

training, on-the-job training and consequently deployment of MNLF forces.

Further, in accordance with the provisions of Executive Order No. 371, dated 2 October 1996, MNLF Chief of Staff Yusop Jikiri was appointed Presidential Assistant for Separate Units with the rank of Director 1 and designated Deputy Commander of the AFP Southern Command (COMSOUTHCOM) for Separate Units (ODCSSU). An AFP Staff Memorandum also created the Office of the Deputy COMSOUTHCOM for Separate Units at the AFP Southern Command Headquarters in Calarian, Zamboanga City.

### **The Reintegration Process**

The reintegration of the MNLF forces into the mainstream society was done without the disarmament and demobilization of these forces.<sup>124</sup> The peace agreement did not include explicit provisions for disarmament or demobilization.<sup>125</sup> The Government recognized that the MNLF cannot be forced to turn-in their firearms and thus worked on "convincing" them to voluntary turn-in their firearms. This is why the scheme on the turning-in of firearms is not explicit in the peace agreement. Reportedly, General Romeo Zulueta instructed the military planners to take out any terms that are synonymous to "surrender", to include such terms as "disarmament" and "demobilization" in order to avoid the perception of an MNLF "surrender".

Then President Fidel V. Ramos was keenly aware of the "loss of face" in the demobilization of MNLF fighters might generates, and that the "issue touched the sense of dignity of MNLF fighters very deeply..."<sup>126</sup> Ramos, in citing the lessons learned from the negotiations, expressed the "critical need to keep a strategic view always and to refuse to be muddled or stampeded by tactical pressures."<sup>127</sup> This he said was one reason why the government during the negotiations "did not force the issue of 'demobilizing' or 'disarming' the MNLF", because to do so would have simply led to an "unreasonable impasse."<sup>128</sup> Accordingly, the "strategic objective" was to have the agreement signed with its political, economic, social and cultural benefits rather than "belaboring

---

<sup>124</sup> Interview with BGEN. Rodolfo Garcia AFP, Commanding General, 6ID, Camp Siongco, Awang, Cotabato City on 22 October 1999 (telephone) and 26 October 1999 (personal).

<sup>125</sup> Demobilization is defined as the "formal disbanding of military formation, and at the individual level, as the process of releasing combatants from a mobilized state" in Mats R. Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilization after Civil Wars*, Adelphi Paper 303 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies/Oxford University Press, 1996).

<sup>126</sup> Fidel V. Ramos, *Break not the Peace: The Story of the GRP-MNLF Peace Negotiations 1992-1996* (Philippines: Friends of Steady Eddie, November 1996), p. 87.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*