

cooperate in their operations (for example, when arms smugglers ask the support of carnappers or even other armed groups for transport, or simply when they criss-cross the "areas of responsibilities" of police and military units).

The nature of firearms shipments methods intended for secessionist groups is also another matter complicated law enforcement efforts. Given the long coastline of Mindanao and the stretched resources of the police (and the military in particular), monitored "drops" or shipments of arms cannot be wholly interdicted. This is all the more so given lack of navigational and night-vision devices and often and even other simple logistical or transportation requirements.

The apathy and complacency of society towards gun smuggling stems from the common perception that law enforcer are either in connivance with the smugglers or simply helpless in addressing the problem, especially against powerful clans or political families. Since the practice of illegally possessing firearms is common, people have become tolerant of and "desensitized" to the problem; the usual response is to acquire arms to be on an equal footing with an enemy or a rival, or simply for personal purposes. In the past, a Congressman has been forced to resign when he was convicted of smuggling Uzi machine guns into the country: it was allegedly that he was taking orders from his colleagues. Some Philippine police peacekeepers who participated in the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) even brought back assorted firearms as "souvenirs" from their tour of duty.

At present, the strong point of the government is perhaps the strong leadership of Director General Panfilo Lacson. While his appointment drew mixed reactions within the ranks, it is clear though that PNP Chief Panfilo Lacson means business in the government's drive against loose firearms. He had recently imposed stricter guidelines in the licensing of firearms and controls the approval of all gun applications. Gun agencies are only responsible for conducting psychological tests and other prerequisites for the issuance of gun licenses. Due to the intensifying situation in Mindanao, all efforts of the AFP and PNP and other law enforcement agencies are focused on this island.

The Government efforts in Mindanao at this point consist largely of a counterinsurgency effort directed against the Muslims, especially in the context of MILF-GRP sporadic clashes. During the Martial Law years, the Muslims perceived the confiscation of guns as specifically directed against them. Since this effort does not address the real motivations and reasons behind the acquisition of firearms, gunrunning and the illegal possession of firearms will continue.

### **III. REINTEGRATION WITHOUT DISARMAMENT AND DEMOBILIZATION**

Before elaborating on the reintegration, it is important to give a backgrounder on the peace negotiations between the MNLF and the Philippine government.