

Army Vision: By 2048, a world-class Army that is a source of national pride



Serving the people. Securing the land.

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13 December 2016

Tuesday

Army Core Purpose: Serving the people, Securing the land

Army vision: By 2028, a world-class Army that is a source of national pride.

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Army Core Purpose: Serving the people. Securing the land.

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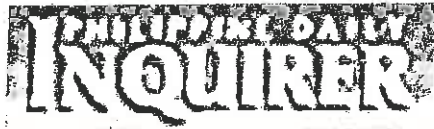
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

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TODAY'S WEATHER FORECAST | DECEMBER 13, 2016 | TUESDAY




LOW PRESSURE AREA
VICINITY OF BUENAVISTA, QUEZON
NORTHEAST MONSOON
AFFECTING NORTHERN LUZON
(As of 3:00 PM - Dec. 12, 2016)

SUNRISE	SUNSET
6:12 AM	5:29 PM
MOONRISE	MOONSET
4:56 PM	5:02 AM
FIRST QUARTER	FULL MOON
DEC 13 9:03 PM	DEC 14 8:16 AM
LOW TIDE	HIGH TIDE
4:22 AM	10:57 AM
1:13 AM	0:30 Meter

Partly cloudy to at times cloudy with rainshowers
Partly cloudy to at times cloudy with rainshowers and/or thunderstorms
Cloudy skies with rainshowers and/or thunderstorms
Light rains


	DEC 14	DEC 15	DEC 16	DEC 17	DEC 18	DEC 19
METRO MANILA	24 - 32 °C	24 - 32 °C	20 - 29 °C	19 - 29 °C	24 - 31 °C	23 - 31 °C
TUGUEGARAO	23 - 28 °C	22 - 28 °C	24 - 30 °C	25 - 30 °C	23 - 32 °C	22 - 33 °C
LADAG	23 - 32 °C	23 - 31 °C	24 - 32 °C	23 - 32 °C	25 - 33 °C	24 - 32 °C
BAGUID	15 - 23 °C	15 - 22 °C	26 - 31 °C	25 - 30 °C	24 - 32 °C	24 - 31 °C
SBMA/CLARK	23 - 32 °C	23 - 31 °C	26 - 31 °C	25 - 32 °C		
TAGAYTAY						
LEGAZPI						
PUERTO PRINCESA						
ILOILO/BACOLOD						
METRO CEBU						
TACLOBAN						
CAGAYAN DE ORO						
METRO DAVAO						
ZAMBOANGA						

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03 December 2016

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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Bloody revenge in Sulu

Troops kill 10 ASG bandits following death of 3 soldiers

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD
and NONOY E. LACSON

Ten suspected Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) fighters were killed in a fierce firefight with government troops shortly after the bandits gunned down three soldiers in Patikul, Sulu, the military reported yesterday.

Army Major Filemon Tan Jr., spokesman of the Armed Forces of the Philippines-Western Mindanao Command (WestMinCom), said troops from the Army's 35th Infantry Battalion, led by Lt. Col. Vladimir Lenos T. Villanueva, were conducting focused military operations when they encountered more or less 150 Abu Sayyaf bandits in Bud Taming, Barangay Kabbontak- ►10

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Bloody revenge in Sulu

kas, Patikul at about 10 a.m. Saturday. The Abu Sayyaf fighters were led by Sulu ASG top leader Radullan Sahiron and sub-leaders Hatib Hajar Sawadjan, Yasser Igasan, and Mujer Yadah.

In the initial burst of gunfire, three soldiers were killed and 17 others were wounded.

Seeing their slain comrades, the government security forces, part of Joint Task Force Sulu, pressed on with their offensive and killed at least 10 Abu Sayyaf bandits.

"Based on the information as confirmed by intel units on the ground and validated by civilians on the ground, a total of 10 Abu Sayyaf fighters were killed while six others were hurt as a result of the clash," said Tan.

Tan said the armed confrontation lasted for an hour and 45 minutes before the Abu Sayyaf bandits withdrew, bringing with them a number of their casualties.

He added that of the 21 soldiers wounded in action, 19 were slightly hurt due to shrapnel wounds.

"Pursuit operations are ongoing to neutralize members of the bandit group," he said.

"Fire support and close air support were provided to the engaging troops. Adjacent units also conducted blocking and pursuit operations as casualties were immediately taken to Kuta General Teodulfo Bautista (KHTB) Hospital," Tan said.

"Two soldiers needing additional medical attention were airlifted to Camp Navarro General Hospital in Zamboanga City," he added.

Tan said the Joint Task Force Sulu

continues to conduct pursuit operations and intensify further the conduct of focused military operations to rescue the remaining kidnap victims and neutralize the ASG in Sulu.

Communist insurgency

Meanwhile, President Duterte appealed to soldiers for understanding as he continues to engage the reds in a bid to end the long-running communist insurgency in the country.

The Chief Executive issued the appeal in a speech before troops of the Northern Luzon Command (Nolcom) at Camp Servillano Aquino in San Miguel, Tarlac City, last Sunday.

"Alam ko na masakit sa loob (ninyo)-yun iba ... yung ceasefire ngayon... You know, we have to somehow end this war. This has been going on for 45 years. Do you mean to say another 45 years tayo?" Duterte told the soldiers.

"Yung iba na matagal na sa serbisyo, alam ko masakit sa inyo 'yan. But you have to understand me and the rest of the Filipino people," he added.

He stressed this as he noted that in dealing with the communist insurgency, which has been dragging on for 45 years, the government forces are fighting against their fellow Filipinos.

"Sana magkaroon kayo ng pagtingin sa akin. I'm not a communist. I am not... I am just a Filipino... I'm just doing it for the sake of my country," he stressed.

"Let us just concentrate on one front," he continued, referring to the conflict in southern Philippines.

"Yung sa Mindanao, talagang tingin ko

lalo na 'yung Basilan pati Sulu, it's either really we have to fight it out for another long time. I really do not know," he said.

He added, however, that "one thing is sure" and that is "terrorism is coming in our way, whether we like it or not."

"The (Muslim militants in Mindanao) pretend or they are already maybe already connected to ISIS," Duterte said. And as operations against ISIS in their occupied territories in the Middle East continue, he said these terrorists may flee to Mindanao and other areas in the region such as Malaysia and Indonesia.

Duterte admitted that many of the Moro people in Mindanao are not sympathetic to the government so there is danger that they might join the ISIS.

"So that's one thing. Let us just concentrate on one front," he stressed.

And as the threat of terrorism looms in the horizon, the President said he cannot give a timetable when peace in Mindanao can finally be achieved.

"I hope we'd have a peaceful Christmas. Sa Jolo, Basilan, well, I don't know. But I cannot even project a timeline there when we can have peace. I'll have to continue fighting and might call on you again," he said.

The President praised the troops as he reiterated his full support to both military and the police.

"Let me tell you now that with gratitude ang Filipino people. I know. I'm on the ground. Happy ang Pilipino sa inyo and I'm more than satisfied by your performance," he said.

Duterte also once again assured government forces that he will assume full responsibility for whatever they do in the performance of their duty. (With reports from Elena L. Aben)

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Duterte: I am not a killer

'Phl not in mummy business'

By ALEXIS ROMERO

Despite more than 5,600 dead in his war on drugs, President Duterte insisted he is not the killer his critics portray him to be, as he expressed readiness to "sacrifice" for his mission to stamp out the scourge of illegal drugs.

Duterte, who has drawn flak for allegedly endorsing summary executions in his anti-drug campaign, also said he would shoot any policeman or soldier who would kill or torture innocent civilians.

"I am not a killer. I do not relish or enjoy (seeing) a Filipino sprawled there with all the blood," the President said at the 2016 The Outstanding Young Men and Women awards at Malacañang.

"With regard to the killing of persons on bended knees, with hands tied behind their back, that's not ours," he added. "Will that make you a better soldier or policeman? If they do that, I'll shoot them."

Corpses found with the heads or bodies wrapped in plastic and packing tape -

what he described as "balot-balot" - are not the handiwork of his government, he stressed.

"Hindi kami gumagawa ng mummy. Hindi ito Egypt (We don't make mummies. This is not Egypt)," Duterte said.

He said he is aware that not everyone approves of his tough stance on narcotics. He believes though that criticisms are part of the job.

"I won't hold back and abandon my job. Somebody has to be sacrificed for it. That's OK with me. It's part of the territory to be disliked," the President said.

"I do not offer any excuses or apologies. I will answer God when I face him," he added.

Some sectors have expressed concern over the conduct of

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Duterte From Page 1

Duterte's war on criminality, saying it has encouraged human rights abuses and summary executions.

Duterte, however, maintained that his intensified campaign is necessary to curb the drug menace, which he said could transform the Philippines into a failed state.

"I cannot explain every death in this country. But if you tell me to hold back, I cannot because I cannot afford it. I cannot now stop the momentum with the four million drug addicts spread all throughout the country," the President said.

The President has described torture and extrajudicial killings as a "dirty job" and "unmanly" and has reminded security forces to perform their operations "with honor." He, however, believes the killings would stop if drug use stops.

"Madaming patayan daw, may salvaging, extrajudicial killings, gusto niyo mahinto ito? Simple lang. Hinto kayo lahat mga durugista (They say there have

been a lot of killings, executions and extrajudicial killings. You want these to end? It's simple. You drug users should stop)," Duterte said. "Stop it and there will be a peaceful New Year and Christmas."

Duterte claimed that he is still overwhelmed by the seriousness of the drug problem in the country.

"But I'd like to ask for an advice, what should I do? I want to cry. I think I can't do it. I can't handle that much. I now realized that about 15 years ago, 17 years ago, we were already a narco-politics country," the President said.

The President earlier said that more than 2,000 government officials, local executives and barangay captains were involved in illegal drugs.

Duterte is hopeful that billionaires would support the government's campaign against illegal drugs, just like Chinese real estate tycoon Huang Rulun, who financed the construction of a rehabilitation facility in Nueva Ecija.



President Duterte poses with 2016 TOYM officials (back row from left) Christopher Camba, Gloria Tan Climaco, Manny V. Pangilinan, Bienvenido Tantoco III, Rafael Dizon and Maria Isabel Manalo, and awardees (front row from left) Jhett Tolentino, Carmela Andal-Castro, Clarisse Delgado, Ryan Guinanan, Richard Heydarian, Geraldine Racaza, Ronivin Pagtakhan, Richard Muallil, Rahdy Halasan, Saturnino Tiamzon Jr. and Earl Martin Valencia at Malacañang yesterday.

KRIZJOHN ROSALES

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<http://dwdd.com.ph/>

Army installs new chiefs of key offices

Lui Claudio



FORT BONIFACIO, Taguig City – The Philippine Army installed new chiefs of the offices of logistics, plans and programs, and the secretary of the Army general staff on Dec. 9 in a joint ceremony held in Luna Hall, Philippine Army Officers Club House here.

Col. Glenn E. Cruz now heads the Army's Assistant Chief of Staff for Logistics, G4 replacing Col. Pio Q. Diñoso III who now heads the 301st Infantry Brigade based in the Western Visayas.

Cruz is the former deputy and executive officer of the Army logistics office prior to his new position.

Col. Roberto S. Capulong replaced Col. Cornelio H. Valencia as the new Army Assistant Chief of Staff for Plans and Programs, G5.

Valencia moved up to the AFP's General Headquarters as the new Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans and Programs or the AJ5.

Capulong, on the other hand, is the former Secretary of the Army General Staff and he was replaced by Lt. Col. Arvin R. Lagamon, a newly graduate of the Masters in National Security Administration at the National Defense College of the Philippines.



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Security execs shy away from Sino arms deal

By Mario J. Mallari

Security officials are hesitant over an arms deal with China that President Duterte announced in a speech last Sunday with officials of both the Department of National Defense (DND) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) citing familiarity issues for their uncertainty.

Tribune sources in the AFP said they have not held any Chinese-made firearms – considering that most, if not all, military-issued regular firearms are made in the United States like the M4 rifle and an .45 caliber pistol.

Aside from US-made firearms, the AFP also has in its inventory specialized firearms made from Spain, Italy, Austria

and even Australia.

"The hesitation is understandable because of lack of familiarity with Chinese-made firearms. We have not used any firearm made from China in actual combat," a DND Aquino source told the *Tribune*.

"And this issue is very sensitive and critical as it may compromise the lives of

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our troops. Our firearms could spell doom or victory in combat," he added.

The official, however, stressed that if Chinese made firearms pass AFP standards and specifications, there will be no problem.

"We have no problem with China products but they (firearms) should pass the necessary specifications based on our actual requirements during combat operations," the official added.

Another officer said: "I have not used any firearm made in China. The closest that I have encountered for a Chinese firearm is its Norinco 1911."

The Norinco 1911 .45 caliber has passed quality standards in the Philippines and is available in the commercial market in Manila.

"Anyway, we have an acceptance committee, if ever and we also have specifications that has to be satisfied by the manufacturer," the second source said.

No China trip planned

On the part of the DND, Undersecretary for Finance, Munitions, Installations and Material Raymundo Elefante said they have yet to schedule a trip to China to check on the firearms offered for the AFP.

"There is no timetable yet in case we can go there," said Elefante.

Elefante also did not say what specific company they will be considering or what particular firearms. He only said that the offer is spread to 25 years to pay.

"That's (specific firearm) to be determined...we are looking at the best offer," said Elefante.

Pressed if the DND has a scheduled trip to China soon, Elefante replied "there is none, there is no date yet."

Mr. Duterte said last Sunday China had informed him that the military arms offered by Beijing are now ready for delivery.

Duterte said that he already instructed Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana to accept the

Chinese armaments.

"China is presenting me its weapons, as promised. We just have to receive them but since I have a lot to do, nobody wanted to go and get them," Duterte said.

In asking Lorenzana to go to Beijing to receive these, Duterte told soldiers that they have to get used with his independent foreign policy which veers away from the Philippines' major traditional ally and consequently the use of weapons and other equipment from countries other than the US.

Russian purchases also eyed

Lorenzana said earlier the military is also considering purchasing sniper rifles from Russia, adding that the Philippine army and marines would undertake a study to see whether a deal could be forged.

Lorenzana visited Russia last week on Duterte's order to meet defense officials, the first visit by a Philippine defense secretary to Moscow since diplomatic ties were established in 1976, officials said.

"If their sniper rifles are superior as they claim, we may decide to acquire," Lorenzana said. "The army and marines will conduct tests and determine how many they may require."

Duterte reached out to China and Russia after taking office in June while assuming a hostile stance with the Obama administration after the latter criticized his deadly war on drugs.

The Philippines has heavily depended on the US, its treaty ally, for weapons, ships and aircraft for years, although it has turned to other countries for defense equipment as it struggled to modernize its underfunded military.

Under Duterte's predecessor, Benigno Aquino, relations with China were strained over disputed South China Sea territories, especially after Aquino brought the disputes to international arbitration. China ignored the arbitration case and the eventual ruling in July, which invalidated China's sweeping territorial claims.

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INQUIRER

BELENISIMO IN TARLAC CITY

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DUTERTE SINGS, JOKES TO CROWD IN AQUINO HOMETOWN

By Gabriel Cardinoza
@gcardinozaINQ

TARLAC CITY—It was supposed to be a night of entertainment on Sunday for President Duterte to cap his first presidential visit to this city, hometown of his predecessor, former President Benigno Aquino III.

But Mr. Duterte became part of the entertainment, to the delight of the huge crowd that gathered on Robinsons' athletic field at Hacienda Luisita shopping complex in Barangay San Miguel here.

He was the guest of honor at the awards night of this year's Belenísimo, the city's annual rendering of the Nativity scene. The President earlier made a brief visit to the military's Northern Luzon Command just across from the complex.

Mr. Duterte again showed what endeared him to ordinary Filipinos as he sang and delivered jokes like a stand-up comedian while discussing his controversial war on drugs.

Before delivering a speech, he gamely joined the all-male group New Minstrels Divos in belting out the classic Filipino song "Ikaw," while he was seated.

Mr. Duterte, in jeans and black polo shirt printed with the word "DU30," later told the crowd how singing the composition of the late George Canseco had helped him win the hearts of three women.

Relationships

"Don't be complacent with the song 'Ikaw.' I had relationships with three women because of that song," said the President, drawing laughter.

"One is already old, but not really that old. The other one is separated from her husband. But that's OK," he said.

Mr. Duterte, whose favorite hangout in Davao City is a jazz bar called "After Dark," also used to sing the song in his campaign



THE CROONER President Duterte becomes an audience participant during an entertainment number at Belenísimo's awards night in Tarlac City, singing the Filipino classic, "Ikaw."

—MALACANANG PHOTO

sorties and during his visits to Filipino communities abroad.

Dr. Isabel Cojuangco Sunatay, cochair of the Tarlac Heritage Foundation, said the New Minstrels Divos—composed of Chad Borja, Ding Mercado and Eugene Villaluz—were invited to the festival because the organizers knew the President's penchant for singing.

Borja, a Davao City native who rose to prominence for his hit song "Ikaw Lang" in the 1990s, said he was happy that the "former father of Davao is now the father of the whole Philippines."

"But I still call him mayor because he's like a father to me. President Rodrigo Duterte, thank you so much," Borja said.

Remembering ma

Known for his tough guy image, Mr. Duterte was nearly in tears when the group serenaded him with another of his favorite songs, Josh Groban's "You Raise Me Up," which, he said, reminded him of his late mother, Soledad.

The President, who sat beside Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, looked pensive

throughout the song.

"When my mother died, I really found solace in that song... I sing that song in karaoke bars. But I could not finish it because I really turn emotional," he later told the crowd.

Recalling his life as a teenager, he said his mother always supported him when his father scolded him for his failure to finish high school on time.

"You know when my father was alive, he used to tell me, 'Do, you could only reach the port.' It means I cannot even finish high school. He died with that impression of me. I finished high school in seven years," Mr. Duterte said.

"One time, my mother asked me, 'Rodrigo, when will you finish high school? Your grade is always 75.' I told her, 'Mother, it's OK as long as I could walk up the stage,'" he said.

"When my mother died, she was 96, it really hit me. My mother, she stood for me."

Trophies, checks

The President handed out trophies and checks to this year's Belenísimo winners, assisted by Aquino's second

cousin, Sunatay, of the Tarlac Heritage Foundation.

In his speech, Mr. Duterte shared jokes and funny anecdotes as he talked about his effort to achieve peace in Mindanao, his campaign against illegal drugs and the criticisms he had been receiving on extrajudicial killings.

Mr. Duterte invited Tarlac residents, especially students, to visit Malacanañang. "Enjoy Malacanañang. That's not mine. It's not a palace,"

Then he joked that he did not sleep there because the place was haunted. "There are ghosts there, even at daytime. There is a white lady who appears during the day," he said.

He sleeps in a small hotel instead, he said.

The Presidential Security Group has been so concerned about his safety that he could not even open the windows of his car to wave to the children who would greet him upon his arrival in Camp Aquino.

"Death? Who's afraid to die? We will all die. If I die, [Vice President] Leni [Robredo] is just there," he said. —WITH A REPORT FROM MARLON RAMOS IN MANILA

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PSG serenades Rody at Tarlac's Christmas event

President Duterte got a surprise from his security detail when the Presidential Security Group (PSG) serenaded him during the awarding of the *belen* (Nativity scene) making contest in Tarlac at the Hacienda Luisita Sunday night.

Duterte was seated beside military and police officials when 30 members of the PSG came up on stage to serenade him with the song "Munting Sanggol" by Ryan Cayabyab. They received the presidential thumbs up.

"We look at the PSG as the protector of the President, so you are seeing the other side," said PSG spokesman Lt. Col. Michael Aquino.

"We only organized the group last Dec. 4 because we had a very busy schedule as we had to go to Tawi-Tawi,

Sulu and other parts of Mindanao. This is very special for the President knowing that the PSG is not only his protector, but can also sing in front of thousands of people," he added.

Duterte and Issa Cojuangco-Suntay, one of the owners of Hacienda Luisita, awarded the grand prize of P100,000 plus trophy to San Clemente town. Its entry was a *belen* made of bamboo and recyclable plastic materials. San Clemente Mayor Elma Macadamia received the award.

The North Luzon Command of the Armed Forces of the Philippines also joined the *belen*-making contest. Its entry was made of abaca, plastic and native materials. Its entry won the grand prize for non-municipal category.

Lt General Romeo Tanalgo of Nolcom received the award.

This year's Belenismo sa Tarlac, the province's annual *belen* making contest, featured 47 entries competing in five categories: community church, monumental, grand municipal and non-municipal.

The entries are displayed along municipality roads and the MacArthur Highway.

The contest aims to showcase Tarlaqueños' artistry through native, regional, modern and biblical interpretations of the Nativity scene.

The province of Tarlac has been the "*belen* capital of the Philippines" since 2007 and Belenismo sa Tarlac has been a calendared event.

At the event, the President admired the *belen* at the main entrance of Camp Servillano

Aquino which features a colorful peacock tail spread out in protection of the statues of the holy family. It was among the major winners in the Belenismo annual competition.

"I like the rapport of the police and the military in this area, and I like how everyone is connected in their effort to come up with beautiful *belens*. I would like to cite how much effort the police and military exert through the years in order to participate in this tradition," Duterte said in his speech during the awards night for the 9th Belenismo sa Tarlac.

Belenismo was a project Aquino often attended during his six-year presidency. Each of Tarlac's 17 towns and one city participated with nativity displays in their localities.

Duterte handed the awards

to the winning participants in five categories: community, church, monumental, grand municipal (local government units) and grand non-municipal (government agencies and business establishments).

He also joined guest singers Chad Borja, Eugene Villaluz and Ding Mercado in singing "Tkaw," a song he was said to be fond of.

The President also lauded the Tarlac Heritage Foundation for sustaining the project which, he noted, showcased the talents and creativity of Tarlac folk.

Foundation co-founder Suntay said the nativity project that her foundation initiated in 2007 has become "globally famous." - Rudy Santos, Ding Cervantes

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10 Sayyaf men slain, 6 hurt in Sulu clash

By ROEL PAREÑO

ZAMBOANGA CITY – Ten Abu Sayyaf bandits were killed while six others were wounded in a clash with soldiers in Patikul, Sulu over the weekend.

The encounter followed a firefight that lasted for over two hours in Barangay Kabuntakas on Saturday that left three soldiers dead and 21 others wounded.

Maj. Filemon Tan Jr., spokesman for the Western Mindanao Command, said soldiers from the 35th Infantry Battalion clashed with around 150 band-

its led by Radullan Sahiron, Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan, Yasser Igasan and Mujer Yadah.

"The encounter was longer... because the bandits had to retrieve their casualties," Tan said.

"We have confirmed and validated through intelligence reports the identities of the fatalities. We know where

they live because the civilians confirmed it to us," he added.

The military is verifying reports that some Abu Sayyaf leaders were wounded in the firefight.

There was no sighting of any kidnap victim, but Tan said they could have been behind their captors.

"The Abu Sayyaf did not retreat immediately to buy time for their companions to slip out their captives," he said.

Tan said Joint Task Force Sulu is leading military operations to rescue the remaining

captives.

Abu nabbed

Meanwhile, a former captive who joined the Abu Sayyaf was arrested in Bongao, Tawi-Tawi yesterday.

Sahiron reportedly tasked Josua Bani, 21, to be their "spotter" and conduct surveillance on potential kidnap victims.

Bani, his father Joseph and cousin Hajan Terong were kidnapped at a pier in Bongao in 2014. They were released after paying ransom. – With Michael Punongbayan

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10 ASG bandits dead in 2-hour gun battle

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

Elements of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) encountered a 150-man strong Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) members, killing at least 10 of the bandits while suffering three casualties during a two-hour firefight Saturday in Patikul, Sulu.

Western Mindanao Command (WestMinCom) spokesman Army Major Filemon Tan Jr. said the Army's 35th Infantry Battalion led by Lt. Col. Vladimir Lenos T. Villanueva were conducting focused military operations in

Bud Taming, Brgy. Kabbontakkas where they ran into the group led by ASG top leader Radullan Sahiron and Sub Leaders Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan, Yasser Igasan, and Mujer Yadah.

"Based on the information as confirmed by intel units on the ground and validated by civilians, a total of 10 Abu Sayyaf fighters were killed while six others were hurt as a result of the clash," said Tan.

Three members of the military perished during the operation while 21 others were injured, most of them were sent to the

Kuta Heneral Teodolfo Bautista (KHTB) hospital for proper medical attention.

Tan said the Joint Task Force Sulu continues to conduct pursuit operations and intensify further the conduct of focused military operations to rescue the remaining kidnap victims and neutralize the ASG in Sulu.

Tan said since intensified military operations were launched against the Abu Sayyaf, a total of 157 bandits have been killed in Sulu (114) and Basilan (43) while 29 others were apprehended. **(With a report from Nonoy E. Lacson)**



03 December 2016



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10 Abus slain in Sulu clash

By Mario J. Mallari

The military yesterday claimed to have killed at least 10 terrorists under the Abu Sayyaf band of Radullan Sahiron during Saturday's clash with government forces in the outskirts of Sulu province as intensified combat operations against the bandits continued.

Maj. Filemon Tan Jr., spokesman for the Western Mindanao Command (Wesmincom), yesterday said that operating elements of the Army's 35th Infantry Battalion (IB), under Joint Task Force Sulu, engaged more or less 150 ASG band, led by Sahiron, along Bud Taming, Barangay Kabbontakkas in Patikul.

Ten ASG were killed and six wounded as confirmed by intelligence units on the ground and validated by civilians in the area," Tan said.

However, not a single body of the slain Abu Sayyaf members was recovered.

Other Abu Sayyaf leaders present during the clash were sub-leader Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan, Yasser Igasan and Mujer Yadah.

On the other hand, Tan said that three soldiers were killed in action while 21 others were wounded, 19 of them sustained slight shrapnel wounds.

"Two soldiers needed additional medical attention were airlifted to Camp Navarro General Hospital in Zamboanga City," Tan said.

Tan said that elements of Joint Task Force Sulu are continuously conducting focused military operations against the band of Sahiron, believed to be holding some of the remaining hostages.

"Fire support and close air support were provided to the engaging troops. Adjacent units also conducted blocking and pursuit operations as casualties were immediately brought to KHTB (Kuta Heneral Teodulfo Bautista) hospital," Tan said.

"The JTF Sulu continues to conduct pursuit operations and intensify further the conduct of focused military operations to rescue the remaining kidnap victims and neutralize the ASG in Sulu," he added.

According to Tan, there were intelligence reports stating there were hostages in the band of Sahiron.

Tan said that the Abu Sayyaf group is still keeping 25 hostages – 20 foreigners composed of Malaysians, Indonesians, a Dutch and a Korean and five locals.

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uring the land.

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2 Indon captives freed

ZAMBOANGA CITY - Two Indonesians seized by Abu Sayyaf bandits off Simisa island in Sulu were freed yesterday.

Mohammad Nazir and Peter Rubin were the remaining captives from seven crewmembers taken from tugboat *Charles 00* on June 22.

The Indonesians were released at around 1:22 p.m. by a bandit group led by Alhabsy Misaya to Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) commander Tahir Sali in Indanan town, said Maj. Filemon Tan, spokesman for the Western Mindanao Command.

The MNLF turned over the victims to Sulu Vice Gov. Nurunissa Tan, who brought them to Camp Teodulfo Bautista in Jolo.

The military is arranging the flight of the victims to this city so they can be turned over

to Indonesian authorities.

Meanwhile, businesswoman Clarita Belisario, who was kidnapped in Linamon town in September, was freed on Friday.

Belisario was released near Mercy Hospital in Iligan City, said Jan Dimaporo, National Bureau of Investigation-Iligan chief.

Dimaporo confirmed that P175,000 in "board and lodging" fee was paid by Belisario's family. It was not immediately known who was behind the kidnapping.

The kidnappers reportedly demanded a higher ransom, but emissaries of local leaders negotiated to reduce it.

Belisario was tending to her gasoline station when unidentified men in a white sport utility vehicle pulled over and dragged her into the vehicle. - **Roel Pareño, Lino de la Cruz**

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Pahina. 3

2 Indonesian hostages, pinakawalan ng Abu Sayyaf

Dalawang Indonesian national na hinostage ng mga bandidong Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) ang pinakawalan na umano sa Indanan, Sulu kahapon (Lunes) ng umaga.

Kinilala ni Major Filemon Tan Jr., spokesperson ng Western Mindanao Command, ang dalawang pinakawalang bihag na sina Mohammad Nazir at Rubin Peter.

Sa report, ipinasa ng ASG sa pangunguna ni Alhabsy Misaya ang dalawang pinakawalang dayuhan kay Moro Na-

tional Liberation Front (MNLF) commander Tahir Sali sa Indanan.

Sina Nazir at Peter ay ang mga natitira sa pitong crew ng tugboat "Charles" na hinarang at dinukot sa karagatang sakop ng Simisa island sa Sulu noong Hunyo 22. Nauna nang pinakawalan ng ASG abductors ang ilang kasamahan ng dalawang nabanggit Indonesian.

Matapos na mai-turn over sa MNLF, ipinasa naman ng nasabing grupo ang dalawang Indonesian kay Sulu Vice Gov. Nurunnisa

Tan dakong alas-11.30 ng umaga na siyang naghatid sa kanila kay Col. Jesus Manangui ng Joint Task Force Sulu sa Camp Bautista sa Jolo.

Dadalhin naman ang dalawa sa Zamboanga City para mai-turn over sa pangangalaga ng

Indonesian authorities.

Nauna na ring tumulong ang MNLF para sa pagpapalaya sa dating bihag na Norwegian na si Kjartan Sekkingstad at iba pang hostages na Indonesian national noong Setyembre. (Ellen Fernando)

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NEWS BULLETIN

ASG frees 2 Indon hostages

The terrorist Abu Sayyaf Group yesterday freed two Indonesian hostages in Sulu to the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). Maj. Filemon Tan Jr., spokesman for the military's Western Mindanao Command (Wesmincom) identified those released as Mohammad Nazer and Robin Peter. The two were the last of the seven crew members of *T/B Charles* who were taken last June 22 along the vicinity of Simisa in Sulu. The other five were earlier freed. According to Tan, the two Indonesians were turned over by the Abu Sayyaf group to MNLF commander Tahir Sali in Indanan town. "The release was the result of relentless operations being conducted by the Joint Task Force Sulu, in coordination with the MNLF," said Tan. The two kidnap victims were immediately turned over to Sulu Vice Gov. Nurunissa Tan at around 11:30 a.m. yesterday. The Indonesians were subsequently turned over to JTF-Sulu commander Col. Jesus Mananguil. "The victims are now undergoing medical checkup at KHTB (Kuta Heneral Teodulfo Bautista) trauma hospital," Tan said. "The transport of KV's from Sulu to Zamboanga City and their subsequent turn over to Indonesian authorities are now being arranged and facilitated of JTF Sulu," he added.

Mario J. Mallari

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December 2016

THE PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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2 NDF peace consultants decry military surveillance

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
@nestorburgosINQ

ILOILO CITY—Two Western Visayas consultants in the peace negotiations between the government and communist rebels have decried alleged surveillance operations by suspected government agents.

Ma Concepcion Araneta-Bocala and Ruben Saluta, consultants of the National Democratic Front (NDF), said they were followed by two motorcycle-riding men from Quezon City on their way to the Ninoy Aquino Inter-

national Airport Terminal 3 on Sunday.

The two were going to the airport for their flight to Iloilo when they noticed the men following their vehicle.

Saluta said he noticed that the motorcycle maintained a distance of two vehicles from the one they were riding and made no attempt to overtake them. The men also followed them whenever they changed directions.

"We tried to go into side streets but they were still behind us. They only stopped following us when we were al-

ready near the airport," Bocala told the Inquirer at the sidelines of a consultation on the peace talks in this city on Monday.

Having spent decades in the underground, the two consultants said they immediately recognized a surveillance operation.

Bocala, 65, was arrested in August last year in a rented house in Iloilo City. She was allegedly the head of the Communist Party of the Philippines on Panay Island at the time of her arrest.

Saluta, 69, a native of Aklan province, was arrested in Caloocan City in March 2015. He

has been tagged by the military as a leader of the New People's Army in Panay.

They were among the 19 detainees who were conditionally released in August for the resumption of the talks.

Bocala said they could not find any reason for the alleged surveillance other than "harassment" as she raised concern over the safety and security of the peace consultants.

She pointed out that since their release on bail in August, they have been very visible attending two rounds of peace talks

in Oslo, Norway, and in rallies, symposiums and other activities related to the peace negotiations.

"They know where we live and where we go and the activities we have been part of," she said.

Bocala and Saluta said the surveillance operation violated the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (Jasig) which was affirmed by both parties during the first round of talks in August.

"The Jasig (among others) prohibits surveillance and arrest of those involved in the

peace negotiations from both panels," Bocala said.

The NDFP consultants said they were talking to their lawyers and will report the incident to their government counterparts.

In the public consultation organized by the peace advocates belonging to the Philippine Ecumenical Peace Platform and held at La Isabelita Hall at the Jaro Cathedral compound, Bocala and Saluta presented the NDF's draft on the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms. INQ

03 December 2016

The Manila Times

Page A1

IDF WILLING TO SIGN AGREEMENT

Govt, Reds closer to bilateral truce

BY CATHERINE S. VALENTE

HOPES that peace talks between the Philippine government and the communist rebels will bear fruit were rekindled with a declaration by the National Democratic Front (NDF) that it is willing to sign a formal bilateral ceasefire agreement despite President Rodrigo Duterte's obstinate refusal to release political prisoners.

Government chief negotiator Silvestre Bello 3rd welcomed the statement of NDF adviser Luis Jalandoni that they are willing to sign an agreement but that it will only take effect upon the release of political prisoners.

"We are willing to sign it, but of course he [Duterte] has to make a commitment and he has to implement it," Jalandoni said in a television interview.

"The NDF is willing to sign a bilateral ceasefire, but Duterte has to release all political prisoners within 48 hours," he added.

Bello said Jalandoni's statement bodes well for the peace efforts.

X-Bilateral A2

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BILATERAL FROM A1 Govt, Reds

"The willingness of the NDF to sign the bilateral ceasefire agreement is indeed a welcome development as this bodes well for a positive atmosphere when we meet again for the third round of talks in January," he noted in a statement.

"A bilateral ceasefire would not only benefit the combatants but the people who are caught in the crossfire of this armed conflict," the government chief negotiator said.

Bello described the communist rebels' willingness to sign a bilateral

ceasefire agreement with the government as a Christmas gift.

"Forging a bilateral ceasefire agreement is the best gift the government and the NDF can give to the Filipino people this holiday season. May this lead to the permanent end of hostilities for the new year leading to a just and lasting peace," he said.

Jalandoni, during an International Human Rights Day protest at the Liwasang Bonifacio in Manila last week, said they are willing to sign the agreement but they will also insist on the release of the political prisoners.

Bello said the government panel "recognizes the NDF's efforts to work with us to attain peace."

"Its declaration of an indefinite

unilateral ceasefire in response to President Rodrigo Duterte's declaration in August is unprecedented and historic. Agreeing to a bilateral ceasefire is another milestone in the peace process," he added.

The NDF had demanded the release of 400 political prisoners, but Duterte had repeatedly rejected this demand, saying he had given "too much, too soon."

"I cannot give you that. I'm sorry but I have already conceded so much on the side of the government," the President said.

"I have conceded to the communists too much too soon. As yet, I have yet to see a substantive progress in the talks. They are asking for 130 detainees to be released... Sorry, I

cannot do that," he added.

Duterte said he will release the political prisoners if the NDF will agree to a bilateral ceasefire.

The Communist Party of the Philippines had threatened to revoke the unilateral ceasefire it earlier declared if the political prisoners are not released.

But Bello said despite the challenges, "we continue to struggle to make peace happen for the country and the Filipino people."

"Rest assured that the administration of President Rodrigo Duterte remains committed to the release of a substantial number of political prisoners. The President has already shown time and again that he delivers on his word," he added.

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The Manila Times

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BEAUTIES VISIT RIZAL PARK Miss Universe Indonesia Kezia Roslin Clifta Warouw takes a selfie with other candidates of the Miss Universe pageant in front of the Rizal monument Monday. The candidates toured Manila after visiting Siargao. **PICTO BY BOB F. UNGO**



13 December 2016

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

Page: 15

BASKETBALL

UNTV: PNP raps AFP; Judiciary up

Games Sunday
(University of Makati)

2 p.m. - PNP vs BFP

3:30 p.m. - BOC vs MMDA

5 p.m. - Judiciary vs Malacanang

Standings

Group A: Malacanang (5-1), AFP (4-2),
BFP (4-3), MMDA (3-3)

Group B: Customs (6-0), Judiciary (6-1),
PNP (5-2), NHA (3-4)

Chester Tolomia sustained his hot form, firing 25 points as Judiciary extended its winning run to five games with a 76-67 win over Bureau of Fire Protection in the 5th UNTV Cup held over the weekend at the University of Makati gym.

Aside from Tolomia, also delivering for the Judiciary Magis were Don Ca-

maso and Warren Ybanez who finished with 14 and 10 points, respectively.

The win improved Judiciary's record to 6-1 while the Fire Fighters absorbed their third loss against four wins.

Meantime, Philippine National Police held defending champion Armed Forces of the Philippines to just five points in the playoff period and scored a vengeful 82-67 win in a showdown of last year's finalists.

Julius Criste and Ollan Omiping starred in that mighty run to lead the PNP Responders with 22 and 17 points, respectively.

The win was PNP's fifth overall against two defeats.



CHESTER TOLOMIA

In the other game of the tournament organized by UNTV president and CEO Daniel Razon, MMDA picked up its fourth win with an 87-79 win over National Housing Authority.

The champion team gets the P500,000 top prize aside from the corresponding P4 million which it will donate to its chosen charity.

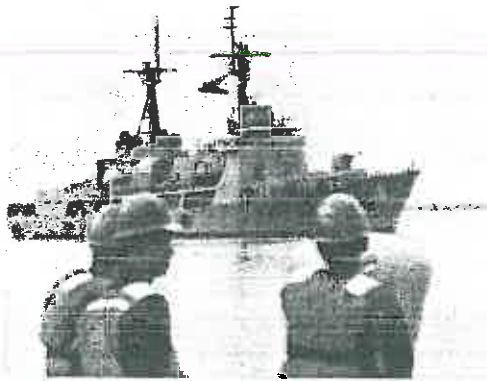
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ONLINE NEWS
13 DECEMBER 2016

<http://dwdd.com.ph/>

PN contingent arrives in Manila after Port Visit to Vietnam

Lui Claudio



Pier 13, South Harbor, Manila, Philippines – The Fleet-Marine Ready Force (FMRF), under the leadership of Commo. Albert A. Mogol, accorded an arrival ceremony for the Philippine Navy (PN) contingent onboard BRP Ramon Alcaraz (FF16) here today, 10 a.m. following their successful port visit to Cam Ranh, Vietnam from Dec. 2 to 12, 2016.

Navy Captain Dennis Rommel Quines, Commander of Naval Task Force (NTF) 80.5, headed the PN contingent comprised of more or less 300 officers and men from the FMRF Directorate, Surface Warfare Students, medical team from Cavite Naval Hospital, Naval Special Operations Team, Helicopter Detachment Afloat (AW109), Submarine Group, Naval Combat Engineering Brigade Combo and representatives from the Support Base Facilities of Naval Installation Command.

During the port visit, the head of mission, Commo. Albert A Mogol, together with Capt. Dennis Rommel Quines, and the Commanding Officer of FF16, Cdr. Jeff Rene Nadugo, paid a courtesy call to the Commander of Naval Region 4, Vietnam People's Navy and the Leader of Khanh Hoa Province Committee in Nah Trang to engage in a dialogue and establish the strategic partnership on maritime security and sustain a mutual respect and cooperation.



This port visit also provided training opportunity for twenty (20) Students of Surface Warfare Commanders Course to be able to have a friendly exchange of knowledge with Vietnam People's Navy (VPN) Officers and to expose themselves on good seamanship.

The port visit was a bilateral engagement between the Philippine Navy and the Vietnam People's Navy to strengthen alliance and commitment towards peace and stability in the maritime region by promoting naval diplomacy, camaraderie and fostering goodwill. During the port visit, series of events were conducted such as combined planning for Passing exercise (PASSEX) to enhance the interoperability between the two navies, goodwill games, city tour, and social interaction.

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DND official confirms Chinese firearms offer to PHL

Philippine News Agency

A ranking Department of National Defense (DND) official admitted that the People's Republic of China has indeed made an offer to provide Philippine special forces with firearms but said the types are still to be determine.

This was disclosed Monday by DND undersecretary for finance, munitions, installations and materiel Raymundo Elefante.

He added they are still looking at China's offerings and determine what it is best for the Philippines.

Elefante said they are still planning on what specific time or date to go into China to evaluate the offer of which payment terms are spread in a 25-year period.

Earlier, President Rodrigo Duterte said he ordered DND chief Delfin Lorenzana to check on China's offer.

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AFP chief inspects brand new military petroleum tankers

Update.Ph

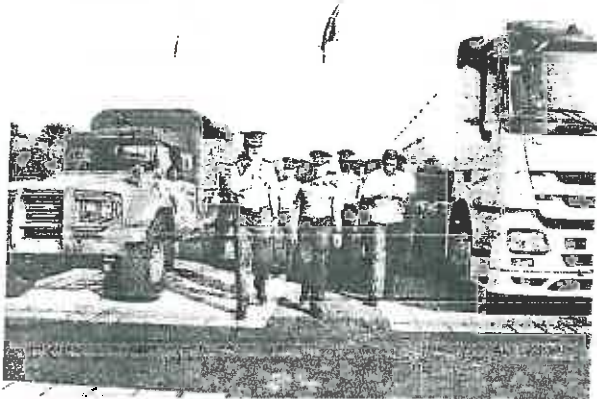


Armed Forces of the Philippines Chief-of-Staff Lieutenant General Eduardo M. Año, during his first flag raising ceremony at General Headquarters, Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City December 12 as Philippine military's top man, inspected brand new petroleum transport tankers.

This initial delivery of petroleum tankers are part of an order to enhance the military's support capability.

Seven (7) collapsible and twenty-one (21) towable tankers were ordered to boost the Armed Forces' Petroleum Oil and Lubricant support capabilities.

Lieutenant General Año took over the command of Philippine military December 7, 2016.



Military photo

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Duterte on CPP talks: I conceded too much, too soon

From Rappler (Dec 11)



WITH THE TROOPS. President Rodrigo Duterte visits Camp Servillano Aquino in Tarlac City on December 11, 2016. Photo by Ace Morandante/Presidential Photo

President Rodrigo Duterte on Sunday, December 11, maintained he would not agree to the release of 130 political prisoners until the government and the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) have hammered out a deal.

Duterte spoke about the peace talks with the communists as he continued his tour of military camps on Sunday, visiting Camp Servillano Aquino in Tarlac City.

The President delivered a 10-minute speech to soldiers from the Northern Luzon Command of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

"Gusto nila 130 na naman ang i-release ko. Sabi ko, 'No, I cannot.' As a matter of fact, I conceded too much, too soon. Sabi ko, 'Hanggang diyan lang ako.' Ngayon bahala na kung terminate it eh di terminate it...

Nandiyan, ipinalabas ko na 'yung mga lider ninyo, lahat na, nandoon na nga sa Norway [for the peace talks] eh. What more do you ask of us? Maubusan ako ng baraha niyan kung release ako ng release," he said. (They want me to release 130 more political prisoners. I told them, "No, I cannot." As a matter of fact, I conceded too much, too soon. I said, "That's my limit." Now, if it the talks are terminated, then whatever... But their leaders have already been released, they even went to Norway [for the peace talks] already. What more do you ask of us? I won't have cards up my sleeve anymore if I keep approving the release of political prisoners.)

But Duterte reiterated the need to end the decades-long conflict, and appealed for understanding from the troops.

"We have to somehow end this war. This has been going on for 45 years," he said.

"Yung iba na matagal na sa serbisyo, alam ko masakit sa inyo 'yan (Those who have been in service for a long time, I know this process is painful for you). But you have to understand me and the rest of the Filipino people... I am not a communist. I am just a Filipino, period. I am just doing it for the sake of my country."

The AFP and the CPP's New People's Army (NPA) had previously declared unilateral ceasefires. The two sides, however, have yet to reach a bilateral ceasefire agreement after they missed an October 26 deadline. The President, meanwhile, also thanked the soldiers for their service.

"I know happy ang [mga] Filipino sa inyo (I know the Filipino people are happy with your performance). I'm more than satisfied with your performance," Duterte said.

"I congratulate you for a job well done," he later added.

The President has been visiting military camps across the country, promising full support for the AFP.

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Duterte congratulates AFP for a 'job well done'

Philippine Information Agency

CAMP SERVILLANO AQUINO, Tarlac City -- President Rodrigo R. Duterte congratulated on Sunday the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) for a job well done in the performance of their duty.

"With gratitude ang Filipino people. I know. Happy ang Pilipino sa inyo. And I'm more than satisfied with your performance," Duterte told about 500 troops of the Northern Luzon Command.

The Commander-in-Chief promised to provide everything the AFP needs because he wants them to be in "tip top condition and high morale."

Duterte likewise assured that he would take full responsibility for actions taken by AFP and police as long as they are done in the performance of their duty.

Meanwhile, he disclosed that China is now ready to turnover the firearms they promised. This is a grant payable in 25 years.

Moreover, Duterte reiterated to the troops his desire to end the 45-year war with the New People's Army.

"Alam ko yung mga matagal na sa serbisyo masakit yan (sa loob) but you have to understand me and the rest of the Filipino people. Mas lalo na kalaban natin Pilipino rin. Kailangang hintuin talaga natin ito... Sana magkaroon kayo ng pagtingin sa akin. I am not a communist. I am just a Filipino. Period. I'm just doing it for the sake of my country," he stressed.

He also hopes that there shall soon be a path towards lasting peace in Mindanao particularly Basilan and Sulu.

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10 bandits killed, 6 wounded in ongoing anti-ASG operations in Sulu

Philippine News Agency

Ten Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) terrorists have been reported killed and another six wounded in the ongoing focused military operations in Sulu which started in the morning of Dec. 10.

Updates forwarded by the Western Mindanao Command spokesperson Major Filemon Tan on Monday indicated that ongoing pursuit operations against the terror group, backed by artillery and air bombardment have so far killed 10 of the ASG and wounding six.

These figures are based on civilian reports and other intelligence sources.

Tan said that pursuit operations are still ongoing as of this posting.

Fighting at Bud Taming, Barangay Kabbontakas, Patikul erupted 10 a.m. Saturday after patrol elements of the 35th Infantry Battalion encountered around 150 ASG terrorists reportedly headed by Radullan Sahiron, Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan, Yasser Igasan and Mujer Yadah, triggering a two-hour firefight which initially killed three troopers and wounded 21 others, 17 of whom were hit by shrapnel.

Wounded government troopers were immediately taken to the Camp Navarro General Hospital in Zamboanga City for treatment.



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3 more soldiers die in Sayyaf clash

Mindanao Examiner

Fierce fighting erupted on Monday between government troops and Abu Sayyaf rebels in southern Philippines, leaving at least 2 dozen casualties on the military side, officials said.

Officials said the clashes broke out in Mount Taming in Sulu's Patikul town that left 3 soldiers dead and 21 others wounded. Troops clashed with about 150 Abu Sayyaf gunmen and the fighting lasted 2 hours.

The clashes occurred in the same area where Abu Sayyaf fighters also killed 3 soldiers and wounded 17 more on December 10.

Officials tagged Abu Sayyaf leader Radulan Sahiron and commanders Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan, Yasser Igasan and Mujer Yadah as behind the huge group that engaged soldiers in a running gun battle in Patikul.

Major Filemon Tan, a spokesman for the Western Mindanao Command, insisted that 10 Abu Sayyaf members were killed and 6 others wounded in the fighting, but troops had recovered not a single cadaver. Tan report cannot be independent confirmed.

"Fire support and close air support were provided to the engaging troops. Adjacent units also conducted blocking and pursuit operations as casualties were immediately brought to the hospital. Two soldiers needed additional medical attention were airlifted to Camp Navarro General Hospital in Zamboanga City," Tan said.

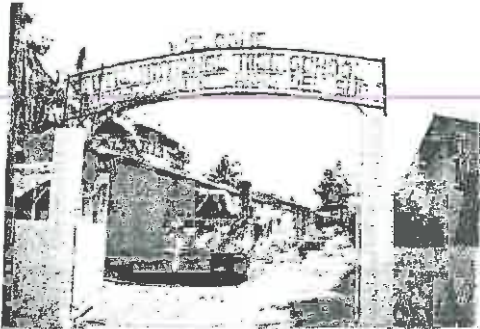
He said security forces were pursuing the Abu Sayyaf in an effort to rescue more than 2 dozen Malaysian and Indonesian sailors kidnapped by the notorious rebel group tied to the Islamic State.

"The Joint Task Force-Sulu continues to conduct pursuit operations and intensify further the conduct of focused military operations to rescue the remaining kidnap victims and neutralize the Abu Sayyaf group in Sulu," Tan said.

www.retiredanalyst.blogspot.com

MILF drawn into fight to finish off Maute

Philippine Daily Inquirer



An Army tank enters a school in Butig, Lanao del Sur, that had been occupied by members of the Maute group. — RICHEL V. UMEL

A Moro rebel group currently negotiating for a new autonomous government in Mindanao is helping the military finish off members of the Maute group, a crime gang that had declared its affiliation with the international terror network Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (IS).

Members of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which had entered into a peace pact with the government under then President Aquino, clashed with Maute members who are fleeing military operations in Butig, a town in Lanao del Sur that Maute occupied.

During the clash in the borders of Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur, a member of MILF was seriously wounded, said Von Al Haq, MILF military chief.

Maj. Filemon Tan Jr., spokesperson of the Western Mindanao Command, cited a report from MILF saying MILF members, under a certain Jimmu Balitor, intercepted a group of Maute members between the towns of Buldon and Barira in Maguindanao and Butig in Lanao del Sur.

The Maute members were apparently withdrawing from Butig when they were intercepted by MILF forces, according to Tan.

He said the military in the area is coordinating with the group of Balitor. Soldiers had been sent to conduct "complementary combat operations" to help MILF.

Al Haq said at least 50 Maute gunmen had tried to enter the perimeter of the MILF's Sultan Base when they clashed with MILF members.

He said the clash took place as MILF tried to drive away the "intruders."

Al Haq could not say whether the Maute group had suffered casualties in the clash but Tan said based on reports, some gang members had been wounded, or even killed.

Maj. Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr, head of the Army's 6th Infantry Division, said soldiers from the 37th Infantry Battalion had also set up a blocking force against Maute members who are now fleeing MILF fighters.

Galvez said the military has sent combat helicopters to the area to evacuate MILF rebels, who might have been wounded in the clash.

Two weeks ago, soldiers also battled Maute group members in Butig.

The military later said it drove the local terror group out of Butig after days of fighting. Soldiers, the military said, continue to pursue Maute members who are now on the run.

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Tawi Tawi-based gangs crippled by deaths of two chiefs and with another on the run

The Star Online

KOTA KINABALU: With two key leaders killed and another on the run, the Tawi Tawi-based cross border kidnapping groups are now rudderless.

The drama took place during Thursday's well-coordinated operations to eliminate the notorious kidnap-for-ransom groups based in the Tawi-Tawi chain of islands in southern Philippines.

Malaysia's elite police squad, the Tiger Platoon, killed Abraham Hamid, described as a kidnap kingpin by the Philippine military, on Thursday night.

The identity of the captured key player has been withheld.

Two other gunmen, including one notorious smuggler known as Albaris, who was with Abraham, and a hostage might have also been killed in the shootout that night.

They have yet to be found.



Abraham: Killed in Semporna.

There is also a possibility that they might have escaped with the hostage and are trying to make their way to southern Philippines or hiding out in the numerous islands in Semporna.

Another kidnap kingpin, Jul Hassan, who was believed to be in Lahad Datu-Semporna waters on that Thursday night, was also caught in gunbattles early Saturday morning with Philippine Special Action Forces at Baligtan area near Sitangkai island.

Jul, who was in a group of five gunmen, was caught in a skirmish with the Filipino elite squad.

At least one of the gunmen was killed.

Sources said that Jul escaped despite his injuries. Security forces from Malaysia and the Philippines are now hunting for the remaining gunmen.

Intelligence sources said Jul and the four men were in a second speedboat that entered Lahad Datu on Thursday night while Abraham and six others were in another vessel.

Abraham's gang snatched two fishermen and robbed the crew of three trawlers before they came face to face with the elite Tiger Platoon men who were lying in wait on a fishing boat.

Sources said that Abraham, who was once a fisherman, operated in Taganak and Sitangkai close to the border of Tawi Tawi.

Apparently, he turned to kidnapping to settle a loan from an influential politician in Tawi Tawi.

Abraham had taken the loan to buy fishing equipment.

He borrowed a speedboat belonging to the politician and began his life of crime, a source said.

Abraham was believed to have teamed up with several criminals involved in human and drug smuggling to

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pursue their activities in Lahad Datu and Semporna waters.

The source said Abraham "sold off" some of his kidnapped victims to the Abu Sayyaf group which is holding five Malaysian sailors and four Indonesians snatched from Sabah waters.

Abraham's side had also teamed up with Jul's group in several forays into Sabah, the sources said.

The sources said that Jul, who is in his 50s, was previously a sub-commander with the Abu Sayyaf but gave it up to become a fisherman.

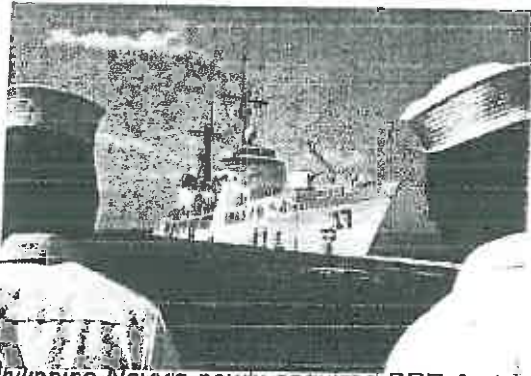
Later, he got involved in criminal activities before forming his own group to go into the kidnap-for-ransom business.

On Saturday, Philippine military's Western Mindanao Command spokesman Major Filemon Tan said the Malaysian security forces had dealt a blow to the Abu Sayyaf by killing Abraham.

<http://www.philstar.com/>

BRP Andres Bonifacio to help curb piracy, kidnapping

(philstar.com) | Updated December 12, 2016 - 10:16am



Philippine Navy's newly-acquired BRP Andres Bonifacio (FF-17) arrives in Manila on Friday, Dec. 9, 2016. The ship, a former United States Coast Guard High Endurance Cutter, is expected to provide increased maritime presence throughout the Philippines' territorial waters and its exclusive economic zone. Philippine Navy photo

MANILA, Philippines (Philippines News Agency) — Once painted naval grey, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana expects the newly-arrived BRP Andres Bonifacio (FF-17) to patrol Sulu waters and help other naval units curb kidnapping and piracy incidents in the area.

"This ship will certainly be a valuable platform in the pursuit of the constitutional mandate of the AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) this will strengthen the PN capabilities in raising the country's security concerns in the protection of our territorial integrity, and maritime interest," he said.

The Filipino frigate will be joining the BRP Tarlac (LD-601), the country's first strategic sealift vessel, in conducting the patrols.

The BRP Andres Bonifacio, the country's third Hamilton-class cutter, arrived at Pier 13, Manila South Harbor on December 9 after a month-long voyage from the United States.

The Philippine cutter is the former US Coast Guard's high-endurance cutter Boutwell which was retired from US Coast Guard service last March 16 and handed to the Philippine last July 21.

Hamilton-class cutters have a gross tonnage of 3,250 tons, has a length of 378 feet, beam of 43 feet, and draft of 15 feet.

Its propulsion systems consist of two diesel engines and two gas turbine engines, giving it a top speed of 29 knots and a crew of 88 officers and enlisted personnel.

The ship has cruising range of 14,000 miles and has a sea and loiter time of 45 days.

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BRP Ramon Alcaraz, 300 naval personnel safely home after Vietnam visit

Philippine News Agency

The BRP Ramon Alcaraz (FF-16) is now safely home after its successful port visit to Camh Ranh Bay where its officers and enlisted personnel interacted successfully with the Vietnam People's Navy (VPN).

Capt. Lued Lincuna, Philippine Navy (PN) spokesperson, said the ship arrived 10 a.m. Monday at Pier 13 of the Manila South Harbor.

The visit started Dec. 2 and ended on the 12th.

Aside from the ship's officers and crew, the BRP Ramon Alcaraz also carried members of Naval Task Group 80.5 headed by Capt. Dennis Rommel Quines and members of the AW-109 helicopter detachment.

Also aboard were surface warfare students, a medical team from the Cavite Naval Hospital, Naval Special Operations Team, Submarine Group, Naval Combat Engineering Brigade Combo and representatives from the Support Base Facilities of Naval Installation Command.

All-in-all, 300 Filipino personnel participated in BRP Ramon Alcaraz's port visit, Lincuna said.

"During the port visit, the head of mission, Commodore Albert A Mogol, together with Capt. Dennis Rommel Quines, and the commanding officer of FF16, Cmdr. Jeff Rene Nadugo, paid a courtesy call to the Commander of Naval Region 4, Vietnam People's Navy and the Leader of Khanh Hoa Province Committee in Nah Trang to engage in a dialogue and establish strategic partnership on maritime security and sustain a mutual respect and cooperation," Lincuna said.

He added the visit also provided training opportunity for 20 students of Surface Warfare Commanders Course to be able to have a friendly exchange of knowledge with VPN officers and to expose themselves on good seamanship.

"The port visit was a bilateral engagement between the PN and the VPN's to strengthen alliance and commitment towards peace and stability in the maritime region by promoting naval diplomacy, camaraderie and fostering goodwill. During the port visit, series of events were conducted such as combined planning for Passing exercise (PASSEX) to enhance the interoperability between the two navies, goodwill games, city tour and social interaction," Lincuna said.

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