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OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS
NEWS CLIPPINGS

15 December 2016

Thursday

NEWS HEADLINES

15 DECEMBER 2016



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

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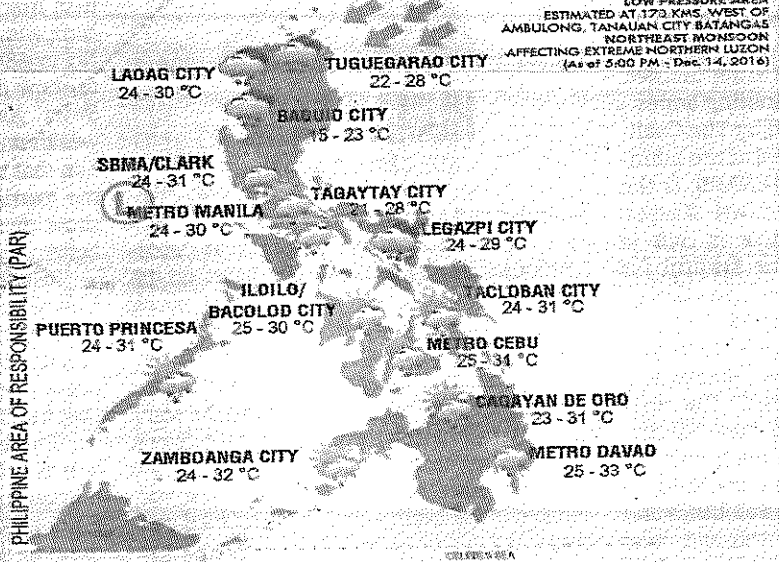


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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS + FEARLESS VIEWS

TODAY'S WEATHER FORECAST | DECEMBER 15, 2016 | THURSDAY




LOW PRESSURE AREA
ESTIMATED AT 173 KMS. WEST OF
AMBULONG, TANAUAN CITY, BATANGAS
NORTHEAST MONSOON
AFFECTING EXTREME NORTHERN LUZON
(As of 5:00 PM - Dec. 14, 2016)

SUNRISE	SUNSET
6:13 AM	5:29 PM
MOONRISE	MOONSET
6:58 PM	7:09 AM
FULL MOON	LAST QUARTER
DEC 14 8:08 AM	DEC 21 9:56 AM
LOW TIDE	HIGH TIDE
MANILA SOUTH 8:03 AM 0.31 Meter	HARBOR 10:20 AM 1.30 Meter


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

DEC 15		DEC 16		DEC 17		DEC 18		DEC 19		DEC 20	
METRO MANILA	24-29 °C	24-29 °C	TAGAYTAY	20-27 °C	20-27 °C	TACLOBAN	25-30 °C	25-30 °C			
TUGUEGARAO	22-27 °C	21-27 °C	LEGAZPI	24-29 °C	25-29 °C	CAGAYAN DE ORO	23-31 °C	23-31 °C			
LAOAG	23-29 °C	23-30 °C	PUERTO PRINCESA	24-31 °C	24-31 °C	METRO DAVAO	25-32 °C	25-32 °C			
BAGUIO	15-23 °C	15-23 °C	ILOILO/BACOLOD	25-30 °C	25-30 °C	ZAMBOANGA	24-32 °C	24-32 °C			
SBMA/CLARK	24-30 °C	24-30 °C	METRO CEBU	25-31 °C	25-30 °C						




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Duterte: I may not finish my term

FROM A1

By Leila B. Salaverria
@LeilasINQ

PHNOM PENH—The realization hit him six months into his presidency: He doesn't need the job.

"I am old," President Duterte told a cheering crowd of several thousand expatriate Filipinos in the Cambodian capital Phnom Penh on his arrival for a two-day visit.

"This is my last hurrah. After this, 77. I am not sure if I will still be around by the end of my term," he said.

Mr. Duterte, who will be 77 when his six-year term expires in 2022, is the oldest person to be elected President in the Philippines.

He added that he had "found out very late" that he did not need the presidency at his age.

"It's not a question of having regrets, none at all, because I entered into it," he said.

"I realize now—I do not need it at this time of my life. But I tell you, I take pleasure at the end of the day, that's the only consolation, I have a job, I am doing something right," he added.

Yellows and Reds

He does not need "confirmation," he stressed, before adding that the "yellows," referring to the previous Aquino administration and its Liberal Party members, want him out of his post because they cannot accept defeat.

But the Reds, or the Left, would not allow him to be unseated.

"The Left will kill you if you remove me. Because I am leftist. I am the child of poor parents. I'm the first left-leaning President. But I am not under or I am not a member of the Communist Party of the Philippines," he said.

Rising death toll

Mr. Duterte told business leaders in Manila on Monday that he had no fear of being removed from power or assassinated because of the killings in

his antidrug campaign.

Since July 1, nearly 6,000 people have died in the crack-down, a key plank of Mr. Duterte's May election campaign. Police say 2,028 have been killed by officers in self-defense, and the rest "deaths under investigation."

"Oust me—good; assassinate me—better; I have this migraine every day," he said. "I have a lot of issues with my spine. What I have is really Buerger's disease. It's an acquired thing that you get from smoking, because of nicotine."

Doctors had advised surgery on his spine, he said, but his wife, a nurse who used to work in the United States, did not agree because "a lot of operations for the spine went wrong."

He added: "If you guys see me always in a sad mood, I am actually pushing a nerve here to relieve the pain," and touched the right side of his face.

Any aches and pains he may experience are just par for the course for someone his age, said the President's spokesperson, Ernesto Abella.

Asked about suggestions that the Palace issue medical bulletins, Abella insisted that Mr. Duterte was OK, days after the President himself detailed his physical ailments.

"Based on results, he's doing very, very well," he said.

Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III, a member of the President's official delegation to Cambodia, said a medical bulletin on Mr. Duterte's condition was not that necessary.

"What you see is what you get. If you see the President going on leave because he cannot do his job anymore, then you can have some doubts about his health," said Bello.

Only if he begins having difficulty meeting his obligations would a health bulletin be necessary, he said. "He is superhealthy. I don't understand where he gets his energy," he said.

Bello also brushed off speculations that Mr. Duterte's condition was worse than what was publicly admitted.

"What he is doing cannot be done by someone who is sick," he said.

Before flying to Cambodia, the President attended late night engagements.

"Whatever pains he's experiencing, the doctors would say basically wear and tear. It's part of the territory," Abella said.

Earlier this month, Mr. Duterte talked about his health problems, which include daily migraines and pain in his spine.

He disclosed that he was taking the powerful painkiller Fentanyl, used by cancer patients.

But he denied that he was suffering from cancer, a rumor that arose during the campaign.

Fentanyl is a prescription drug similar to morphine but is 50 to 100 times more potent.

Side effects include nausea, vomiting, confusion, hallucination and seizures.

Mr. Duterte no longer smokes or drinks alcohol.

Meeting of tough guys

The President met with Prime Minister Hun Sen later Wednesday at the Peace Palace.

The two leaders known for

their tough-guy approach to governing witnessed the signing of four agreements on transnational crime, sports cooperation, tourism and labor cooperation.

These include opening direct flights between Manila and Phnom Penh and coordinating best practices on sports management and training, said Philippine Ambassador Christopher Montero.

The Philippine and Cambodian police will address drug trafficking, terrorism, extremism, and financial and economic crimes.

Montero earlier said Cambodia had an interest in vocational training, pointing out the Philippines had a high level of expertise in this area.

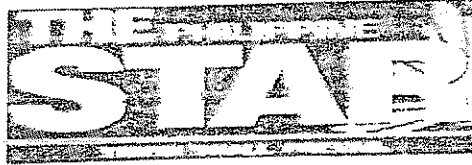
Before his departure from Manila, Mr. Duterte said his trip to the Philippines' neighbors—he will go to Singapore after Cambodia—was in preparation for the Asean summit meeting which the Philippines would host late next year.

—WITH REPORTS FROM MARLON RAMOS, REUTERS AND AP



PALACE WELCOME Cambodian students holding portraits of President Duterte await the Philippine leader outside the Royal Palace in central Phnom Penh where he would meet with King Norodom Sihamoni. —REUTERS

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2 immigration execs in bribe case sacked

By EDU PUNAY

Justice Secretary Vitaliano Aguirre II has sacked two intelligence officers of the Bureau of Immigration (BI) linked to the alleged P50-million extortion case of Chinese casino mogul Jack Lam.

This came as President Duterte warned anew yesterday that he would terminate Cabinet members who are corrupt or whose departments are involved in anomalies under their watch.

In his arrival speech in Cambodia Tuesday night, Duterte vowed to stop corruption in government, coupled with his intensified drive against crime and illegal drugs.

"Corruption will stop," Duterte said. "Wala akong papatawarin diyan, maski kaibigan (I will not spare anyone, even my friends). It will stop. Sinabi ko talaga, maski kaming mga kaibigan, sinabi ko, 'Pagka may nangyari diyan at under sa iyo (I really told them, even among us friends, I said, 'If anything happens under your watch, I'm sorry, maybe, even you would have to resign.' Kasi yan ang pangako ko. Hindi naman talaga ako yung honest, very honest. Pero matanda ba kasi ako (Because that's my promise. I don't claim to be very honest, but I'm old). I'm 71. This is my last hurrah."

The President did not say if he was alluding to Aguirre, who has under his department the BI, which is now enmeshed

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2 immigration From Page 1

in an extortion controversy.

In Manila, Aguirre informed acting BI intelligence division chief Charles Calima Jr and technical assistant for intelligence Edward Chan of their dismissal from their respective posts in separate letters after their names surfaced in the scandal.

"Please be informed that your appointments as appointees of the Bureau of Immigration are hereby terminated. As such, you are no longer required to report for work and this is immediately," read Aguirre's orders.

The orders also made the dismissed officers informally recommending to the President the dismissal of BI Deputy Commissioners Al Argosino and Michael Robles, who admitted receiving P50 million from Lam's camp in what they claimed to be a covert investigation on the reported bribery for the release of 1,316 arrested illegal Chinese workers of Lam's Fontana Resorts and Casino in Clark Field, Pampanga.

Argosino and Robles are fraternity brothers of Duterte and Aguirre in San Beda College of Law's Lex Talionis.

Argosino and Robles surrendered P50 million in cash to the Department of Justice (DOJ) after 10 days of keeping the money claiming that the

P18 million went to Calima and P2 million to retired police official Wally Sombero, who acted as Lam's middleman.

They earlier filed a 30-day leave of absence to allow the separate probes of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) and BI but have been recommended dismissed by Aguirre.

"The action was called for because of the gravity of the accusations. This will also prevent the parties involved from interfering with the ongoing investigations," Aguirre said.

The DOJ chief said the NBI and BI probes would proceed to determine who is criminally liable for the alleged extortion of Lam.

Argosino and Robles, however, denied the extortion charge and said they were conducting an investigation and were just "framed up" during the incident last Nov. 27 at the City of Dreams Casino in Paranaque City, which was caught on closed-circuit television (CCTV) camera.

Aguirre said he learned about the incident from Sombero days before the two BI officials confided in him.

As per Sombero, the money was not for processing of the license of Lam's casino but for the release of the illegal Chinese workers.

Contacto clarifies that only "Angewandte" dictated the terms of the alleged transaction, according to Somboro's statement. — With Christina Mendez, Deion Porculla, Ohio One

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Signing of permanent ceasefire with Reds seen before yearend

PHNOM PENH —The Philippine government is holding informal talks with the Communist Party of the Philippines before yearend to craft the terms of a permanent ceasefire between the two parties before the next round of peace talks in January.

Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III, chief government negotiator, said both parties are working on terms of the permanent ceasefire. There will be a meeting in Oslo, Norway on Dec. 26 to 29.

"Our ceasefire committee will meet with their ceasefire committee to arrive at a consensus on the definition of terms and conditions that will cover the proposed joint permanent ceasefire," Bello said on the sidelines of the state visit here.

"If they agree on the definition of terms like what is considered a hostile act, or what, where is the buffer zone where their forces can get in or out and our forces can get in or out, and they can agree on who the referees are in case of violations, then we will be ready to sign a bilateral ceasefire," Bello said.

The details of the permanent ceasefire are now being drafted before another round of peace negotiations on Jan. 18 to 25.

"Hopefully, if they agree, we may have to go on a special trip just for the signing of the joint bilateral permanent ceasefire," Bello said. "I'm emphasizing the word permanent, because it could result in the end of hostilities, which is one of the main objectives of the peace process," he said.

On calls for the release of more prisoners, Bello said this should not be made a precondition of the peace agreement.

He said the "old" and sickly political detainees have bigger chances of being released as part of the continued confidence building measures of the Duterte administration.

National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr. is also optimistic about the positive outcome of the peace talks.

President Duterte had declared a unilateral ceasefire a few months ago to pave way for the peace talks.

He even negotiated for the release from detention of NPA top leaders, including the Tiamzon couple.

Meanwhile, suspected communist

By CHRISTINA MENDEZ

rebels torched an air-conditioned passenger bus in South Cotabato last Tuesday evening, the military reported yesterday.

Capt. Marvin Gammad, Civil-Military Officer of the Army's 27th Infantry Battalion, said the latest incident along the national highway at Purok Pioneer, Barangay Poblacion in Sto. Niño town was the fourth burning of the Yellow Bus Line (YBL) after the firm's management refused to pay revolutionary taxes to the New People's Army.

"This is the fourth arson they have committed on YBL passenger buses since Nov. 13," Gammad said, adding that the first two burning incidents happened in Kiamba, Sarangani and third was in Tantangan town, all in South Cotabato.

Initial reports showed that the 35-seater air-conditioned bus with body No. 7225 was bound for Koronadal City from Isulan when six armed men posing as passengers introduced themselves as NPA rebels then ordered the bus driver

to alter his route toward the municipal cemetery.

Upon reaching the cemetery, another group of NPA rebels boarded the bus and ordered the driver, the conductor and the passengers to get off before setting the

vehicle on fire with gasoline.

— With Jaime Laude

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The Nation's Newspaper

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NPA's torch 4th passenger bus in a month

COMMUNIST New People's Army rebels burned a passenger bus of the Yellow Bus Line in South Cotabato on Tuesday night, the fourth vehicle of the bus company to be razed by the insurgents since last month.

The rebel atrocity came hours after Defense Secretary scored the National Democratic Front for failing to control NPA rebels from conducting extortion and arson activities despite the ongoing peace talks.

Capt. Marvin Gammad, civil military operations officer of the Army's 27th Infantry Battalion, said the rebel attack occurred in Sto Niño town.

Gammad said eight rebels boarded the Koronadal City-bound bus at a passenger terminal in Isulan town in Sultan Kudarat.

Upon reaching Sto Niño, Gammad said the PA rebels declared their intention to burn the bus. They ordered the driver to stop where two other rebels, carrying cans of gasoline, were waiting.

Gammad said the military has stepped up patrols in the two provinces to prevent similar incidents. – *Victor Reyes*

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NPA burns another bus in South Cotabato

SUSPECTED members of New People's Army (NPA) burned another passenger bus the other night in South Cotabato.

This was confirmed by Capt. Marvin Gammad, Civil Military Operations (CMO) of Philippine Army's 27th Infantry Battalion (IB).

Reports said the incident occurred at around 6 p.m. along the national highway of Bgy Poblacion, Sto. Nino, South Cotabato.

Investigation showed that the rebels burned one unit of yellow bus line aircon bus with body number 7225 travelling from Isulan, Sultan Kudarat to Koronadal City.

Accordingly, six armed men pretended to be passengers of the 35-seater bus and upon reaching the said place, one of the suspects directed the driver to stop the bus near the cemetery.

The suspects also directed the passenger of

the bus to go down and leave before setting the bus into fire.

It was learned that prior to the incident, the rebels warned the owner of the bus line to pay revolutionary tax to avoid the incident.

Records showed that the rebels already burned three passenger buses in separate incidents in South Cotabato and Davao del Sur from November 2016.

Zaida Delos Reyes-Palanca

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Army foils attempts by BIFF to over-run Army, police camps in Maguindanao

From the Philippine News Agency (Dec 14): **Army foils attempts by BIFF to over-run Army, police camps in Maguindanao**

Military forces foiled attempts by outlawed Moro gunmen to over-run an Army and police detachments in Datu Salibo, Maguindanao on Tuesday night and Wednesday morning, a military official said.

Colonel Warlito Limet, commander of 2nd Mechanized Infantry Battalion, could not say how many were killed on the side of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF).

"We can only surmise that they suffered heavy casualty, we have not recovered dead bodies," he said.

At 7:45 Tuesday night, about 50 heavily armed BIFF, led by commander Abo Sayden, harassed the police detachment of Datu Salibo municipal police office but quickly retreated as the Army came to the cops' rescue by firing mortars towards the BIFF location.

As the gunmen were leaving toward the marshy area, they fired at the transformer of Maguindanao Electric Cooperative (Magelco) sending a large portion of Datu Salibo without light.

There were sporadic exchange of mortars between the bandits and the Army until about 4 a.m., Limet said.

At the break of dawn, the BIFF also tried to over run a nearby military detachment in Barangay Sambolawan, also in Datu Salibo.

But prepared soldiers pushed the attackers away.

No casualty on the government side, Limet said.

Earlier, the BIFF blamed the MILF for the death of a sub-commander last week. Its spokesperson, Abu Misry Mama, said soldiers attacked the house of Commander Ismael Tamarin which led to his death.

But Limet said there was no military operation in Datu Salibo last week or early this week. Army offensive was only launched Tuesday night when the BIFF harassed a police detachment.

"Commander Tamarin could have been killed by an armed group he was in conflict with," Limet told reporters.

A few number of civilians have fled to nearby village for fear of getting involved in the clashes.

Limet also assured commuters using the Isulan, Sultan Kudarat to Cotabato City highway that road security have been in place.

Elements of 2nd Mechanized Infantry Battalion of 1st Mechanized Infantry Brigade have been placed on alert since last week of November to ensure safety of civilians during the holidays.

<http://www.pna.gov.ph/index.php?idn=2&sid=&nid=2&rid=948393>

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North Cotabato PNP, Army hunting down suspect in murder of ARMM police officer

From the Philippine News Agency (Dec 14): North Cotabato PNP, Army hunting down suspect in murder of ARMM police officer

PIKIT, North Cotabato -- Police here have launched manhunt against gunmen who ambushed and killed a police officer along the national highway here Wednesday morning, police said.

Backed by elements of the 7th Infantry Battalion, members of Pikit municipal police office, are searching for a multi-carry vehicle that the suspects used in killing PO3 Suy Talipasan at about 10 a.m. in the highway in Barangay Batulawan, Pikit, North Cotabato.

Chief Inspector Donald Cabigas, Pikit town police chief, said Talipasan who was assigned at police regional office in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) was driving his Nissan pick-up vehicle when three men on board a passenger vehicle (Suzuki multicab) without license plate opened fire using M-16 and M-14 assault rifles.

Talipasan, a resident of Fort Pikit in Barangay POblacion, was killed on the spot due to multiple gunshot wounds.

The slain cop was to report to his station in Parang, Maguindanao when the ambush happened.

Anwar Akmad, a tricycle driver, was seriously injured when the police officer's car went wayward after the shooting and rammed on his pedicab.

Mustapha Sanduyugan, a civilian who was waiting for a ride at the road side, was hit by stray bullets.

Cabigas said investigation continues on the possible involvement of Talipasan in illegal drugs but stressed probe is focused on the victim's conflict with another Muslim family. He did not elaborate.

Cabigas said town investigators are still waiting for statement from the family of Cabigas.

Pikit has been rocked by grenade attacks the past week with the local PNP recording at least four grenade throwing incident.

Before today's ambush on Talipasan, two persons were injured when an unidentified man tossed a hand grenade inside the town's public market.

<http://www.pna.gov.ph/index.php?idn=2&sid=&nid=2&rid=948318>

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Senior military officers set to get new assignments

BY VICTOR REYES

SEVERAL senior military officers are expected to be given new positions in a new round of high-level re-assignments brought about by the recent retirement of AFP chief Gen. Ricardo Visaya and Navy chief Vice Adm. Caesar Taccad.

Visaya retired on Wednesday last week and was replaced by former Army chief Lt. Gen. Eduardo Año. This paved the way for the assumption of AFP vice chief Lt. Gen. Glorioso Miranda to the post of Army chief. Miranda's old post remains vacant.

Taccad retired last month and was replaced with Vice Adm. Joseph Ronald Mercado. Named to Mercado's old post as chief of the Western Command was Lt. Gen. Raul del Rosario, former head of the Central Command.

The Central Command is now

headed by Maj. Gen. Oscar Lactao, whose old post of AFP inspector general is still vacant.

Military sources said Maj. Gen. Salvador Mison, AFP deputy chief of staff, has been recommended by the AFP Board of Generals to succeed Miranda as AFP vice chief.

Mison's successor, based on the recommendation, will be Rear Adm. Narciso Vingson, chief of the Naval Education and Training Command.

The same sources said that Western Mindanao Command chief Lt. Gen. Mayoralgo dela Cruz, who is supervising the fight against the Abu Sayyaf, had been recommended to become the AFP inspector general, vice Lactao.

The recommended successor of Dela Cruz is 4th Infantry Division commander Maj. Gen. Benjamin Madrigal. Madrigal's proposed successor is Brig. Gen. Melquia-

des Feliciano, AFP deputy chief of staff for civil military operations.

The apparent loser in the proposed re-assignments is Dela Cruz, who is taking over a desk job as AFP inspector general. Dela Cruz assumed the post of Wesmincom commander in November last year.

"It's not actually a demotion or what. It's personal staff of the AFP chief," one of the sources said of the post that will be reportedly given to Dela Cruz.

Though an office job, the source said the AFP inspector general post is still powerful one, even with only a handful of subordinates around him. As Wesmincom commander, Dela Cruz has operational control over all troops and assets in Western Mindanao.

"Nothing negative was mentioned why he is being recommended to become the AFP inspector general. As a senior of-

ficer, he has to move up. Maybe it's time to relax or time to rest, I don't know," he said.

Dela Cruz is due to retire in May next year.

If re-assigned as AFP inspector general, Dela Cruz' job will include conducting investigations and inspections. He can also recommend cases against erring personnel based on this investigations and inspections.

"There's still no turnover schedule set. Actually, these (proposed re-assignments) may still change along the way. What I can tell you is there will be movement definitely because of recent retirements," the source said.

Another source said: "These are merely movements, reassignments recommended by the AFP Board of Generals. These were recommended for the President's approval. There is still no approval from our commander-in-chief."

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Lanao execs nix plan to arm residents vs Maute

COTABATO CITY—Members of the Maute terror group have threatened to burn Marawi City amid pressure from military operations, but officials of Lanao del Sur province have rejected proposal to arm residents to defend themselves from attacks.

Lanao del Sur Gov. Soraya Alonto-Adiong, Vice Gov. Mamintal Adiong Jr., Butig Mayor Dimatang Pansar and Marawi City Mayor Majul Gandamra all turned down the proposal, which first came up during a meeting with residents and officials in Butig.

On Nov. 24, armed men belonging to the Maute group, led by brothers Abdullah and Omar Maute, stormed Butig and took over an old town hall, a mosque and a madrassa (Islamic school). It took the military six days to regain control of Butig, which saw 61 rebels dead and at least 35 soldiers wounded.

Reports said 2,500 families, or over 12,000 people, fled their homes during the fighting.

Governor Adiong said arming residents to fight the Maute group would only promote the formation of militias, which

would most likely result in cases of human rights violations.

Instead, Adiong urged communities to cooperate with law enforcers and exercise vigilance.

"We need the cooperation of every individual, group, and organization for us to fight this growing concern," Adiong said during the international human right's day celebration at the provincial capitol last week.

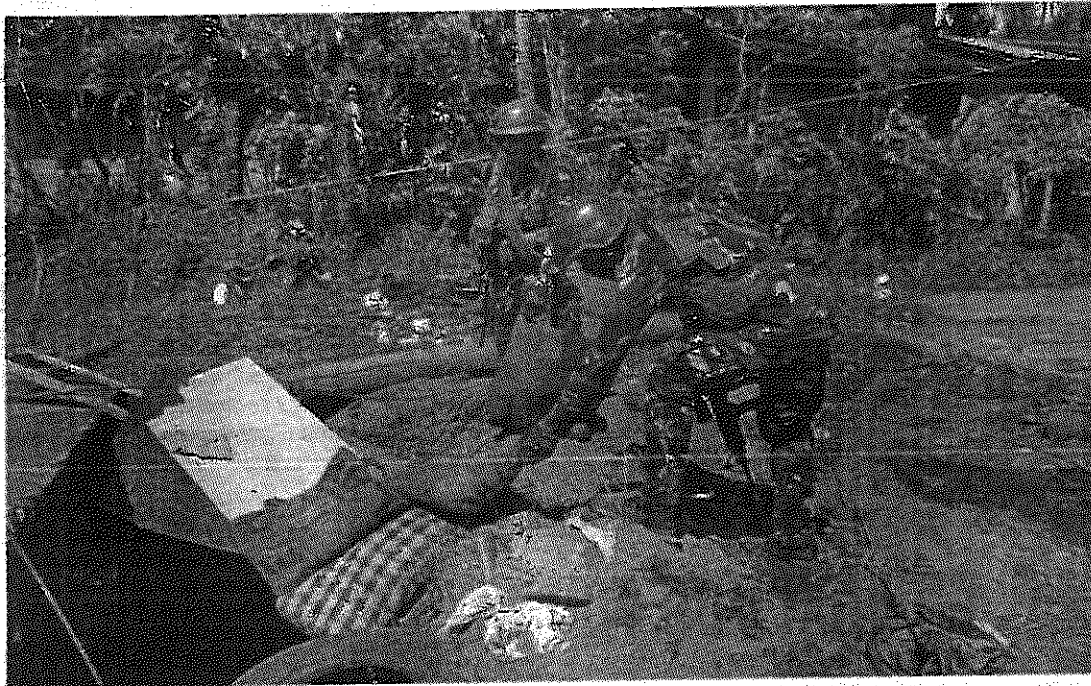
But even after Butig Mayor Pansar shot down the proposal, residents in other towns of Lanao del Sur continued to endorse it, following the terror group's threat to burn Marawi, the provincial capital, if military operations continue.

Gandamra said several groups in his city wanted the government to allow civilians to arm themselves after hearing the threat, but he rejected these proposals.

"We should strengthen partnerships with law enforcement agencies instead," he said. "Everyone should uphold peace and promote protection of basic human rights."

Vice Governor Adiong said

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Soldiers inspect a foxhole used by snipers of the Maute terror group when they took over Butig town in Lanao del Sur province. —RICHEL V. UMEI

the government should require the registration of all madaris (Islamic schools) in the province to ensure that young Maranaos "get the right Islamic education."

"This is not to say that madaris are producing extremists, because we do not know where these people (extremists) are coming from," he said.

He said the proposed registration with the Department of Education would ensure that students get the right lessons and participate in extracurricular

activities required under the Refined Elementary Madrasah Curriculum (REMC).

He said the REMC had been developed, reviewed refined and evaluated by DepEd in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) from 2010 to 2011.

Earlier, the ARMM's Humanitarian Emergency Action Response Team (ARMM-Heart), assisted evacuees from Butig and nearby Lumbayanague town.

The residents were forced to flee their communities after some houses were burned by Maute gang members while other structures caught fire when these were hit by shelling from government troops and the rebels.

The ARMM government had promised to help the Lanao del Sur government and the affected towns in rebuilding.

ARMM Gov. Mujiv Hataman earlier said the regional government has asked the military to station soldiers in Butig to prevent the return of gang members and to reassure residents that they would protect them.

—NASH B. MAULANA INQ

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16 December 2016

The Manila Times

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Reds 'not ready' to die for Duterte

BY LLANESCA T. PANTI
AND CATHERINE S. VALENTE

LEFTIST lawmakers on Wednesday took exception to the President's remark that the Reds will "die" for him, but confirmed that they won't break their alliance with the Duterte administration amid an impasse over the release of detained communist rebels and the burial of ex-strongman Ferdinand Marcos.

The Makabayan bloc said the 434 detained rebels, including 130 old and sick prisoners, should not be used by the President as leverage in ongoing peace talks with the National Democratic Front (NDF), the political arm of the Communist Party of the Philippines.

"This is a matter of justice because they were detained with planted evidence and with no bail. They should be released

on humanitarian grounds. We're not ready to die for the President, *pero handa kaming i-alay ang aming buhay para sa mga naaapi* [but we are willing to lay our lives for those who are oppressed]," said Rep. Antonio Tinio of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers.

The Makabayan bloc said it won't sever ties with President Duterte and that the alliance

► 'Not Ready' A2

Reds 'not ready' to die for Duterte

stood on solid ground, because the administration was committed to hammering out a peace agreement with the NDF.

"The peace talks are still on in spite of these concerns along the way. In fact, there is another round [of talks] in Italy come January 2017...so that's where our alliance is based upon," Tinio said.

Rep. Carlos Zarate of Bayan Muna, vice chairman of the House Committee on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity, backed up Tinio.

"For the past 15 years, the peace talks between the two parties have been stalled. Since CARHRIHL was signed [during the Ramos administration], nothing substantial happened, until now. Now, for the first six months, there is already a second round of talks for the socioeconomic reforms pact," Zarate said.

CARHRIHL is the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law.

Anakpawis party-list Rep. Ariel Casilao told reporters. "The issue of political prisoners' release should not get in the way of drafting a peace agreement."

"The 130 political prisoners are incapable of armed struggle anymore and they were detained because of trumped-up charges. Actually, all 400 of them were wrongfully charged, and that's why we are still calling for their unconditional release," he said.

'Conceded too much, too soon'

On Tuesday night in Cambodia, Duterte reiterated that communist rebels must sign a bilateral ceasefire deal before their detained comrades are released by the government.

Speaking before Filipinos in Phnom Penh, Duterte stressed that he had made a lot of concessions to the NDF.

"You bring me a document which says that there is, or there would be ceasefire. Do not put a timeline. Then *i-release ko 'an pag nakuha ko. Ayaw ang usapan* [Then I will release the prisoners. That's the deal]," Duterte said.

"I have conceded too much, even too soon. *Nandiyan na 'yung mga malalaking leaders nila* Tiamzon [their main leaders have been released. Tiamzon]," he added.

Duterte was referring to top rebel leaders Benito and Wilma Tiamzon whom he met Friday in Davao City, where he supposedly said he would "keep his campaign promise to release detained communist rebels."

At least 19 political prisoners, including the Tiamzon couple, have so far been released, including rebel leaders who joined the peace talks that formally started in August.

Duterte said he would release a number of elderly and sick detainees before Christmas.

But the President added: "*Sabi ko dahan-dahan i-release ko. mawala 'yung baraha ko. Hanggang maubusan ako, wala na akong pang-negotiate* [I said I will release them gradually, because I might run out of cards. I will have nothing to negotiate over]."

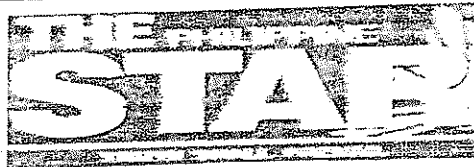
Presidential spokesman Ernesto Abella justified Duterte's position, saying "what he wants is a mutual...a bilateral agreement."

In place are unilateral ceasefire declarations announced by both sides in August as peace talks went underway in Oslo, Norway.

The Palace has prepared a draft amnesty proclamation containing the names of detained leaders and alleged members of communist groups.

Abella said he was hopeful the issue on the release of political prisoners would be "resolved before Christmas."

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New fighter jets to boost patrol in disputed waters

By MICHAEL PUNONGBAYAN

Proud of its new iron eagles, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) now hopes to make good use of its newly acquired fighter jets in patrolling the West Philippine Sea.

Philippine Air Force (PAF) chief Lt. Gen. Edgar Fallorina said the military's four new planes definitely boost its air defense capability.

"With our four FA-50PH, we have further strengthened our wings and we can now secure more our land, airspace and maritime territory," Fallorina said during last week's turnover ceremony of two more fighter jets acquired from South Korea.

"We will now be able to conduct security operations in the West Philippine Sea and perform more surveillance and reconnaissance missions," he added.

Fallorina said the additional aircraft is a good indication that the PAF is on course toward realizing its vision of a professional and competent air force responsive to national security and development as embodied in Flight Plan 2028.

"This is also a boost to our being the Jointly Engaged Transforming Force for greater peace and security," he added.

The PAF held a formal acceptance, turnover and blessing ceremony of the two newly acquired FA-50PH "Fighting Eagle" Fighter/Surface Attack/Lead-in Fighters Trainer Aircraft with tail numbers 003 and 004 at the Villamor Air Base in Pasay City.

The event was attended by Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana as guest of honor.

The formal handover of aircraft documents highlighted the ceremony as it symbolized the transfer of the FA-50PH aircraft from South Korea represented by Jae-shin Kim to Lorenzana on the part of the Philippine government.

Lorenzana, for his part, turned over the documents to AFP chief Lt. Gen. Eduardo Afio, who in turn gave them to Fallorina for the PAF.

The symbolic turnover rites were then followed by the blessing of and ceremonial pouring of champagne on the new platforms.

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ERGO

The soldiers' blank faces



By LEANDRO DD CORONEL

NOTICE the blank looks on soldiers' faces when President Duterte visits their camps and gives them a pep talk. They only applaud when he tells them about raising their salaries.

Mr. Duterte has been doing the rounds of military camps around the country. He's trying to rally the troops to his side, telling them he's the answer to the nation's problems.

Are his talks to the soldiers effective? The soldiers don't look enthusiastic. They gawk at the President on stage but that's all. They crane their necks when the President is on stage. But there's hardly any reaction to what he says except, as I say above, when he talks about giving them a pay rise.

He talks about how he won the presidency in a major surprise, unexpected of a city mayor who had been unknown in many parts of the country. He talks about his hatred of drugs and drug users, and how much he wants to kill them all.

Then he talks about the enemies of the state, like the Abu Sayyaf (somehow he's not as angry with the NPA). He talks about international terrorism allegedly creeping into the country and which will be the nation's problem between now and six years.

He continues to assail the United States and declares an independent foreign policy. He talks excitedly about allying the Philippines with China and Russia (isn't there a contradiction there in terms of a truly independent policy?).

Watch the faces of the soldiers next time Mr. Duterte visits a camp and notice how nothing seems to register in their minds. They stare blankly at the President and show no reactions, again only when he tells them they'll be getting more benefits.

Four sectors will be key to the nation's stability in the coming months: the Catholic Church, the media, academe, and the military.

The Church has started to make noises, the media are maintaining a professional stance in their news coverage, and students have

come out recently in protest (their teachers/professors are yet to join the fray).

The fourth sector, the military, is still sitting on the fence, meaning they haven't taken a position for or against the President. The brass of course toe the line and appear loyal to the Commander-in-Chief. But what about the rank and file? That's the big question.

(Note that I don't mention the masses: They're too busy with their daily struggles.)

Judging from the non-committal reaction on soldiers' faces when the President visits them in their camps, the rank and file, especially the younger soldiers, appear confused. Especially over the President's initiatives vis-a-vis the communists and the United States.

The military is always key to political stability in any country. Countries like Pakistan, Thailand, Burma and others have powerful militaries that even control government and national policies.

The Philippines has a tradition of civilian supremacy over the military. But, as we've seen in the two People Power uprisings, the military is a key ally for those who oppose the government.

Right now, the military bosses are ostensibly on Mr. Duterte's side. But what about the rank and file, the ordinary soldiers? They will be key to what happens in the near future.

Has Mr. Duterte succeeded in persuading the soldiers to his way of thinking in relation to abandonment of the country's alliance with the United States and shifting toward China and Russia?

What do the soldiers think of the President's dalliance with the communists? In relation to this, some of the leftist elements who had initially come to a rapprochement with the President, even accepting his invitation to coffee in Malacanang, have started to take to the streets again in protest, something they should have continued to do, in keeping with their ideological stand on national politics.

But where the military will align itself will be pivotal to both Mr. Duterte and anti-Duterte forces. With whom will the military side?

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METRO CORNER

Mandatory ROTC

(PART I)



By **ERIK ESPINA**

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte urged, "Let us strengthen our ROTC Program to instill love of country and good citizenship." Congress must now heed the call of the new administration. It must be apprised of the very same complaints. Ideologues and parties resistant to the restoration of mandatory ROTC in all colleges and universities, private or state administered, to move forward.

My good friend, the late Welson Chua, father of the murdered UST ROTC cadet Mark Chua, in the Senate Defense hearing once chaired by Senator Ramon Magsaysay Jr., said, "I plead with everyone to spare the institution. Please help me restore it to its former glory when it used to be a proud institution that gave us men ready to defend their country if it was ever necessary. It is time to claim it back. This is my son's heart." The hurdle for "Mandatory ROTC" remains in the profit motive of private/religious school administrators salivating to own the ROTC funds and the baseless leftist rant of militarization in the campus, citing the AFP's role in the country's martial law experience. They avoid the fact-check of history: of 10 battalions sent to Bataan, 8 were Reservist; ROTC Hunters kept the guerrilla war alive, and the 1897 revolution legacy/timeline of the Philippine Army, etc.

Why does the Philippines require mandatory ROTC? The answer is in the phenomenon of geography and history. Simply, the accident of territorial location, neighboring countries, etc., and what a people

decides to do with their nationhood. Example: How many soldiers does Canada, 2nd largest country in the world, have? 50,000-70,000 with 30,000 primary reservists. They can afford a bare minimum to protect a 9.6-M sq. km. area because they are under the wide defense umbrella of the United States of America. How about New Zealand which has slightly lesser territory than the Philippines? They have 4,539 Regular Troops and only 1,569 Reservists! Why? Because they are in the remotest area of the globe, 900 km east of Australia. They were never visited by any war except the ones they volunteered to join overseas.

Under the principle of Geography and History, the Philippines is located where? The gateway to East Asia. The pathway to tens of billions of dollars in commercial/trade shipping routes. Dead-center of geo-political fault lines of two world powers. And visited by trade and subjected to conquest since the Sung Dynasty in the 960s; Arab traders the 14th Century; the Spanish conquest in 1521; Pirate Limahong in 1574; the British in 1762-64; Americans in the 1898 Battle of Manila Bay which, as an aside, saw the presence of Japanese, French, British, and German warships, the latter ready to take over and claim the Philippines. One of the German warships under Prince Heinrich of Prussia had 1,400 soldiers. Which prompted US Admiral George Dewey to comment to Admiral Otto von Diederich, "If Germany wants war, all right we are ready". If not for the British allying with the US at the time, we would have been a German protectorate.

(Next week)

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Peace talks and the Marcos burial

General Santos City—Much has been said about the legality and the questions of “suitability” of the burial of the dictator Ferdinand Marcos’ remains in the Libingan ng mga Bayani. After the multi-colored protests and the political firestorm that jolted the country, it’s time we threw another substantial question for the Duterte administration to deal with: the ramifications of the Marcos burial on its peace processes with the Left and the Bangsamoro.

President Duterte has the reputation of being “friends” with the Left. Back in his day as mayor of Davao City, he displayed this closeness by supporting its causes which he considered propoor. When he became president, he gave members of the Left the opportunity to join his Cabinet and serve as his alter egos. In a video message at a forum held last June 8 at Ateneo de Davao University, Jose Ma. Sison, founding chair of the Communist Party of the Philippines, expressed optimism over the prospects of putting closure to the longest-running communist insurgency in Asia under the Duterte administration.

As for the Bangsamoro, the President’s grandmother was a full-blooded Maranao. And he himself hails from Mindanao, so he is seen by many as someone who understands their grievances and is capable of putting an end to the conflict in the region. With such credentials, he could fashion an inclusive framework to protect the rights of the diverse stakeholders in Mindanao

COMMENTARY

JESSE ANGELO L. ALTEZ

for durable peace to work for everyone.

Ironically, the President’s outward pronouncements of support for the Marcos burial in the Libingan, declared with a legalistic stance, seem to blur all prospects of reconciliation and forgiveness on the side of the Bangsamoro and the members of the CPP-New People’s Army-National Democratic Front.

For one, Marcos was considered the No. 1 recruiter of communist insurgents when he declared martial law. From 2,000 members in 1972, the insurgents’ membership ballooned to 20,000 in 1986. The dictator did so by instituting the monopoly of the oligarchs (aka Marcos cronies) of state resources, repressing freedom of expression, normalizing corruption, and sanctioning the killing, torture and rape of many Filipinos. And many of the communist insurgents were among the 100,000 human rights victims of martial law.

For another, the Moro secessionist movement in Mindanao began during the Marcos regime. The revelation of the covert “Project Merdeka” which resulted in the “Jabidah massacre” (or the killing of 68 young Muslims on Corregidor in March 1968) pushed Nur Misuari, a young profes-

sor at the University of the Philippines at the time, to form the Moro National Liberation Front in 1969. The killings and violence that followed against the Bangsamoro during martial law were just staggering. One infamous incident was the Malisbong massacre perpetrated by the military on the dictator’s orders in Palimbang, Sultan Kudarat, on Sept. 24, 1974, in which 1,500 unarmed Moro men were killed inside the Tacbil Mosque, while the women were raped.

The obvious closeness and loyalty of the President to the Marcos family despite the cry for justice and reparation among the many victims of martial law raise questions about his sincerity to institute the genuine change that he seemed to personify when he ran for the presidency.

But how can we move on and put closure to the wounds of the past when we keep extolling the legacies of the man who inflicted those wounds in the first place? How do we move forward and engage in legitimate peace processes if the government that will pursue these processes is turning a blind eye to the atrocities and excesses of Ferdinand Marcos and his family?

The President loves talking about historical injustice. Why doesn’t he apply the same to the legacy of the man whose remains he allowed to be buried in the cemetery for heroes?

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

ONLINE NEWS

15 DECEMBER 2016

DND still interested in Russian sniper rifles

From the Philippine News Agency (Dec. 14): DND still interested in Russian sniper rifles

While the People's Republic of China has expressed its willingness to provide the country's military units with firearms with generous payment terms, Department of National Defense (DND) Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said they will still look at sniper rifles being offered by Russia.

This is based on the orders by President Rodrigo Duterte, he said.

"The President told us to look into the sniper rifles being produced by Russia as these are good. Although we are still to see anything yet, they (Russians) will show us some models for testing to (determine whether these are suitable for our needs)," Lorenzana said in Filipino.

Earlier, DND undersecretary for finance, munition, materiel Raymund DV Elefante said the country is open to acquire weapons of all kinds from Russia but said these are dependent on the nation's capabilities to handle these equipment.

Capabilities refer to the funding and manpower capable of handling these weapons.

"It depends. As long (as) we have capabilities (i.e funds and manpower) but this is still a long-term (plan)," he added.

Elefante made this statement when asked if the Philippines is interested in acquiring attack helicopters, diesel electric submarines and fighter jets from Russia aside from small arms like the AK-47 automatic rifle and long-range sniper rifles.

Duterte earlier ordered the DND to look into Russia as possible sources of armaments and other weaponry needed by the Filipino military.

<http://www.pna.gov.ph/index.php?idn=1&sid=&nid=1&rid=948488>

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Battle-hardened Marine Battalion given Hero's Welcome after decade in Mindanao

From Update.Ph (Dec 14): Battle-hardened Marine Battalion given Hero's Welcome after decade in Mindanao

A Hero's Welcome for Philippine Marines' Marine Battalion Landing Team (MBLT) 7 was rendered at Sangley Point in Cavite. The said MBLT has been deployed to Mindanao for 1 decade to fight terrorism.

Prior to the said MBLT's arrival, Marine Battalion Landing Team (MBLT) 2 was deployed to Sultan Kudarat province. MBLT 7 operated in Sultan Kudarat.

Capt. Victor Donque, Philippine Marine Corps (PMC) spokesperson, said the 2nd Marine Battalion undergone intensified training on both lectures and practical exercises on administrative matters, military tactics, simulated military planning, live-fire maneuvers, marksmanship and rigid physical fitness activities.

He added the unit also participated in the recently concluded Philippine and US Amphibious Landing Exercise.

Prior re-training, Donque said the 2nd Marine Battalion has earned numerous victories against lawless elements and terrorists in the southern part of the Philippines.

<http://www.update.ph/2016/12/battle-hardened-marine-battalion-given-heros-welcome-after-decade-in-mindanao/12172>

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