

# Comparative Connections

A Quarterly E-Journal on East Asian Bilateral Relations



**US-Southeast Asia Relations:**

## **Thai Turmoil; President Postpones Indonesia Trip Again**

**Sheldon Simon  
Arizona State University**

In mid-May, long-simmering political tension in Thailand between the Bangkok elite establishment and urban lower classes as well as those in northern Thailand who feel ignored by the center erupted in the worst political violence in decades. Tentative US efforts to mediate were rejected by the Thai government, though the opposition appeared to welcome a US role. A tense calm has been restored, but the prospect for renewed violence is palpable. While the Indonesian government expressed understanding for President Obama's second postponement of a visit to his childhood home because of the disaster in the Gulf of Mexico, opposition Muslim politicians claimed the real reason for the postponement was the Israeli attack on a Turkish flotilla running Israel's Gaza blockade. A number of Muslim leaders stated that Obama wished to avoid encountering Indonesian ire for his country's pro-Israeli stand. The election of Benigno Aquino III as the Philippines' 15<sup>th</sup> president was greeted by international observers as a generally fair and transparent process. The president-elect has stated he plans to review the country's Visiting Forces Agreement with the US to modify its pro-US bias. Washington continues to criticize Burma's preparations for elections scheduled for October as marginalizing the political opposition. The US is also concerned that Burma may be clandestinely importing materials from North Korea for a nascent nuclear weapons program.

### **Thai turmoil appalls US**

Two months of anti-government demonstrations in Bangkok led to the worst bloodshed and property damage in Thailand since the early 1970s with at least 88 deaths and 1,800 wounded. On May 19, the army raided the opposition Red Shirt encampment in the commercial center of Bangkok dispersing its followers. Subsequently, hundreds of opposition members have been arrested and held without trial, the assets of scores of people accused of funding the recent protests frozen, while a state of emergency declared during the violence remains in force in much of the country. Though the Abhisit government speaks of a national reconciliation program, the opposition does not seem to buy it. The army and police – charged with restoring order – are themselves split with senior officers for the most part lining up with the government while enlisted personnel tend to sympathize with the opposition. Most of the police support the Red Shirts, partly due to the fact that exiled billionaire and former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra began his career as a high-ranking police officer and also because most police personnel come from the lower classes.

The Yellow Shirts – created, funded, and protected by the military, the aristocracy, bureaucracy, and urban professional and commercial classes – support the current government and represent the status quo. They forced Thaksin from office in a 2006 coup and a pro-Thaksin government

from power in 2008. Subsequently, the conflict between the Reds and Yellows this spring deteriorated into full-scale violence. Yet, there are multiple layers to the conflict, involving geographic regions (the rural north and northeast vs. the commercial center in Bangkok) as well as competing models of governance.

The US, Western governments generally, and Thailand's ASEAN neighbors have been appalled at the growing turmoil, but they are essentially bystanders. For Washington, Thailand is a "major non-NATO ally." It is also Southeast Asia's second largest economy. Prolonged political instability could weaken ASEAN as revealed in Thai-Cambodian tensions over a disputed land border and off-shore energy disputes. The two armies have skirmished over ownership of the Preah Vihear temple grounds, and the situation has been aggravated with Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen openly backing former Thai Prime Minister Thaksin by providing him sanctuary in Cambodia and appointing him as a special economic advisor.

While the Red Shirts attempted to enlist the US as a mediator in the dispute as early as the beginning of April, the Abhisit government has insisted the conflict is exclusively an internal Thai matter. Nevertheless, at an academic seminar in mid-April at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, Foreign Minister Kasit Piromya acknowledged the legitimacy of the rural Thai demands for greater political voice. By late April, as violence escalated in Bangkok and other locations in Thailand, the State Department issued a travel advisory to US citizens, urging them to avoid "non-essential travel" to the country.

In early May, the Abhisit government created a five-point road map for national reconciliation that provided for November elections, a year before the current government's term would expire. Washington quickly endorsed the plan and urged the Red Shirts to accept it. Visiting Bangkok, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Kurt Campbell met separately with government officials and opposition leaders, urging the latter to give a "positive response to the road map...." Nonetheless, violence continued to escalate with reports that the opposition United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship (UDD) [the Red Shirts] had formed a paramilitary wing loyal to Thaksin which, on April 22, launched grenade attacks on the Silom Road financial district. The US Embassy condemned these attacks, and reports surfaced that US and other Western intelligence agencies were providing signals intercepts and other information to the Thai government on financial transfers to the UDD from Thaksin's overseas sources. On May 10, the Thai foreign minister summoned Eric John, the US ambassador, to complain about Secretary Campbell's meetings with opposition leaders. Thai officials stated they needed no mediation from foreign partners. Bangkok was obviously concerned that US contacts with the UDD gave it a legitimacy that the Thai government opposed.

By mid-May, although Prime Minister Abhisit's roadmap seemed acceptable to a number of Red Shirt leaders, hardliners within the opposition raised a new set of conditions and refused to disband their encampment in central Bangkok. The prime minister rescinded his offer for November elections as well as the rest of the reconciliation plan. The US Embassy closed, hospitals were alerted, and the army marched on the encampment on May 15. Three days later both Amnesty International and the New York-based Human Rights Watch accused the Thai army of "reckless use of lethal force" and "firing live rounds at unarmed people who pose no threat whatsoever."

In a rare statement commenting on the internal affairs of a member state, on May 21, ASEAN underscored the importance of peace and stability in Thailand as crucial to the creation of an ASEAN Community and supported “the early restoration of law and order, national reconciliation, and a return to normalcy in Thailand,” adding that the Association was ready to help. On May 25, a unanimous resolution drafted by Sen. Jim Webb affirmed the US Senate’s support for Abhisit’s five-point roadmap, though by this time it had been withdrawn by the Thai government.

While the physical confrontation ended with the Thai military’s raid on the Red Shirt encampment and the return of thousands of protestors to their homes in the north, in June both sides accused each other of responsibility for the casualties. In addition to the human toll, more than 30 buildings were destroyed by arson, and there were multiple cases of stealing, looting, and armed robbery. Moreover, two foreign reporters were killed and seven foreign and local media personnel were wounded during the violence. The US ambassador, among other notables, called on the prime minister “to launch independent probes into recent attacks and bring the perpetrators to justice.”

In an effort to forestall further US efforts to mediate, the Thai government dispatched a special envoy to Washington to meet with members of Congress and the Obama administration in mid-June. While welcoming “suggestions,” the envoy insisted that the Abhisit government was pursuing its own reconciliation plan. US efforts “might complicate the issue even further.” Scot Marciel, the deputy assistant secretary of state for Southeast Asia, stated that in 25 years of work on the region, “I’m not sure I’ve encountered a situation as complex as the one in Thailand right now in terms of trying to understand the politics.”

### **President Obama postpones Indonesia visit for the second time**

Once again, unforeseen crises forced another cancellation – this time the BP Gulf of Mexico oil rig disaster. The June visit was to be a lengthy, substantive one to consolidate a growing friendship as well as provide time for his family to see where Obama spent several years of his childhood. The Indonesian government once again expressed understanding for the decision. A spokesman for the Indonesian president stated: “President Yudhoyono can fully understand that [Obama] needs to be in his country to handle the worst ever environmental disaster in US history.” (The leaders agreed to meet on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Toronto later in June.)

Speculation abounded in Indonesia that the trip would be rescheduled for November, but that month seems problematic since President Obama is already committed to Seoul (G20) as well as Yokohama (APEC), and also scheduled a visit India *after* he had postponed the Jakarta visit – a decision seen by many in Indonesia as either thoughtless or a sign that Southeast Asia does not rank high on the US agenda. Nor does the US president plan to attend the ASEAN Summit in Hanoi – another indication that the “America is Back!” mantra is sounding increasingly hollow in Southeast Asia.

Opposition members in the Indonesian Parliament articulated a different explanation for President Obama's postponed visit: the Israeli naval attack on the Turkish ships' attempt to breach Israel's Gaza blockade. On June 5, Sidato Donusubroto, an opposition leader for the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle, stated: "The attack has provoked antipathy against Jews in various parts of the world. [Obama] may be afraid of the reactions of Muslims in Indonesia." The deputy chairman of the House Foreign Affairs and Defense Commission went on to say that President Obama should remember his 2009 Cairo speech where he stated his intention to improve relations with the Islamic world. United Development Party (PPP) Deputy Secretary General Pomahurmuzing also cited anti-Israel and anti-US rallies in Indonesia as the reason for the US president's postponement, noting that the Gulf of Mexico oil spill "is a medium-term issue that does not require ... immediate solution."

Others stated that Obama's decision was based on a desire to avoid dealing with restoration of US military links to Kopassus – the Indonesian Special Forces unit accused by Washington of human rights violations in East Timor and West Papua. Indonesia's military chief, Gen. Djoko Santoso, dismissed this explanation, noting that Indonesian-US military exercises have been regularly held since 2008 and that many US officials "have shown their interest in reviving cooperation with Kopassus. Let's hope they will succeed." While Kopassus in 2010 does not include those involved in past human rights abuses, Sen. Patrick Leahy, who authored the ban on US involvement with Kopassus, insists that "Indonesia's military officers who violated human rights cannot continue to serve in the military." A number of former Kopassus officers who had committed human rights depredations are now high-level military officers. However, the current head of Kopassus, Maj. Gen. Lodewizk F. Paulus, in mid-April, noted that human rights and humanitarian issues are now an integral part of the Army Special Forces curriculum.

On June 10, Indonesia and the US signed an agreement establishing a framework for defense cooperation that included logistics, joint training, officer exchange programs, security dialogue, and equipment procurement. The agreement did not include Kopassus. Indonesia's defense spokesman explained that the Army's Special Forces could not be part of the agreement because the US would be spending money for its implementation, and US law forbids any transfer of funds to Kopassus.

On other matters, in early May, President Obama thanked President Yudhoyono for his leadership at the 2010 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty Review Conference. The Indonesian foreign minister stated that his country would immediately work to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, an action welcomed by the US.

### **A new president for the Philippines**

On May 10, Filipinos went to the polls to elect their 15<sup>th</sup> president, a sentimental favorite and the son of the late President Corazon "Cory" Aquino and her martyred husband, Benigno Aquino, Jr. Known as "Noynoy," Benigno Aquino III has been a lackluster senator and has no relevant administrative experience. His major appeal was his heritage and no taint of corruption. His main opponent, "Manny" Villar, one of the country's biggest real estate magnates, has been plagued by corruption charges. The election was generally praised by international observers and was the first-ever featuring automated electoral machines. Noynoy's predecessor, Gloria

Macapagal Arroyo, left office under a cloud of corruption and human rights complaints. Relations with the US were strained when the Philippines withdrew their forces early from Iraq as a part of President Bush's coalition of the willing. US trade and investment in the Philippines is considered underperforming due to concerns about corruption and lack of infrastructure.

While the incoming Philippine president claims to be pro-US and has expressed concern over China's tactics in the South China Sea, in his campaign he also criticized the US for supporting the long-lived Marcos dictatorship and questioned current US foreign policy. Nor is there any indication that President Aquino has any new ideas for resolving the protracted conflict with Muslims in Mindanao. Nevertheless, the new US ambassador, Harry Thomas Jr., quickly endorsed the election's outcome by visiting the president-elect on May 23, fully a month before his inauguration. Ambassador Thomas stated his visit was "to show our respect for the Philippines election process. You are our long-term ally." Leftist Philippine legislators, particularly Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago on June 16, urged the incoming president to rescind the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) with the US. She reminded him that as a senator, Aquino had supported a Senate resolution to that end so that a less "lopsided" agreement against Philippine interests could be negotiated. During the presidential campaign in April, Aquino stated he would review the VFA, saying the long-term presence of US soldiers in the troubled south should not be allowed despite their role in the fight against Islamic militancy. The main sticking point in the VFA is a provision allowing US soldiers to be detained at the US Embassy if they commit crimes in the Philippines.

### **Burma: upcoming elections and North Korean nuclear aid**

As preparations by the military junta proceed for Burma's October elections, the US has led international condemnation of the laws enacted by the ruling regime, effectively barring opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi from participating. ASEAN leaders have also expressed displeasure with the electoral obstacles placed by the junta, though there is no indication that the Association will make a collective criticism of the election given ASEAN's noninterference principle in members' internal affairs. On May 9-10, Assistant Secretary of State Campbell visited Burma and was allowed to meet opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who is currently under house arrest. After his visit, Campbell released a statement expressing disappointment in the preparations for the election and noting that if the junta's obstacles against the opposition were kept in place, the election would "lack legitimacy."

During discussions with Burmese officials, Campbell voiced concern about ties between Burma and North Korea. He reminded them about Burma's obligation under the 2009 UN Security Council Resolution embargoing arms deals with Pyongyang. Suspicious arms cargo from North Korea docked in Burma in April, leading to State Department insistence that the May 3-5 ASEAN-US Economic Ministers road show in Seattle and Washington, DC exclude Burmese representation from "all levels." Reports going back two years, including data collected by two defecting Burmese military officers, provided evidence of North Korea extending assistance to Burma for a nuclear reactor that could produce weapons-grade plutonium. Based on this information, Sen. Webb cancelled his early-June trip to Burma. Noteworthy is the fact that any Burmese effort to build nuclear weapons would be a direct violation of the treaty declaring

Southeast Asia as a nuclear weapons-free zone (SEANWFZ), which has been signed and ratified by the junta.

### **Human rights concerns**

Human rights concerns continue to strain US relations with several Southeast Asian states. In early April, Washington suspended nonlethal military aid to Cambodia after Phnom Penh deported back to China dozens of Uighurs, who had sought asylum last December. The Cambodian government blamed the US and the UN High Commission for Refugees for not finding a third country willing to accept the refugees and insisted that Cambodia was only implementing its own immigration law. The US aid suspension was offset by a simultaneous aid package from China of \$1.2 billion with no strings attached.

Also in April, US Undersecretary of State for Economic, Energy, and Agricultural Affairs Robert Hormats, while in Hanoi, warned Vietnam that human rights issues could return the country to the list of “countries of concern” for religious freedom, a designation that could carry economic sanctions. Vietnam had been on the list between 2004 and 2008. In 2009, the US was the biggest foreign investor in Vietnam and also its largest export market. Washington is also gradually improving military relations with Hanoi. Vietnam has been invited to observe US military exercises with regional partners, including *Cobra Gold* in Thailand. Additionally, there is discussion of joint search and rescue operations off Vietnam’s coast and of US training for Vietnamese peacekeepers in UN-led missions.

On June 14, the State Department published its *2010 Trafficking in Persons Report*, which listed Burma, Brunei, Laos, the Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, and Singapore as countries of concern. Singapore was particularly incensed at the censure that stated city-state traffickers had tricked women from other Asian countries to enter with promises of legitimate employment, only to coerce them into the sex trade. Thailand was similarly accused, though both the US Embassy and Sen. Webb appealed to the State Department not to place Thailand on the watch list because it could curb assistance for much-needed democracy and human rights programs in the wake of the kingdom’s political violence. Thailand also complained about its listing, saying the State Department did not take into account Thai efforts to suppress trafficking. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has made women’s and children’s rights a signature issue, calling human trafficking a “terrible crime” as she presented the annual report.

### **Malaysia’s US ties strengthened**

During Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak’s April visit to Washington, President Obama met with him and praised Malaysia’s economic vibrancy, democracy, and cooperation with the US on security issues. The prime minister pledged his country’s readiness to assist in medical and reconstruction programs in Afghanistan and offered to assist US efforts to engage the Muslim world. In turn, President Obama praised Malaysia’s recent passage of a Strategic Trade Bill designed to thwart illegal arms transactions and prevent weapons proliferation.

In an April 14 speech at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, DC, Prime Minister Najib underlined the Obama administration’s emphasis on multilateralism “as the

preferred route to problem solving, noting that the US signature on ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation is "an affirmation of the close ties between the United States and ASEAN." The visit also resulted in "strategic partnership" status for Malaysia. In June, the strategic partnership may have borne its first fruits when US Defense Secretary Robert Gates agreed to upgrade Malaysia's participation in the annual multilateral *Cobra Gold* military exercise from observer to participant status.

### **US takes stronger stand on South China Sea**

In Hanoi for the US-Vietnam Security Talks on June 8, Adm. Robert Willard, commander of the US Pacific Command, told reporters that the US opposes any resort to force or disrespect for international law in the South China Sea – the body of water Vietnam calls the East Sea. Earlier in Singapore at the Shangri-La Dialogue, US Defense Secretary Gates called the South China Sea "a growing concern. This sea is not only vital to those directly bordering it, but to all nations with economic and security interests in Asia." In a pointed reference to Chinese threats against oil companies considering cooperation with Vietnam, Gates said, "we object to any effort to intimidate US corporations or those of any nation engaged in legitimate economic activity." In Vietnam, Adm. Willard reiterated the well-known position that the US supports no South China Sea claimant but "What's essential is that differences be resolved multilaterally," singling out the ASEAN Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea as an appropriate framework. Vietnam would like to see ASEAN sustain a collective stand on the South China Sea claims, lest Beijing pick off the weaker members.

### **Looking ahead**

President Obama's planned visit to Indonesia has now been postponed twice. To understand this requires context. No US president since Franklin Roosevelt has faced such a daunting combination of domestic and international crises: the worst economic meltdown since the Great Depression, the worst environmental disaster in the Gulf of Mexico in US history, two wars – one in the Arab world and one abutting South Asia. The US is simultaneously crafting the most comprehensive financial reforms since the 1930s and a public health expansion unparalleled since the creation of Medicare in the Johnson administration. In the face of these challenges, it is hardly surprising that Southeast Asia has not risen to the top of the president's policy agenda.

Nevertheless, tentatively scheduling two new trips to South and North Asia for November before the Indonesia visit is reset and before the long-awaited ASEAN-US Summit is set is an error of omission. It sends an unfortunate signal that Asia's most economically vibrant sub-region and one undergoing significant political change is not seen as important to this administration. At the June 17 Asia Policy Assembly in Washington, DC (attended by the author), Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg insisted that ASEAN had a central role in Asian affairs and that Indonesia is a "role model" for the region and a "critical partner" for the US. A rescheduled presidential visit would go a long way to validate these claims. Fortunately, the president must have listened to these concerns for on June 27 at the Toronto G20 meeting, the White House announced that Obama will visit Jakarta in November, making it a very busy travel month for him to Asia.

## **Chronology of US-Southeast Asian Relations**

### **April – June 2010**

**April 1, 2010:** US suspends nonlethal military aid to Cambodia following Phnom Penh's deportation to China of ethnic Uighurs seeking asylum in Cambodia.

**April 2, 2010:** Red Shirt pro-Thaksin opposition in Thailand sends a letter through the US Embassy in Bangkok thanking Secretary of State Hillary Clinton for her expression of concern about the political situation in Thailand.

**April 8-9, 2010:** ASEAN leaders, meeting in Hanoi, invite President Barack Obama to attend a second 2010 ASEAN Summit in Hanoi to be scheduled later in the year.

**April 11-12, 2010:** ASEAN leaders attending the Nuclear Security Summit (NSS) in Washington include Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

**April 11-15, 2010:** Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak visits the US to attend the NNS and meet President Obama. US-ASEAN ties are stressed as well as a "strategic partnership" between the two countries.

**April 12-15, 2010:** Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong visits the US to attend the NNS and urges Washington to pay more attention to his country and to ASEAN.

**April 21, 2010:** Welcoming Cambodia's inauguration of a new counterterrorism center, a US spokesman states that Cambodia's porous borders are a concern not only because of terrorist movements but also transnational crimes such as narcotics trafficking.

**April 22, 2010:** Presidential candidate Benigno Aquino III says he will review the Philippine's security treaty with the US to insure that there is no permanent US presence in Mindanao.

**April 22, 2010:** State Department spokesman Philip Crowley expresses Washington's alarm at the protracted conflict between supporters and opponents of ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra that had led to bloodshed and calls on both sides to negotiate a settlement.

**April 26, 2010:** US Ambassador to ASEAN Scot Marciel visits Indonesia for the Joint US-ASEAN Consultative Committee focusing on capacity building in the ASEAN Secretariat.

**April 26, 2010:** The US Commission on International Religious Freedom releases its Congressionally-mandated annual report that designates Burma and Vietnam as countries of particular concern. The report also criticizes the White House for not effectively pursuing a religious freedom agenda or naming a State Department officer in that role.

**April 26-27, 2010:** Indonesia attends the US Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship in Washington, DC, part of President Obama's pledge to broaden ties with the Islamic world.

**April 27, 2010:** The second ASEAN-US Joint Cooperation Committee meets at the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta.

**April 27, 2010:** The new US Ambassador to the Philippines Harry K. Thomas, Jr. presents his credentials to President Arroyo. He emphasizes the Peace Corps presence in the country with 130 volunteers working in 40 provinces.

**April 29, 2010:** The US State Department issues a travel alert for Thailand urging US citizens to avoid non-essential travel to the country.

**May 1, 2010:** The US hospital ship *Mercy* sails from San Diego for the fifth annual US Pacific Fleet humanitarian and civic assistance endeavor with visits planned for Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Timor-Leste.

**May 3-5, 2010:** Southeast Asian economic ministers visit the US for a nationwide business tour sponsored by the US-ASEAN Business Council. Burma is excluded from the group because of its violation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1874 on arms trade with North Korea.

**May 4, 2010:** President Obama commends Indonesia's decision to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty at the opening session of the 2010 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty Review Conference.

**May 4-12, 2010:** Elements of the US Pacific Fleet and the Royal Brunei Navy engage in the 16<sup>th</sup> series of *CARAT* exercises off the Brunei coast with both sea-based maneuvers and symposia.

**May 7-11, 2010:** Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Kurt Campbell travels to the Philippines, Thailand, and Burma.

**May 9, 2010:** Assistant Secretary Campbell meets with leaders of the opposition United Front for Democracy, Against Dictatorship (UDD) in Bangkok.

**May 10, 2010:** Assistant Secretary Campbell meets detained opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi in Rangoon.

**May 10-17, 2010:** The second iteration of *Pacific Angel 2010* takes place in Can Tho, Vietnam, with over 50 US military working on humanitarian assistance with Vietnamese counterparts.

**May 13, 2010:** The US Embassy in Bangkok closes to the public as the Thai Army begins to move against Red Shirt enclaves.

**May 14, 2010:** President Obama informs Congress that the administration plans to renew sanctions against Burma based on the ruling junta's failure to allow the political opposition a role in upcoming elections.

**May 14-21, 2010:** The US and Thai Navies engage in the *CARAT* exercise, encompassing riverine, anti-submarine, and unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) warfare maneuvers.

**May 15, 2010:** The US Embassy in Bangkok warns US citizens against travel to Thailand because of the violence generated by the confrontation between the government and populist opponents. The Embassy also authorizes non-essential government workers and their families to leave the country.

**May 17-21, 2010:** US Undersecretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs Maria Otero visits Indonesia to engage government officials in an array of human security issues.

**May 22-29, 2010:** Malaysian Minister of Defense Ahmad Zahid Hamide visits Washington for talks with the Pentagon, National Security Council, State Department, and leading think tanks.

**May 24, 2010:** The US Embassy in Bangkok reopens for “limited operations” after violence in the vicinity of the Embassy ends.

**May 24, 2010:** The US Senate unanimously passes a resolution drawn up by Sen. Jim Webb affirming support for the US-Thai alliance and calling for an end to violence.

**May 24-25, 2010:** The Indonesian-US Security Dialogue focuses on the roles of militaries in disaster relief, peacekeeping, counterterrorism, and bilateral military relations.

**May 26-June 5, 2010:** The US and Indonesian Navies engage in joint exercises in and around Surabaya, East Java.

**May 31-June 12, 2010:** The US hospital ship *Mercy* visits Vietnam providing medical services as part of the Pacific partnership humanitarian aid program.

**June 3, 2010:** Malaysia announces that the US has upgraded Kuala Lumpur’s participation from observer to participant in the annual multinational Thai-US exercise, *Cobra Gold*.

**June 4, 2010:** Because of the continuing crisis in the Gulf of Mexico oil spill, President Obama postpones his trip to Indonesia for the second time.

**June 4, 2010:** US Defense Secretary Robert Gates meets Indonesian Defense Minister Purnomo Yusgiantoro on the sidelines of the annual Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore. They discuss removing the US ban on training for Indonesian Special Forces (Kopassus).

**June 7-16, 2010:** Cambodia participates in its first *CARAT* exercise with the *USS Tortuga* that includes shipboard training and jungle operations for US and Cambodian naval personnel.

**June 8-10, 2010:** The US-Vietnam Political, Security, and Defense Dialogue is held in Hanoi, focusing on peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, maritime search and rescue, and nonproliferation.

**June 9, 2010:** Sen. Benigno Aquino III is officially proclaimed the winner of the Philippines’ presidential election during a joint session of the House of Representatives and the Senate.

**June 10, 2010:** The US and Indonesia sign a defense framework agreement in Jakarta covering training, procurement, and maritime security. However, the US ban on Indonesia's Special Forces (Kopassus) remains in place.

**June 10-25, 2010:** Over 100 US soldiers and airmen join Indonesian forces for the exercise *Garuda Shield 10* in Bandung on peace support and stability training.

**June 15, 2010:** Singapore objects to its inclusion in the annual State Department Watch List on Human Trafficking and counters that the US should examine its own record on immigration.

**June 16, 2010:** The eighth annual Southeast Asia Cooperation against Terrorism (*SEACAT*) maritime security exercise begins in Singapore with the US and six Southeast Asian navies tracking simulated vessels of interest.

**June 19, 2010:** US Ambassador to Indonesia Cameron Hume speaks at a seminar sponsored by the Islamic Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) on "The US View of Islam," an effort to broaden the PKS appeal as a moderate Muslim party.

**June 21, 2010:** The State Department releases its "Human Trafficking Report 2010" which criticizes several ASEAN countries for labor trafficking and prostitution.

**June 21, 2010:** After a third reporter is murdered in the Philippines over the weekend, the State Department urges the Philippine government to move quickly to prosecute the perpetrators.

**June 30, 2010:** Benigno Aquino III is sworn in as the president of the Philippines.