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Loud town, quiet base

Olongapo City, Subic Bay and the US Navy, 1950–70

Kevin Sliwoski

Introduction: Locating the sonic

Sound is scarce within US military records. Sound is largely absent also in the growing critical scholarship about military bases. Although scholars such as Cynthia Enloe ([1990] 2014), Catherine Lutz (2009), Katherine T. McCaffrey (2002), Jana K. Lipman (2009), Trevor Paglen (2009), David Vine (2011), Kenneth T. MacLeish (2013) and Erin Fitz-Henry (2015) write critically about foreign occupation and US military bases, their focus on sound is as a passing reference. When sound is present in records or scholarly works, it is rarely explicit and demands the researcher to read and to listen obliquely to the text. Music and sound scholars, however, have developed a growing subfield within music studies on the sonic impact of the US military and the sound experiences of US service members. Suzanne Cusick (2008), Jonathan Pieslak (2009), Martin Daughtry (2015) and Lisa Gilman (2015) have studied the recent US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan through the lenses of sound, listening, trauma, violence and occupation. Others, like David Suisman (2015) and Jessica Schwartz (2012), focus on the ways in which US militarization has been mediated and experienced through sound.

These critical studies of war, sound and violence have expanded the scope of music and sound studies, and introduced new questions, subjects, materials and interpretations related to sound. These scholars have risen to anthropologist David Vine's suggestion of a bifocaled approach to studies of empire and militarization, which he defines as 'subjecting U.S. Empire and its actors to the same kind of ethnographic scrutiny most often reserved for imperialism's victims' (Vine 2011: 233). A bifocaled approach has scholars treat the experiences of local populations, American service members and state institutions equally and ethnographically. Vine argues that critical nuance is missing from studies of war and militarization,

and sound studies scholars have made important interventions within that discourse. Jim Sykes cautions about issues of representation in the emerging literature on sound and war within music studies. He writes that 'the sounds of everyday life are absent or placed in a sharp dialectic with the sounds of war' (2018: 3). Sykes worries that focusing on the producers and the machines that generate the sounds of war risks alienating the people and sounds that are part of war but are not part of a military. This has also been a concern for scholars who write on US empire and militarization, such as Maria Hohn and Seungsook Moon (2010) and Setsu Shigematsu and Keith L. Camacho (2010).

The expanding scholarship on military bases, war, sound and occupation intersects constructively with the growing critical literature on US–Philippine colonial history. Many scholars write about the complexity of perspectives and forces related to the historical military relationship between the United States and the Philippines. Sharon Delmendo, for example, argues that US–Philippine history is a 'study of two nationalisms' (2004: 16) developed in proximity to each other, while Vernadette Vicuna Gonzalez points out the hypermasculine 'doubled subjectivity' (2013: 3–4) of US service members in the Philippines as tourists and soldiers. These studies address the military history between the United States and the Philippines but also ask questions about how systems of asymmetrical power became institutionalized. Other scholars such as Mary Talusan (2004), Stephanie Ng (2005), Lucy Mae San Pablo Burns (2012) and Christine Balance (2016) have looked to music and performance to understand the legacies of colonial history between the Philippines and the United States. These scholars demonstrate the wider scope of US–Philippine history and show how Filipinos used musical performance to understand, undermine and translate the experiences of US colonialism and occupation. Taken together, these works provide examples of how to engage with military and sonic histories of the Philippines and show the importance of considering many historical viewpoints to counter, upend and criticize accepted narratives of Philippine history, US occupation and US military bases in the Philippines.

Out of all the installations the US military established in the Philippines during the twentieth century, none experienced the full range and concentration of occupation-related sounds than Naval Base, Subic Bay and its neighbouring city, Olongapo. Subic Bay is located at the south-eastern point of Zambales Province, on the large northern island of Luzon in the Philippines. When the United States took possession of the Philippines after the 1898 Spanish–American War, it inherited a nation constructed on 300 years of colonial and occupational rule, and a small naval installation at Subic Bay. The Philippines

gained legal independence from the United States through the Treaty of Manila in 1946. One year later, the United States and the Philippines signed the Military Bases Agreement Act (1947), granting the United States nearly unrestricted use of several military installations in the Philippines, notably Naval Base, Subic Bay and Clark Air Base. The Military Bases Agreement Act contained a land-lease clause that granted the United States a ninety-nine-year rent-free lease for the land housing the bases (*Agreement Between the United States of America and the Republic of the Philippines Concerning Military Bases* 1947; see Figure 5.1).

By the 1960s, US Naval Base, Subic Bay was a 262-square-mile (680 square kilometre) naval reservation that at times housed approximately 40,000 US service members, families and contract employees, and hosted millions of sailors and marines taking shore leave when in port. The base shared a border with Olongapo City, a city of 60,000 people. Olongapo had been legally part of the US naval station after the Second World War and stayed under military jurisdiction until 1959. Even after it became Philippine sovereign territory, the city's culture,

Figure 5.1 An aerial view of the Subic Bay US Naval Station, 1953. Photo by Michael Rougier/The LIFE Picture Collection via Getty Images.

economy and politics remained tethered to the base's growth. Subic Bay became important to the US military during the Korean War (1950–3), when the massive post-war drawdown of troops made many in government insecure about the US geopolitical position in the Pacific. The 1950s brought significant changes to the naval reservation at Subic Bay, with huge construction and infrastructure projects, new units and more personnel as the base became the new home for the US Seventh Fleet. Naval Base, Subic Bay became one of the largest and most strategically important repair, supply and logistics hubs for the US Navy. Subic Bay was at its busiest between 1964 and 1973, during the peak years of the Vietnam War (1955–75). After the Gulf of Tonkin Incident (1964), the United States began committing huge numbers of combat troops to Vietnam. Subic Bay was the nearest major support installation compared to other bases in Japan, Guam or Taiwan, and millions of people passed through the base while base workers repaired ships and service members took leave.

The build-up of personnel, materials and infrastructure during this time meant that Subic Bay was a noisy place, even though sound is rarely directly present in the historical record. This was also a period when Filipinos and Americans negotiated new geopolitical relationships since the Philippines was no longer a colonial possession. Subic Bay, however, was hosting more Americans than ever before. The US Navy never left, and the base did not close until 1991.

The history of Naval Base, Subic Bay during the 1950s and 1960s is a useful historical case to examine the relationship between sound and occupation – and what sound tells us about occupation – because the United States and the Philippines were still defining their postcolonial relationship; definitions of occupation were fluid and ill-defined. The 'loud town, quiet base' narrative that hangs over the history of the US Navy at Subic Bay as the focus of this chapter conveys American attitudes towards the Philippines, demonstrates lingering colonial structures and shows how sound can shape occupation and empire. By focusing on military history through sound and using the military base as a research site, I ask questions about US militarization and draw attention to the ways in which the US military tried to rebrand its presence overseas and on how it tried to minimize its role as an occupying force.

Self-noise and oblique listening

Although the US Navy's presence at Subic Bay spanned a century, the US military's shift to operations in the Pacific during the mid-1950s to the late 1960s transformed

the base's reputation and physical layout. It is important to give this military base a full-body auscultation at this specific moment in time; to listen to its pulse and all its vital organs: its infrastructure, its environment and its people. This kind of close study and close listening to people, place and institution is a useful method to draw out more details when studying overseas American occupation and militarization. It can also help to better identify and define contemporary forms of occupation. To do so requires oblique listening, a sonic methodology that emphasizes listening between the cracks and below the surface to multiple perspectives. Oblique listening is a method for researching and writing sonic histories by listening critically to texts, performances and interviews for the sonic even when it is not explicit. Oblique listening challenges scholars to find different sources – like military records – to write sound narratives beyond familiar musical, performative and ethnographic perspectives. This is what Martin Daughtry (2015: 3) works towards in his writing on the belliphonic, 'the spectrum of sounds produced by armed combat', and similar to what Christine Balance (2016: 26) calls disobedient listening, which she uses to 'unsettle dominant discourses on race, performance, and US popular music.' Kyle Devine (2015: 368) also advocates for oblique approaches in his push for a political ecology of music, 'how the stuff of musical culture is made and possessed, dispossessed and unmade.' These scholars have worked to expand the boundaries of music and sound research, and they demonstrate several ways to be oblique listeners and researchers: by introducing new spaces, rehearsing accepted or familiar narratives and including new or different materials and individuals.

Classified and unclassified US naval records from the 1950s and 1960s detail the real and perceived contrasting sound worlds of the American base and the adjoining Filipino municipality of Olongapo City. The naval base and its affiliated materials, people and infrastructure were represented as quiet and orderly, a reflection of the public image that the navy tried to uphold. Reports like a 1951 'Noise Survey and Repair Procedures for Submarine Noise Reduction' suggest the navy was concerned with reducing its sonic footprint and being sensitive to allied nations by reigning in its sonic emissions (Department of the Navy Bureau of Ships 1951). A closer reading of the survey reveals the navy's interest in submarine noise reduction was not altruistic but was driven by a desire to design a more lethal and efficient fleet. The survey's authors explain that 'the effectiveness of our submarines depends on their ability to remain undetected by the enemy' and advise that 'a constant awareness of possible noise sources and methods for eliminating them is necessary in order to keep the submarine as quiet as possible' (Department of the Navy Bureau of Ships 1951: 1).

The manual covers the science of sound including vibrations, noises, frequencies, reflections, sine waves, harmonics, infrasonic and ultrasonic, and the authors present practical solutions for underwater noise reduction based on these scientific principles advising a reduction goal of 20 decibels per case (Department of the Navy Bureau of Ships 1951: 2–6, 21). Sailors and submariners were encouraged to trace and measure excess ‘structure-born’ vibrational noise with a vibration meter, a sound-level meter outfitted with a vibration pickup instead of a microphone or hydrophone (Department of the Navy Bureau of Ships 1951: 12–13). The authors also warn about the effects of ‘self-noise’, the noises internal to a sonar or listening ship that can disrupt or interfere with outward-facing sonar hydrophones. In these contexts, American sailors and submariners were asked to be critical listeners, to observe the ship’s and their own ‘self-noise’, and to actively reduce the noise of their ships. These suggestions point to the intimate sonic relationships between ships and sailors and to the presence of sound in naval life (Department of the Navy Bureau of Ships 1951: 2–6, 12–13, 21).

The survey authors, however, do not consider the potential sound effects of a docked submarine. The navy’s policing of ‘self-noise’ did not extend beyond the confines of a ship at sea or combat-related work. The focus is on deployed vessels and submarines. Sounds in other contexts are not considered. Docks, piers and quays of different ports that serviced docked ships and submarines were loud, busy spaces filled with ships under repair, workers, machine shops and other materials. Submarines and their crews added to that sound space, yet a submarine in port for repairs was not considered a sonic actor in the same way a deployed vessel was. The navy’s concern was to reduce ship or submarine noise at sea, not in port, even though upgrades, adjustments and additional listening surveys could only take place in shipyards like Subic Bay (Department of the Navy Bureau of Ships 1951: 23).

The navy’s indifference to the impact of its self-noise at Subic Bay demonstrates persistent colonial attitudes and further shows how sound and occupation overlap. Paying attention to the navy’s self-noise adds expanded dimensions to US–Philippine history and shows that Subic Bay and Olongapo City were sonically complicated places where Americans and Filipinos grappled with different legacies, experiences and definitions of occupation. In this chapter, I repossess the term ‘self-noise’ and use it to mean the collective sound of an institution, group, individual or process, and its intentional and unintentional effects on another group or institution. The loud town, quiet base narrative is about the self-noise of the US Navy

and of the Philippines. Using oblique listening to focus on the politics of self-noise and daily life at Subic Bay leads to a deeper understanding of how Filipinos and Americans encountered and confronted forces of occupation and colonialism.

While the naval base and the navy's reputation are documented as a spectrum of sonic contradictions, Olongapo, in contrast, was categorized as loud, dirty, disorderly and congested. Although Olongapo was at times all of those things, the city does not sonically exist beyond such reductive descriptions. Olongapo's sound world was tied to its use as an entertainment destination for US sailors arriving in port after the monotony of a months-long Pacific cruise. Olongapo was known for 'fancy ladies and the musical napalm of the bars', 'the faded thin walls of the teetering shacks', where 'poverty festers like the open street sewers' (*USS Ranger Cruise Book* 1967). This word choice illustrates how US sailors perceived Olongapo's bar and music culture. Sailors remembered the music, the space and the people as lively, hot, chaotic, exciting and all-consuming, washing over listeners, dancers and drinkers and immersing them in an explosive musical experience. The clubs and bands provided a soundtrack of release and abandon, of rest and relaxation. Women's bodies, music, poverty and cleanliness are themes that were reproduced in cruise yearbooks by sailors on different ships throughout the 1950s and 1960s. There is little space in these narratives for Olongapo to exhibit sonic or other kinds of social or cultural diversity. Instead, Olongapo was a superficial experience for sailors on liberty, and their impressions of its people and spaces were often clichéd and exoticized, filtered through a history of occupation and colonialism (Figure 5.2).

The US Navy's sonic observations of its neighbour did not include any proportional self-examination of the base's self-noise. There was no commentary from the navy's administration about the sound experiences of US sailors or the sonic impact of the navy in the Philippines. Nor was there a willing awareness to examine ways the navy might be adding to or disrupting the overseas sound world it was a part of. Interviews, cruise books, newspapers and naval documents, however, show that Subic and Olongapo's real and imagined sonic reputation was constructed in part by the presence of the US Navy. Sailors of the *USS Coral Sea* remembered how 'the peaceful sound of tropical stillness is occasionally shattered by gunfire from the rifles of *Coral Sea* Marines and sailors' (*Cruise of USS Coral Sea* 1963: 125). In this description, US Marines are sonic disrupters, filling the jungles around the naval reservation with lead casings, gunpowder and the reverberant cracks of rifles.

Figure 5.2 Street scene, Olongapo, 1972. Photo by Robert Alexander/Getty Images.

The navy's contrasting sonic representations of Americans and Filipinos was a mindset inherited from previous generations of US military and political leaders during the American colonial period in the Philippines. Sound in this context reflects ideas about cleanliness. Anne McClintock writes how cleanliness was at the centre of the British colonial project. McClintock pulls apart images and advertisements of bar soap and clean white linens, used to emphasize the differences between British colonizers and British colonial subjects (McClintock 1995). The British were clean, white and civilized, while the colonized were dirty, brown and uncivilized. Many Americans viewed the Philippines and individual Filipinos in a similar manner; the US doctrine of 'benevolent assimilation' towards the Philippines was intended to uplift, modernize and clean up 'little brown brothers', to help the Philippines become a modern nation in the image of the United States (Rafael 2000: 76–81). In connecting sound to McClintock's stance on cleanliness, sound and hygiene become parallels: loud is to dirty as quiet is to clean; colonizers are imagined to be quiet while the colonized are imagined to be loud or noisy. Karin Bijsterveld argues there is a similar class-based distinction between a 'quiet' intellectual class and a 'loud' working class (2003: 183). For the post-Second World War US Navy and the American government, control over sound was how the United States rebranded its relationship with the Philippines and a source the United States used to try to create boundaries with the Philippines. The US Navy attempted to use or manipulate sound to maintain hierarchies of power in Subic Bay.

Olongapo sounds

While debates over the politics of occupation were performed by senators, diplomats and protestors throughout the 1950s and 1960s, US sailors and citizens of Olongapo City tried to make sense of their everyday sonic relationships. The sonic differences between the base and the city were often contrasted in terms of volume. When I asked veteran navy submariner Jim Pope about the sounds he heard at Subic Bay, he outlined a binary of sound and silence that reflected the physical divisions between town and base. An Iowa native, Jim grew up poor and started providing for his parents and siblings in his early teens as a farmhand and janitor. He enlisted in the navy in the 1950s, completed training and sailed to the Philippines in the late 1950s, the start of his twenty-seven-year military career. Jim was a submariner and later became a sonar technician. In our conversation, he was reflective and discerning in talking about sound and silence (Pope 2017). When I asked him about Olongapo, he offered clear and immediate memories of the city as noisy and chaotic. Off-base, Jim recalled ‘drunken brawls and fights and that kind of stuff. . . . That was going on all the time. Shore patrol wagon honking away and running to some brawl some place . . . it was always Americans involved’ (Pope 2018). The sailors of the USS *Hancock*, who documented their 1960 port of call through Subic and liberty in Olongapo, echoed Jim’s observations: ‘The air is filled with dust, new smells, and excitement. Shouts and cheers echo from the cock pit; raucous laughter and coy giggles from the clubs mix with grunts and cackles from farm-like back yards and the spirited shrieks of seemingly countless children’ (Allen 1960: 70). These sailors describe a dense acoustic environment filled with many sounds that reflect aspects of Filipino culture and demonstrate how familiar the sounds of daily life in Olongapo were to US sailors.

These two accounts detail several things. The well-known and lively bar and music scene in Olongapo was also the setting for chronic public noise created by Americans. Nightclubs were places for live music and loud Americans. Jim described how the familiar sirens of shore patrol vehicles were a ubiquitous presence in Olongapo during the evenings. And he described the diversity of sounds in the city beyond the live bands and street musicians. Olongapo sounded congested and overwhelming. Humans, animals, structures and numerous genre cover bands together created a complicated sonic tapestry that filled the space and the ears of US sailors. Many of these sounds were of Filipino cultural origin – the *carabao*, wandering children, fighting cock pits and street vendors. Although Olongapo was loud because of the city’s design and congestion, it was

also chaotic because of US service members filling its spaces. Millions of sailors and marines took liberty at Subic every year throughout the 1960s, and the gate leading off-base would regularly see a daily minimum of 5,000 sailors pass through back and forth. In 1967, for example, 2,586 ships docked at Subic Bay at a rate of approximately 216 per month (*Command History of the United States Naval Station Subic Bay* 1967: 32).

I also interviewed US Navy veteran David Ball who was stationed at Subic in the 1960s and 1970s. He did not recall the base leadership or his own command ever expressing concern about sailors being excessively loud. A diver, corpsman and submariner, David filled many roles during his naval career. He lived and worked at Subic Bay during two sets of orders, lived off-base and travelled widely. The Philippines interested him and his wife, and he recounted numerous detailed narratives of his time overseas. He described how the shore patrol was strict in regulating behaviour during liberty but not overly concerned about sound. Raised voices would attract the shore patrol, but only because yelling preceded fighting. Otherwise, loud American voices were keynote sounds in Olongapo (Ball 2018).

Olongapo's reputation for fun, filth and music was well known in the 1960s, and that legacy endures to this day. However, that description is reductive and obscures the range of activities and infrastructural projects led by the US Navy in collaboration with local Philippine leadership that added to this sound world. The navy's influence and jurisdiction might have been legally limited to the base by the 1960s, but its cultural, economic and sonic reach extended beyond the base's borders. By 1960, the US Navy had made numerous gestures of goodwill towards the Philippines and had returned full jurisdiction over Olongapo back to the Philippine government. The base's Public Works Center (PWC), however, was part of the connective tissue that linked and influenced on- and off-base life. One of the PWC's flagship programmes in the 1960s was construction procurement and contracting in conjunction with the base's Process Plant Section. The base experienced a construction boom in the 1960s to expand the base's facilities in support of combat operations in Vietnam. When the navy contracted part of its construction and materials needs off-base, they also parted with the accompanying sonic afterlife of heavy construction and material processing. Base newspaper *Subic Bay News* detailed how 'heavy boulders blasted by means of explosives from mother rock are hauled in by dump trucks to undergo the crushing process', which would later be carried by trucks through Olongapo to the base (Alinea 1967b).

It is not surprising that the US Navy contracted many of its industrial services off-base, as military leaders struggled to control the base's public

image. The on-base process plant was known for 'Belching smoke, emitting dust and giving out jarring noise' (Alinea 1967b). By moving some of the dirty and noisy industrial work off-base, the navy demonstrated its commitment to supporting the local Filipino economy and created a more sonically peaceful work and home life on base for its sailors and military dependents. The other way to read this is that the navy dumped the unwanted, dirty or ugly aspects of industrialization off-base for the local Filipino population to deal with. Large numbers of Filipinos depended on the formal and illicit economies the base propped up, and the United States controlled and influenced aspects of the local economy, another manifestation of an inherited colonial relationship. The navy's leaders at Subic Bay wielded power and fashioned economic and sonic life on and off-base to the specifications they found acceptable.

In some instances, however, naval leaders at Subic Bay were eager to emphasize the sonic impact of the navy in Olongapo. In a politically calculated 1968 piece titled 'Fleet's Work and Music Promote Closer Relations,' US Navy journalist Bob Rainville explained the positive effects of sailor-civilian interactions. US sailors worked with Olongapo City citizens to help build up the Boys Town Community Center, a space and programme for the struggling community's children. Sailors served as instructors in farming and building, and helped lay foundations for new facilities (Rainville 1968: 5). A navy band from the USS *Coral Sea* 'played popular music for the boys and the school children,' and 'performed before students at the National High School and Bajac-Bajac Elementary School in Olongapo City' (Rainville 1968: 5). In a performance reversal, the US Navy Band played for Filipinos instead of the Filipino bands performing for US sailors on liberty.

The performance, however, was a political device used to demonstrate to the local Filipino community the positive aspects of a continued friendly relationship with the US Navy. This was the politics of occupation mediated through music, through the sonic. Sailors at Subic Bay were regularly a part of community outreach events and disaster relief efforts to be good partners to their Filipino hosts. These actions could also disguise the shape of naval and sonic occupation; they were attempts at geopolitical sleight-of-hand, to misdirect and mask American dominance at Subic Bay and in the Southwest Pacific. Sound and music were tools used to elicit positive emotional responses instead of critical political ones from Filipino communities abutting the naval base.

The 1968 performance concluded with the ceremonial presentation of a school bell, offered by Lieutenant Commander John A. Baxter, chaplain on the USS *Camden*, to the mayor of Castillejos, Rodrigo Trimorand, and to the

elementary school's principal Gerardo Beltran (Rainville 1968: 5). This was a public display of intercultural exchange that happened around a musical and sonic symbol. Alain Corbin (1998: 4, 218) argues that bells hold emotional power and transmit 'auditory messages' of power, ownership, control, time and regulation. The 1968 bell presentation and the bell itself was an act the navy hoped would symbolize the selfless and generous sailors who represented the navy and the United States. The bell was also a reminder of the existing power relations between the United States and the Philippines and between the naval base and the city. Although the bell was intended as a gesture of goodwill between two allied nations, it could also represent the US Navy's dominance over the local economy and culture, a sonic reminder of occupation, an extension of the base's sonic presence. The navy did not merely occupy a cordoned-off stretch of coastal Philippine land but made its presence known and felt inland away from the base, as a physically, sonically and culturally occupying force.

Subic: Sound and silence

By 1968, when US troop levels peaked in Vietnam and support operations in the Philippines were at their busiest, the navy's leadership at Subic Bay enacted policies and restrictions to assert more control over noise, movement and security on base and the immediate surrounding areas. In response to a series of criminal activities on base, increased congestion and more local hiring, power-driven, two-wheel vehicles were strictly prohibited between sunset and sunrise on base, with minimal exceptions granted (*Subic Bay News* 1968: 2). The number of motorcycles and motorbikes on base was apparently a cause for concern, but the navy's restrictions also affected the sound world on base. The restrictions meant a quieter, more orderly and more controlled after-dark culture on base. Because of increased support operations, the base was also a site of perpetual construction and accompanying environmental and sonic disruptions. The waters of the bay grew more quiet in the late 1960s as the anchorage boundaries were restructured in response to piracy against US ships. The base's transportation command had spare vessels patrol the bay, but by the late 1960s those ships were running salvage operations off the coast of Vietnam. By 1966, the western portion of the bay was a restricted zone. This series of policies was designed to contain noisy disruptions and behaviour by sailors and Filipinos, and between Philippine and American sovereignty. As Olongapo's neon lights flickered awake and the bands began their sets, the base was supposed to become dark and quiet.

Subic's leadership also made efforts to distinguish the sound worlds of families stationed overseas and the sailors passing through Subic for liberty, refuelling or repairs. David Ball remembered how the navy used cattle cars to transport sailors from the piers across the base to Magsaysay Gate, the main point of access for sailors venturing out into Olongapo. He described how cattle carriers were attached to semi-trucks, and that coming back from town, 'there were lots of drunks on there, lot of fights on there. People were thrown off. Talk about noise – that was noise' (Ball 2018). David's experience details how the navy herded sailors like cattle to control their bodies and their ability to make sound, to make sure their noisy and unruly behaviour did not intersect and violate the transplanted suburban family neighbourhoods. The navy wanted to preserve its on-base military-sonic domesticity, the totality of sounds and music within suburban-style housing and family recreation areas on base.

To solidify the division between family life and bachelor life, the base command opened Grande Island in March 1966 as a rest and recuperation site for US service members. Newly repurposed, and capable of hosting several thousand sailors, the island resort offered food, beaches, a golf course, a movie theatre and other leisure activities. The navy planned for Grande Island to establish better long-term relations with the local Philippine government by siphoning off the flood of noisy sailors that visited Olongapo. This was the same year the navy's land lease for Subic was shortened to twenty-five years and when the navy began constructing a fuel pipeline from Subic to its neighbouring inland installation, Clark Air Force Base (Anderson 1991). There were many reasons to maintain a positive relationship with the local community with so many political and sonic changes occurring. Although the navy's policies were a reaction to crime and geopolitics and not necessarily sound, the outcome affected all those elements.

Community, recreation and family life at Subic Bay were marked and organized around sound. A 1967 story in *The Admiral's Log*, the school newspaper of Subic Bay's George Dewey High School, detailed a performance by the USS *Bryce Canyon's* navy band. The nineteen-piece band 'brought down the house with its outstanding interpretations of Herb Alpert's Tiajuana Brass selections' and their 'clowning antics and various skits' (*The Admiral's Log* 1967). Earlier that year, the China Seas EM (Enlisted Mens) Club was 'converted from a temporary building to a semi-permanent structure' (*Command History of the United States Naval Station Subic Bay* 1967: 3). And a year later, in 1968, the base's go-kart track was reopened, 'basketball, volleyball and deck shuffleboard courts were built between barracks', new skeet shooting ranges were added and 'a total of 32 USO shows were presented at Naval Station Theater and NAS Cubi Theater'

(*Command History of the United States Naval Station Subic Bay* 1968: 3, 1, 8). All these events describe a dynamic indoor and outdoor musical and recreational sonic culture on base. Sailors and civilians heard live music and other acts throughout each year, while the base's Special Services Division took steps to make entertainment and recreation permanent parts of base culture by building new spaces and expanding older ones. The base was in many ways like any other domestic American suburb, with sports fields and courts, stages and community centres, parks and theatres. The base was not a silent, sterile place as so many technical and administrative naval documents suggest but was instead home to American service members, their families and other civilians who engaged in all manner of sonic activities. The sound and culture of the naval occupation of Philippine land for these individuals and communities were structured around a military-sonic domesticity, a manufactured pastoral suburbanization coexisting with military industry and logistics.

In addition to the base's family and domestic sound worlds, Subic Bay was marked by the sounds of industry and labour. Although most naval documents and navy leaders did not emphasize the impact of sound, other people experienced the base's industrialism acoustically, and were aware and familiar with that kind of sonic power. In a 1967 *Subic Bay News* article, reporter Romeo C. Alinea wrote a detailed report about the workers at Ship Repair Facility (SRF) 23, a blacksmiths shop. Alinea described how 'this group makes known its presence and its work by the sound and hot fumes it evolves' and that the 'neatly arranged furnaces burn like inferno, aggravated by the resonant sounds of pounding hammers on iron bars atop anvils' (1967a). The article was a propaganda piece that highlighted the contributions of the shop's fifty-three Filipino base workers. Alinea used the clamour of the shop as a device to demonstrate the exceptional and humble work ethic of the workers, who, without complaint, wielded fire and endured smashing metal to support the navy's missions: 'Friendly fire after all retains its God-given usefulness and noise is not a nuisance per se in this place' (Alinea 1967a). This article takes the reader into this shop and shows what it sounded like and how it fit into the overall industrial work area. One hears the 'pounding hammers', the 'welding and chipping' and the massive 'electric driven hammer' (Alinea 1967a). It was one of many machine shops located in that area of the base. Alinea writes how the 'deafening sounds' were not deterrents to the shop's output. The Filipino workers are heroic in this narrative, doing difficult work in difficult conditions. It is a sweaty, masculine space, full of strong men wielding hammers and tongs to manipulate the earth's natural elements.

The navy's efforts to assert political and economic control had a corollary effect on the base's sound, on the base's social and cultural life and on raw decibel measurements. In these examples, we can hear how sound is wrapped up in politics and see how it becomes politicized, a battleground for power. On-base life was not louder or quieter than off-base – it was simply different. The base did not have the congestion and traffic that distinguished Olongapo, and base residents enjoyed considerably more open space than their Filipino neighbours. Sound on base was largely relegated towards the bay itself where the dockyards and the repair facilities were located, with some exceptions. Exceptions included how the US Navy tried to sustain positive US–Philippine relations through celebrations on base. In December 1969, for example, the navy hosted a Fil-Am Fiesta – a celebration 'designed to promote friendship and understanding between American servicemen and their Filipino hosts' (*Command History Report* 1969: 27). The event was endorsed by Olongapo mayor Amelia Gordon and included a parade, events, performances and exhibitions featuring Americans and Filipinos, all raising money for Philippine charities. Local Filipinos were invited to tour three US ships and one Philippine ship (*Command History Report* 1969: 28). The navy's narrative account of this event is rich in sonic detail: we can hear the boxing matches, cock fights, bingo games, film screenings, carnival, parade, arcade, sporting events, singers and bands – a blend of American and Filipino cultural activities. This was a massive event, and Subic Bay hosted approximately 100,000 Filipino guests, tripling the base's population. This large event dismantles the imagined quiet culture of Subic Bay used to distinguish the base and therefore the United States and Americans from Olongapo and Filipinos. The history and legacy of US colonialism and military occupation in the Philippines continued to exist into the 1960s and was regularly mediated through the ways the United States and the US Navy sought to differentiate themselves from Filipinos. Distinguishing base from town and American from Filipino was another facet of pre-Second World War US colonialism that continued to exist at Subic Bay, influencing the way in which naval leaders asserted control over sounds and spaces.

A home port away from home

The United States built its relationship with the Philippines on control – control of space, control of bodies, control of institutions and control of sound. The US colonial government used the Philippines as a laboratory to test social policies

and ideas before importing them back for domestic use. Alfred McCoy shows how the incubation of modern policing, surveillance and intelligence gathering in the Philippines projected US authority and control, tactics later incorporated into the modern American security state (McCoy 2009). The Philippines was also a place where Americans developed understandings of race and gender, a process that continued at postcolonial Subic Bay. Paul Kramer writes how the politics of racial recognition defined American colonial institutions in the Philippines and how race needed to be a malleable social construct to represent Filipinos as racially dark, savage or barbaric (Kramer 2006). Writing in counterpoint to McCoy and Kramer, Nerissa Balce (2017) and Benito Vergara (1995) demonstrate how colonial photography visually reinforced perceived racial and sexual differences between Americans and Filipinos. Both show how American perceptions of the Filipino population were carefully curated. American control and occupation of the Philippines was enforced through military measures, but also through cultural, political, economic, visual and, later, sonic factors.

The methods of control used by the United States in the Philippines were mediated through stages and forms of occupation. The Philippines was subjected to three colonial governments and occupations: Spain, the United States and Japan. For many years, the Philippines was a geopolitical token, traded and possessed. When the Philippines became an independent nation in 1946, occupation was recent history. A year earlier, in September 1945, US Marines maintained a military occupation of Subic Bay from the US Army, who assumed control of it after defeating the Japanese (Anderson 1991: 76). Thus, even with independence, Philippine land was occupied by the US military. Vague phrasings written into the Military Bases Agreement Act concealed latent sovereignty issues regarding military occupation, debated in the mid-1950s and throughout the following decades. The crux of these debates was that both the United States and the Philippines interpreted the indeterminate language regarding the titles to mean that they were each uniquely the possessor of lands used by US forces (Ma 2001). The history of American occupation was a persistent issue even in an independent Philippines, as the two countries debated sovereignty and extraterritoriality (Ma 2001).

The post-Second World War base leases negotiated between the United States and the Philippines demonstrated the extent of continued American power in the Philippines. As the US State Department and Defense Department negotiated agreements for US military outposts in the Philippines, US colonial and military occupation narratives were extinguished, and rent-free property leases replaced the previous generation's overt tactics of military and governmental occupation.

On paper, these legal agreements appeared to overwrite the historically asymmetrical relationship of military occupation and colonialism between the United States and the Philippines, and were established through legitimate diplomatic efforts by representatives of both governments. These documents used language that emphasized mutual security concerns in the region, a collaboration between two Allied nations. The arrangements between the United States and the Philippines were for 'mutual security', 'common defence', 'mutual interests', 'mutual protection', 'military necessity' and 'international security' (Military Bases Agreement Act 1947). This agreement and other treaties, however, were written upon a fraught history, and functioned as palimpsests more than clean slates, as traces of the colonial past seeped through the freshly inked signatures.

The 1947 agreement favoured the United States and granted the US military complete autonomy over the land leased to them by the Philippine government, including jurisdiction over Olongapo City. The agreement ensured that Subic Bay would become a nexus for re-negotiating power dynamics and defining overseas American culture and lifestyles in the following decades. Critics of overseas US base leases argue that these arrangements were negotiated under unequal terms, and that overseas bases enacted colonial and imperial dynamics under a new banner, a more subtle, legal approach to occupation, what Mark Gillem calls a 'mortgaged empire' (2007: 26). This arrangement differed between countries with US bases, such as South Korea, Japan and Guam, but there was always a legal architecture in place that allowed the United States to lease the land for overseas bases essentially rent free. Host nations in return received the benefits and privilege of a security relationship with the United States. There were variations on this arrangement, and in the case of the Philippines, the United States provided annual military, defence and other kinds of monetary aid packages. In this way, the United States was still 'paying' for the right to station troops overseas. The Philippines, however, received substantially less economic aid than other US allies in the region, such as Thailand and Australia (Ma 2001).

Issues of occupation and sovereignty were complicated further from the 1950s onwards, as the United States was forced repeatedly to give legal and symbolic concessions concerning Subic back to the Philippine government. There was negotiation and exchanges of power, and for the United States, a significant loss of control and influence. What matters is the distinction between whether this arrangement was the legal occupation of land by the US military or a US military occupation. If it is the former, then referring to it as an 'occupation' may not be appropriate. Another label – such as occupation-adjacent – might be more useful. The diplomatic complications between the United States and the

Philippines over Subic Bay point to the importance of what Jürgen Osterhammel describes as networks of ‘maritime enclaves’, a colonial form alongside extraction and settlement ([1995] 2005: 9–10). Global powers fought over the Philippines for its strategic and sheltered maritime ports, which provided access to Asian markets and coveted trade routes in the Pacific.

Maritime expansion and trade networks led to naval enclaves or harbour colonies and later developed into strategic global positions. Osterhammel writes that ‘the military base was the only colony type that was adaptable to modern circumstances on a long-term basis’ ([1995] 2005: 10). He argues that military bases as a form of colony manage to persist and outlive other forms of colonialism, suggesting that military bases have unique functions within colonial endeavours and possess a distinct militarized role and definition. In the case of Subic Bay, the presence of the US military (specifically the navy) cannot be separated easily from decades of US colonialism and occupation. Militarized overseas maritime enclaves (and airfield and army enclaves) continue to be used by the United States to execute global policy. This network of bases has been called a ‘base nation’ (Vine 2017) or ‘bases of empire’ (Lutz 2009). Whatever this network is called, once established, bases like Naval Base, Subic Bay become home ports away from home for millions of US sailors and civilians, a port in a friendly host nation, often glad to support US troops. US sailors were happy sailing to ‘the P.I.’ (i.e. ‘the Philippine Islands’) and anticipated the sounds of the city and the base that awaited them there.

Conclusion: Listening to militarism

Although sound is a fixture of overseas US military culture, it is routinely neglected. The US Navy’s disavowal and manipulation of its record of self-noise in the Philippines perpetuated stereotypes and assumptions about the differences between US Naval Base, Subic Bay and the neighbouring Olongapo City. Sound was an element used to make distinctions between these two connected places. An oblique analysis of military records, cruise yearbooks, newspapers and interviews demonstrates how sound was a politicized factor and influenced debates about the role of the US Navy in the Philippines. Sound is relevant within the context of US–Philippine occupation narratives, because the sonic (and music) was often how the politics of occupation and sovereignty was enacted or performed by different groups of people. Clubs, bars, industrial shops and other spaces were sonic contact zones where Americans and Filipinos negotiated the legal and cultural effects of occupation.

Sound can occupy space and consciousness, reality, imagination and memory. In the case of Naval Base, Subic Bay, sound collapsed spatial boundaries. It penetrated and permeated daily life on either side of the base's gates. A sonic narrative about the US military in the Philippines helps construct a filled-in history of Subic Bay and Olongapo City, places where Americans and Filipinos interacted within a militarized culture. The presence of the navy produced concentrated, intense sonic events, while around those events, people found quiet, introspective moments. The loud town, quiet base narrative, then, is a false polarity, born of US colonial governance and reinforced by later generations of Americans serving in the navy. The navy's own records reveal how busy and noisy Subic Bay was, a counter to the image and brand the navy wanted for the base. The arguments and memories from sailors that depict Olongapo as a noisy space, meanwhile, fail to consider that the city might have been noisy for them, but quiet for others. Nor is there awareness that the US Navy and its sonic infrastructure was the reason why Olongapo was sonically dense. Jim Sykes writes that the sound studies literature on war has suggested a problematic universal: that 'peacetime is quiet and wartime is noisy' (2018: 10). Sykes writes that peacetime in many places might be noisy rather than quiet and that clear distinctions between the audible quotidian can vary from place to place. This was true at Subic Bay, where the loud-quiet standard varied culturally between Americans and Filipinos.

Sound is part of occupation and empire, and sounds can vibrate and resound across occupied space. Bruce Smith suggests that 'the shape of empire replicates the shape of sound', and I would argue the reverse is also likely to occur – that the shape of sound can replicate the shape of empire (1999: 288). Sound can fill in geographies of empire, assuming its shape while pushing out of its borders. Adding to Smith's argument, I contest that while state-controlled empire has geographic limits, sound is far-reaching and can spill over physical borders and transmit other cultural or social facets of empire or occupation. The sounds of empire are mutable, immediate and more readily experienced in an imperial context than other aspects of empire. Where colonial schools or other institutions take time to set up, the sounds of empire are immediately present, whether mediated through the military, diplomacy or politics. At Subic Bay, the sounds of empire manifested in shipyards, machine shops and family housing units, and in bars, music halls and outdoor markets.

A sonic perspective of the US military occupation of the Philippines demonstrates a history of fuzzy dialogics. Using sound as an amplifier to examine daily life and interactions around base and town shows that simple definitions

of occupation and imperialism fail to describe the complexity of daily life and geopolitics at Subic Bay. Sound makes occupation a fungible descriptor of US–Philippine relations and complicates stock narratives and assumptions about the shape of US imperialism. The academy’s emphasis on limiting US–Philippine history to reductive narratives of colonialism or occupation obscures the more sinister role of global US militarism, which disguises itself within such histories. The fuzziness of occupation and narrative stasis requires an oblique approach to better discern the role of global US militarization. By listening around and in-between, the scope of American occupation and militarism in the Philippines becomes clearer.

Occupation, exploitation and colonialism are intrinsic elements of US–Philippine history, and of the history of Subic Bay. More fundamentally, however, the history of these two nations is a story of the global reach and excesses of US militarism. US occupation and colonialism in the Philippines were side effects of the larger project of global military dominance. Twentieth-century American technocrats and military leaders used the tools of industrial warfare and set up a global network of military bases without deeper philosophical and ethical considerations as to what followed in the wake of unrestricted militarism. Sound was not a serious concern, yet, a global military cannot escape its own self-noise, and those unintentional resonances are there for us to listen to, frequencies for criticism. There are many ways to listen to and for occupation, but we must listen because occupation is merely a symptom of encroaching militarism and the militarization of daily life. Listening obliquely to the colonial self-noise of US military occupation at Subic Bay shows that the scope of occupation and militarism extends in every direction, affects every sense and leaves traces in even the most unexpected places.

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