaration of Principles and State Policies](#), which states that:

Section 3. "Civilian authority is, at all times, supreme over the military. The Armed Forces of the Philippines is the protector of the people and the State. Its goal is to secure the sovereignty of the State and the Integrity of the national territory"

The functions of the AFP were stated under the [1987 Administrative Code](#) which are to: (1) uphold the sovereignty; (2) support the Constitution; (3) defend the territory of the Republic of the Philippines against enemies, foreign or domestic; and (4) promote and advance national aims, interests, and policies. In essence, the main goal of the AFP is to secure the sovereignty of the State and the integrity of national territory. Currently, the AFP has three major services—Philippine Military, Philippine Navy, and Philippine Air Force.

As for the PNP, [Article XVI, General Provisions, of the Constitution](#) states that:

Section 6. “The State shall establish and maintain one police force, which shall be national in scope and civilian in character, to be administered and controlled by a national police commission. The authority of the local executives over the police units in their jurisdiction shall be provided by law”

Unlike in the case of the AFP, the functions and mandates of the PNP were not clearly stated in the Constitution. The Constitution only states the need to create a police force that is [“national in scope and civilian in character”](#), but did not specifically mention the need to establish the PNP per se. To abide by the Constitution, the State established a police force through the enactment of [Republic Act \(RA\) 6975](#) called “An Act Establishing the Philippine National Police under Reorganized Department of Interior and Local Government, and for Other Purpose”. RA 6975 states that the functions of the PNP include enforcing laws and ordinances to protect lives and properties, maintaining peace and order, ensuring public safety, and preventing crimes.

Ultimately, the nature of the roles of the AFP and the PNP lies around a similar theme—protector of the State and the People. Their roles might have similarities in nature, but their differences are visible when it comes to their specific jurisdictions. Nevertheless, the paths of these two security forces cross around the area of internal security. Looking at the functions of the AFP, the initial role of preserving internal security falls under their responsibility. However, when RA 6975 was enacted, it states that the PNP, together with the Department of Interior Local Government (DILG), will assume the primary role of preserving internal security. On the other hand, the AFP, together with the Department of National Defense (DND), will assume the support role to focus on addressing external threats to national security. Although, upon recommendation of the peace and order council, the President may give back the primary role of preserving internal security to the DND-AFP in concerned areas, while the DILG-PNP will assume the supportive role.

In 1998, amendments to certain provisions of R.A. 6975 were created through the enactment of [R.A. 8551](#), an act for the reform and reorganization of the PNP. Here, the primary role of preserving internal security was given back to the AFP, while the PNP now plays the supportive role. It states that the PNP will support the AFP through information gathering, the performance of its police functions, and aiding them in combat operations if mandated by the President.

[Executive Order \(EO\) 110, series of 1999](#), directed the PNP to support the AFP in internal security operations for the suppression of insurgency and other serious threats

to national security. Under [Section 2 of EO 110](#), the AFP and the PNP were ordered to establish a joint AFP-PNP system that will oversee the planning, coordination, implementation, and monitoring of plans and measures in enhancing internal security operations. Amendments in EO 110 were made through [Executive Order 546, series of 2006](#). From the support role, EO 546 mandates the PNP to undertake active support to the AFP in internal security operations.

There have been several arguments regarding the shift of focus of the AFP and the PNP roles in internal security operations. It was argued that if the PNP assumes the lead responsibility to preserve internal security, the police force may be distracted from their main duties in law enforcement and ensuring public safety. Consequently, if the AFP assumes the lead role for internal security operations, it also undermines the focus of the AFP to push forward its efforts and capability on external security issues such as territorial defense. Undoubtedly, whoever assumes the primary or supportive role in preserving internal security still shows that the AFP and the PNP are both main actors for this particular security concern.

### **AFP and PNP: As Partners in Internal Security Operations**

To institutionalize the joint AFP-PNP system, the Joint Peace and Security Coordinating Center (JPSCC) was created by the virtue of Joint Letter Directive No. 07-2010 on 24 November 2010. The JPSCC serves as the governing body among the AFP and the PNP that is responsible for the following: crafting and implementing plans for intensified security operations, monitoring and assessing peace and security situations, coordination and implementation of necessary measures to ensure peace and security, initiating cross-training and exercises between the AFP and PNP units, and continuously reviewing and evaluating peace and security situations nationwide. JPSCC exists at the national, regional, and provincial levels and follows the same structure.

The National JPSCC has five (5) cells: Joint Operations Cell, Joint Investigation and Intelligence Cell, Joint Civil-Military Operations-Police Community Relations Cell, Joint Legal Cell, and Joint Training Cell. The Joint Operations Cell is responsible for the planning and coordination of law enforcement operations against personalities, groups, activities, or facilities that are identified to be a threat to the country's peace and security. They also conduct regular reviews on the peace and security situation at the national and regional level, as well as recommend appropriate measures in ensuring peace and security. The Joint Investigation and Intelligence Cell lay out the whole picture of the peace and security landscape of the state and they are tasked to develop mechanisms for easier and organized information exchange and sharing on areas of mutual interest.

On the other hand, the Joint Civil-Military Operations-Police Community Relations Cell facilitates activities related to community building, development, and relations. It also certifies the transparency and accountability of the JPSCC by ensuring that the general public will readily access relevant information on peace and security issues. As for the Joint Legal Cell, they formulate and supervise implementations of joint legal plans in collaboration with other concerned national government agencies. They also guarantee proper coordination in matters requiring investigation and prosecution of cases involving threats to peace and security. Lastly, the Joint Training Cell determines the educational and training priorities, guidelines, policies, and objectives of the AFP and the PNP to attain proficiency of personnel and operational readiness of units conducting joint/inter-agency operations. The regional and provincial JPSCCs follow the same structure as the National JPSCC cells. However, they can modify it based on the requirements of their specific areas and jurisdictions. The JPSCC gave birth to a more structured and organized AFP-PNP system in dealing with security threats, and it strengthens their coordination and collaborative actions.

For the past few years, various internal security operations have been conducted by the AFP and the PNP. According to PCol Reynaldo Pawid, the Chief of Law Enforcement Division and Former Chief of Internal Security Operations Division of the PNP, one of the biggest joint operations of the AFP and the PNP was during the Zamboanga Siege. The siege occurred when Muslim rebels from the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) attacked the city of Zamboanga last September 2013. The AFP and the PNP were able to display unity and coordination to expel the rebels. Further, another massive joint operation by the AFP and the PNP that he mentioned was during the 2017 Marawi City Siege. For five months, the AFP and the PNP joined forces to liberate Marawi City from the hands of Islamic extremists.

Recently, efforts of the AFP and the PNP in countering threats to internal security are focused on the implementation of the Joint AFP-PNP Campaign Plan “KAPANATAGAN” 2019-2022. This Joint Campaign Plan is the overarching strategy that focuses on embedding the whole-of-nation approach in ensuring security, peace, and order of the state. The campaign plan also applies four strategic concepts such as (1) Enhancement of Joint AFP-PNP Operations to defeat all armed threat groups (terrorist and all other organized crime groups), (2) Enhancement of managing of police operations, (3) Promotion of peace and order and (4) Strengthening of inter-agency engagement. All necessary action plans and steps in addressing internal security threats must be anchored on the campaign plan “KAPANATAGAN”. Further, both the AFP and the PNP play significant roles in the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC). They are the main actors under the cluster of peace, law enforcement, and development support. This cluster aims to reduce the capabilities and recruitment of

communist terrorist groups. They also lead the Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (E-CLIP) and Amnesty Program cluster, wherein they oversee all efforts and plans to assist and reintegrate former rebels from communist terrorist groups.

Challenges will certainly occur as the AFP and the PNP combat threats to internal security. During joint programs or operations, one of the challenges faced was the different prioritization or focus of both forces due to different chains of command. According to Col Melencio Ragudo (GSC) PA, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Civil-Military Operations, J7, one cannot impose which steps or directions to take since each force follows a certain chain of command that applies a different strategic process. As individual institutions, the AFP and the PNP have other priorities and responsibilities thus they cannot focus their time, effort, and resources on combating threats in internal security alone. Another challenge is the lack of coordination at the tactical level during operations. It is vital to enhance coordination at the tactical level to ensure the proper execution of action plans. PCol Pawid mentioned the need for proper cascading of information regarding campaign plans, from highest to lowest levels of organizations. Campaign plans crafted and implemented at the national level should be cascaded and explained thoroughly to the regional and provincial levels, up to companies, platoons, battalions on the ground. Personnel on the grounds must be able to completely grasp and understand the objectives and action plans of the joint campaigns since they are the ones who were deployed to do such operations.

### **The AFP-PNP Relationship: Challenges and the Way Forward**

As state security forces and partners in peace and security, [a well-maintained and harmonized relationship is vital between the AFP and the PNP](#). It will help them smoothen and strengthen their coordination that is a prerequisite to the success of their joint operations and campaign plans. However, just like any other work relationship, the AFP and the PNP also experienced roadblocks along the way. Given that their roles are interconnected, conflicts rooting from different personalities and mindsets, clashing of ideas, and lack of communication and coordination, were unavoidable. Col Ragudo shared that throughout his 30 years of experience in the service, he witnessed several personality-based disagreements and disputes. Such phenomena are inevitable, but may be prevented.

Slowly, the AFP and the PNP will be able to prevent or lessen the occurrence of such conflicts through 1) continuous communication and exchange of information, 2) conducting regular joint planning, workshops, or sessions, and 3) abolishing the “legacy syndrome”. Firstly, continuous communication and exchange of information are significant and should be enforced across all levels of positions among the two forces. If continuously and rigorously practiced, [it lessens the occurrence of conflicts](#),

[misencounters, and intrigues, which in turn, will highly contribute to the success of their joint operations.](#)

Secondly, regular joint planning, workshops, or sessions between the AFP and the PNP should be given importance. JPSCC institutionalized the conduct of regular updates in meetings. It paved the way for both forces to have an avenue wherein they can openly share ideas, voice out concerns, give recommendations and suggestions, review programs, and settle conflicts together. Indeed, the JPSCC played a significant part in strengthening coordination and collaboration between the AFP and the PNP. Col Ragudo emphasized that through this practice, both forces are willing to cooperate in resolving issues and they are now more open to suggestions and recommendations.

Lastly, there is a need to abolish the “legacy syndrome”. Legacy syndrome occurs whenever a commander or official assumes a new position and disregards existing programs or action plans of that specific division or unit. Instead, he or she will implement new programs or action plans that are completely different from the previous ones, to ensure a “legacy”. This practice is not effective and efficient since it disrupts the continuity of a good program or action plan. Adopting this legacy syndrome shows that a commander or official’s work is turning to be more personality-based which prioritizes his or her personal agenda, rather than focusing on the continuity of a good program or action plan that was deemed to be successful in the long run. Nowadays, Col Ragudo gladly shared that both forces were slowly stripping off to this kind of mindset. Newly seated commanders or officials are now adopting programs or action plans that will benefit the whole division, unit, or community, regardless of whether the idea originally came from them or not. Also, courtesy calls were standardized as well. These courtesy calls are vital because it shows respect to the new commander or official of the said unit or division, and it is also a way of starting conversations on how they can work together in harmony and how they will prioritize achieving collective goals that will benefit the whole community.

A more positive and improved relationship between the AFP and the PNP is very much evident now. It cannot be possible without the AFP and the PNP’s acknowledgment of their shared lapses and mistakes in the past. Through these lapses, the AFP and the PNP were able to see the value of unity and cooperation in achieving their ultimate goal. Now that they are past the stage where misunderstandings and conflicts are prevalent, what is now more crucial is for the AFP and the PNP to maintain their rapport and solidarity intact, as truly, a united security force is integral to defeat the enemies of the State.

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