

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



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OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS
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18 December 2016

Sunday

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

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THE PHILIPPINE STAR
ESTABLISHED 1935

Rody fires Blazquez in casino bribe
Free higher education pushed

Rody ready to set aside ruling on sea dispute
NCRPO: No Christmas break in drug war

Meth gangs of China play star role in Phi drug crisis

U.S. to China: Return our underwater drone

Bye-bye America: Rody threatens to scrap VFA

Rolito Go released, asks for Maguina's forgiveness

THE SUNDAY TIMES
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Prepare to leave, US told

Govt orders seizure of Jack Lam's assets

Duterte says he won't impose anything on China

Obama lashes out at Putin, warns Trump

Do you really need God?

Sunday used

PCSO SUPERLOTTO 6/49 SUNDAY, 18 DECEMBER 2016 JACKPOT PRIZE: P56,000,000.00

SUNDAY

CHINA SUB SEIZES US NAVAL PROBE

BYE-BYE AMERICA, DICONG SAYS AFTER MCE, DRUMMAKA

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US think tank: China installs weapons systems on 7 reefs

ALL FUN, ZERO LOSS

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The Manila Times

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PANAHON TV

TODAY'S WEATHER FORECAST

DECEMBER 15, 2016 SUNDAY

TAIL-END OF A COLD FRONT
AFFECTING EASTERN SECTION OF SOUTHERN
LUZON AND EASTERN VISAYAS
NORTHEAST MONSOON
AFFECTING NORTHERN AND CENTRAL LUZON
(As of 5:00 AM - Dec. 17, 2016)

SUNRISE SUNSET

MOONRISE MOONSET



9:53 PM 9:52 AM

FULL MOON LAST QUARTER



LOW TIDE HIGH TIDE



8:22 AM 11:04 PM
-0.24 Meter 1.22 Meter

Strong easterly wind with rain
and squalls from Luzon to
Palawan, to the Visayas
and Mindanao.

Clouds with rain squalls
over Mindanao.

Light rain

LAOAG CITY 24 - 28 °C	TINIGUJARAO CITY 20 - 27 °C
SBMA/CLARK 24 - 30 °C	BAGUIO CITY 14 - 22 °C
METRO MANILA 24 - 31 °C	TAGAYTAY CITY 29 - 36 °C
	LEGAZPI CITY 23 - 29 °C
ILOILO/BACOLOD CITY 25 - 32 °C	TACLOBAN CITY 24 - 30 °C
PUERTO PRINCESA 25 - 32 °C	METRO CEBU 25 - 32 °C
	LAGAYAN DE ORO 24 - 32 °C
ZAMBOANGA CITY 24 - 32 °C	
	METRO DAVAO 24 - 32 °C

LAOAG CITY 24 - 28 °C	LAOAG CITY 24 - 28 °C	LAOAG CITY 24 - 28 °C	BAGUIO 14 - 22 °C	LAOAG CITY 24 - 28 °C	LAOAG CITY 24 - 28 °C	LAOAG CITY 24 - 28 °C
METRO MANILA 24 - 31 °C	24 - 31 °C	24 - 31 °C	24 - 31 °C	24 - 31 °C	24 - 31 °C	24 - 31 °C
METRO CEBU 25 - 32 °C	25 - 32 °C	25 - 32 °C	25 - 32 °C	25 - 32 °C	25 - 32 °C	25 - 32 °C
METRO DAVAO 24 - 32 °C	24 - 32 °C	24 - 32 °C	24 - 32 °C	24 - 32 °C	24 - 32 °C	24 - 32 °C



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Rody ready to set aside ruling on sea dispute

By ALEXIS ROMERO
and EDITH REGALADO

President Duterte said yesterday he was ready to set aside the arbitral ruling that voided China's expansive maritime claim in the South China Sea following reports that Beijing had installed weapons systems in seven disputed areas it has occupied.

Surveillance photos released this week by the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative (AMTI) of the Washington-based Center for Strategic International Studies (CSIS) showed that China installed what appeared to be close-in weapons systems (CIWS) on seven artificial islands it built in the disputed sea.

The artificial islands were built on Kagitingan (Fiery Cross), Panganiban (Mischief), Zamora (Subi), Burgos (Gaven), Kennan (Hughes), Mabini (Johnson) and Calderon (Cuarteron) Reefs, areas located off the western province of Palawan.

AMTI said the gun and CIWS emplacements would show that China "is serious about defense of its artificial islands in case of an armed contingency in the South China Sea."

The Philippines, which once challenged China's expansive maritime claim before an international arbitral court, is not keen on stopping Beijing's actions.

"In the play of politics, now, I will set aside the arbitral ruling," Duterte said in a press conference in Davao City early morning yesterday upon arrival from state visits to Cambodia and Singapore.

"I will not impose anything on China. Why? Because the politics here in Southeast Asia is changing," he added.

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Rody ready From Page 1

Duterte elaborated on the changing politics in the region by reiterating his threat to remove American troops from the Philippines. He first issued the threat after the United States raised concerns over his brutal war on illegal drugs, which so far left over 5,000 drug suspects dead.

"I will demand that they go out of my country. What's the use of keeping, hosting them when they think we are a bunch of criminals?" the President said.

"Go, go out. If you do not believe in us, why deal with us?"

Duterte's position on the South China Sea issue was a radical shift from that of his predecessor Benigno Aquino III, who was very vocal in criticizing China's expansion in the South China Sea.

China, which claims about 90 percent of the South China Sea, has launched an ambitious land reclamation program in seven reefs that are also being

claimed by the Philippines.

In 2013, the Philippines under Aquino challenged China's expansive claim before an international arbitral court but Beijing refused to participate in the hearings.

The tribunal ruled in favor of the Philippines last July and declared that China's claim in the South China Sea has no legal basis. China has described the ruling as "null and void" and dismissed it as a "mere piece of paper."

Last Friday, Foreign Affairs Secretary Perfecto Yasay Jr. said the Philippines could not stop China from installing weapons in the artificial islands. He said the Philippines wanted to make sure that there would be no actions that would create tensions with China.

"We cannot, we cannot stop China at this point in time and saying 'do not put that up' — we will continue to pursue peaceful means at which all of this can be prevented," Yasay

said in a press conference in Singapore.

His remarks differed from Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, who expressed concerns over the CSIS report and said the government was attempting to verify it.

"If true, it is a big concern for us and the international community who uses the South China Sea lanes for trade," Lorenzana said Thursday. "It would mean that the Chinese are militarizing the area, which is not good."

Yasay maintained though that the Philippines would continue to stand on the arbitral tribunal's decision.

Friendly coast guards

Meanwhile, the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) and the Chinese Coast Guard (CCG) have agreed to form a Joint Coast Guard Committee (JCGC) that would deepen friendly cooperation between the two maritime agencies.

In a statement, PCG spokesman Commander Armand

Balilo said once the JCGC was established it would serve as an avenue for both coast guards to strengthen mutual trust, deepen confidence, intensify communications and exchange, enhance friendly cooperation based on equality, reciprocity and consensus.

The agreement was reached during the first meeting between the two coast guard agencies on Friday since CCG was established in June 2014.

During the past few years there had been instances when the relationship between the two countries was strained due to conflicting claims over the West Philippine Sea.

In their first meeting, the PCG said the two agencies had a friendly exchange of views on the establishment of the JCGC, including the principles of the organizational structure, terms of references and operational procedures.

They also explored possible programs of maritime cooperation, including combatting drug trafficking and other maritime crimes, marine

environmental protection, maritime search and rescue, and capacity-building in related areas.

It was also proposed that an interim arrangement for a hotline between the two agencies be put up to expedite the response during search and rescue operations.

Balilo cited the case of the two Filipino fishermen who went missing late November and were rescued by Chinese fishermen, who turned them over to the CCG.

He added there had been previous instances when the Chinese embassy would call the PCG and seek assistance to locate missing Chinese fishermen or when there were those requesting that they be allowed to take shelter during bad weather.

Once a hotline is created, the PCG official said they would be able to save on precious time since "during these search and rescue operations time is of the essence."

Balilo said the PCG and CCG could dispense with the

need to course their requests through their embassies and directly relay their request to their counterpart coast guard.

On the part of the PCG, the hotline can be set up at its action center.

The first organizational meeting took place last Dec. 15 to 16 in Manila. Representatives from the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), the Office of the Foreign Affairs Leading Group of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs were also present.

The PCG and CCG meeting was the result of a memorandum of understanding signed in the presence of President Duterte and Chinese President Xi Jinping during Duterte's visit to China last Oct. 18 to 21.

The second organizational meeting and the inaugural meeting of the JCGC is scheduled in February next year here in the country.

— Evelyn Macairan, AP

8 December 2016

MAHILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

Page: 1

Duterte: Invest in PH

Singapore business leaders to benefit from country's improved economy

By ELENA L. ABEN

With an improved peace and order situation that has been rewarded by a gross domestic product (GDP)

of 7.1 percent growth in the first three months of his administration, President Rodrigo Duterte told business leaders in Singapore that the Philippines is open for business "and we welcome what you have to offer."

Trade and Industry Secretary Ramon Lopez said the courtesy call by major banks and investment funds, including Deutsche, JF Morgan, Goldman Sachs, and HSBC, was organized by the group of businessman Ramon

Ang, president and CEO of San Miguel Corp and Petron Corp.

During the meeting, the President invited Singapore businesses "to partner with us as we pursue the development of innovative, job ▶23

◀1

generating and inclusive growth in my country."

"In particular, we are looking at key growth sectors, such as energy and infrastructure," Duterte said.

"This would mean more investments and encouraging competition, putting an end to protectionism in industries that are monopolized. More competition would only mean better services for all," he added.

The President encouraged Singaporean and Singapore-based companies to invest in the Philippines assuring them that his campaign against drugs and criminality have made the streets much safer.

He said China, Russia, and Japan have expressed interest in participating in several infrastructure projects in the Philippines.

The big-ticket items that are up for

grabs, he informed the business group, are power plants, a container port, toll ways and bridges, and special economic zones, all of which are being looked into by our biggest conglomerates, including San Miguel, Ayala, and Metro Pacific.

Improved economy

"Over the last few months, we've improved our peace and order situation. Filipinos today generally feel safer and the crime has remarkably dropped, especially in the urban areas," Duterte said. He explained that the government's war against illegal drugs was necessary to prevent the country from becoming a narco-state which has won broad-based support among all socio-economic classes in the Philippines.

"Much of our growth has largely been fueled by the manufacturing sector which has revived to grow at 6.9 percent, higher

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than the previous averages of 3 and 4," he stated, generating more decent jobs.

Unemployment figures likewise improved to 4.7 percent from 5.4 and 6.5 percent in previous quarters.

Singapore is the Philippines' largest trading partner and the largest source of investments from ASEAN.

The Philippines' attractiveness as an investment economic destination has also been secured with the huge goodwill earned from the President's visits, that generated investment pledges from China, Russia, Japan and Malaysia.

"The key to maintaining our economic momentum is infrastructure. My administration is committed to raise infrastructure spending to 6 to 7 percent of the GDP, focusing investment on the bottlenecks – more importantly in transportation – that

would lower the cost of doing business in the Philippines," he added.

"Our economic and business sector continue to be generally upbeat due to a combination of prudent macroeconomic and promotional trade and investment policies," Duterte said.

"Consumer propensity to spend is helped by generally low inflation, low interest rates. We are determined to cut red tape and make our country more business friendly."

Continued investment

Lopez said multinational firms affirmed their continued business interest in the Philippines citing the country's strong growth.

"The SBF members committed to invest in the country as a show of support to

the Duterte administration," Lopez said. They are also looking at development projects that they can do with their counterparts in the Philippines, like sharing of best practices and experts, he added.

SBF, the apex business chamber that champions the interests of the SG business community in trade, investment and industrial relations, represents 22,500 companies that contribute significantly to the Singapore economy.

Teo Siong Seng, Chairman of SBF, who led the group, was joined by Keppel Offshore & Marine, Singtel, among others.

President Duterte assured the group of protection of their investments, right to repatriate profits, zero corruption and peace and order, that the government is giving priority to. (With a report from Bernie Cahiles Magkilat)

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POLICE FILES

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Marawi blast: Sundalo, 4 pa sugatan

Lima katao kabilang ang isang sundalo ang nasugatan makaraang masabugan ng bomba sa Brgy. Rorogus, Marawi City, Lanao del Norte kamakalawa.

Kinilala ang mga nasugatan na sina Sergeant Adrian Gaon habang sugatan din ang apat na sibilyan na sina Fathma Nawira, 39, guro; Hafi Daluma, 11; Hasbea Daluma, 8 at Adatu Gulam, driver ng motorsiklo.

Ayon kay Lt. Col.

Joselito Pastrana, Commander ng Army's 65th Infantry Battalion na naganap ang pagsabog dakong alas-5 ng hapon habang bumabagtas sa lugar ang convoy na military trucks sa nasabing lugar.

Sinabi ng opisyal na tinamaan ng sharpnel ng Improvised Explosive Device (IED) ang isa sa mga sakay ng military truck habang apat pa kabilang ang driver ng motorsiklo ang nasugatan

sa pagsabog.

Nabatid na dalawang IED na gawa sa C4 na may pako ang ginamit sa pambobomba na ikinasugat ng mga biktima na agad namang isinugod sa Amai Pakpak Hospital.

Inihayag naman ng opisyal na malaki ang posibilidad na kagagawan ng Maute terror group ang pagpapasabog bunga ng opensiha ng militar sa Lanao del Sur upang durugin ang grupo. *Rhoderick Beñez*

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4th CMO set to hold Young Cultural Minority Professionals' Forum

Philippine Information Agency

BUTUAN CITY -- The 4th CMO Battalion, Philippine Army in partnership with the government line agencies (GLAs) will conduct a two-day Young Cultural Minority Professionals' Forum (YCMPPF) this coming December 21 to 22, 2016 at Division Advance Command Post, Barangay Bancasi, this city.

The activity will be participated by the Officers of the Caraga Mindanao Cultural Development Incorporated (CMCDI), an IP youth organization which was organized by the unit and partner government agencies as IP Youth Leaders and Communicators in Caraga region, students leaders and Muslim young professionals.

"This forum is part of empowering and developing the youth leadership potential and transforms them to become responsible citizen and catalyst for peace and development," said LTC Rey Pasco, 4th CMO commanding officer.

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PH keeps distance from US-China row

by AARON B. RECUENCO

The Philippine government opted to keep distance from the issue of confiscation of a United States-owned underwater drone by Chinese authorities in the West Philippine Sea.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana would not comment on the incident that happened Thursday, some 50 miles off the shores of Subic.

"That is between the US and China," said Lorenzana when asked to comment on the issue.

The underwater vehicle was taken around 50 nautical miles (90 kilometers) northwest off Subic Bay late Thursday in a non-violent incident, said Captain Jeff Davis, a Pentagon spokesman.

The event unfolded as the civilian-crewed USNS Bowditch was retrieving a pair of "naval gliders" that routinely collect information on water temperatures, salinity, and sea clarity.

A Chinese Dalang-III class submarine rescue ship then stopped within 500 yards (meters) of the Bowditch

and snatched one of the probes. The Americans safely hoisted the other one back onto their ship.

Davis said he could not recall another time when something like this has happened, and the Pentagon issued a statement calling on Beijing to "immediately" return the probe that it had "unlawfully seized."

The US personnel "were asking over bridge-to-bridge radio to please leave it there," Davis said.

Other than a brief acknowledgment that it had received the message, the Chinese ship did not respond.

"The only thing they said after they were sailing off into the distance was: 'We are returning to normal operations,'" Davis said.

'It's ours'

Washington has issued a formal request through diplomatic channels to ask for the probe back.

"It is ours. It is clearly marked as ours. We would like it back, and we would like this not to happen again," Davis said.

Pentagon spokesman Peter Cook said China had acted unlawfully.

"The UUV (unmanned underwater vehicle) is a sovereign immune vessel of the United States. We call upon China to return our UUV immediately, and to comply with all of its obligations under international law," Cook said in a statement.

Lorenzana said he is not aware that such underwater drone is being used at the West Philippine Sea amid the alliance of US and the country over China's muscle-flexing in the West Philippine Sea.

"We did not know the US is using one in SCS (South China Sea)," said Lorenzana.

The United States has been assisting the Philippines in strengthening its maritime patrol and defense capability on the West Philippine Sea following China's reclamation in some of the disputed areas in the area through joint patrols or military hardware procurement.

Despite an international tribunal's ruling that is favorable to the case

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filed by the Philippines against China, the latter continues its build up in the West Philippine Sea, the recent was the additional deployment of military equipment in one of the reclaimed reefs.

Heightened tensions

Davis said the seized vessel is off-the-shelf technology that is commercially available for about \$150,000. Data it gathers are unclassified and can be used to help submarines navigate and determine sonar ranges in murky waters.

The incident comes as President-elect Donald Trump has repeatedly infuriated Beijing, by questioning longstanding US policy on Taiwan, calling Beijing a currency manipulator and threatening Chinese imports with punitive tariffs.

"This was very likely a highly planned and escalatory move to show China will not take matters lightly when it comes to" Trump said Harry Kazianis, the director of defense studies at the conservative Center for the National Interest.

"Beijing is showing it has the capability to respond in a time and place of its choosing."

Unless it is prepared to ramp up regional tensions, Washington has few options except to ask for the underwater vehicle back.

'Brazen provocation'

Senior Republican Senator John McCain said the United States should not tolerate "such outrageous conduct."

"This brazen provocation fits a pattern of increasingly destabilizing Chinese behavior, including bullying its neighbors and militarizing the South China Sea," McCain said.

"This behavior will continue until it is met with a strong and determined US response, which until now the Obama administration has failed to provide."

The incident comes amid broader tensions in the South China Sea, where China has moved to fortify its claims to the region by building out tiny reefs and islets into much larger artificial islands.

Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam have competing claims in the South China Sea, which is laced with the world's most heavily traveled international trade routes.

While the United States takes no position on sovereignty claims in the South China Sea, it has repeatedly stressed all maritime claims must comply with international law.

The US military has conducted several "freedom of navigation" operations in which ships and planes have passed close to the sites Beijing claims.

Such missions have provoked angry rebukes from China, which accuses Washington of provocation and increasing the risk of a military mishap.

The USNS Bowditch is a research and survey vessel, and does not look like a warship.

The Chinese ship's hull number was ASR-510, the Pentagon said. (With a report from AFP)

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China captures US naval probe in S. China Sea – Pentagon

WASHINGTON – China “unlawfully” seized an unmanned US naval probe in international waters in the South China Sea, the Pentagon yesterday said, a move sure to heighten tensions around Beijing’s military presence in the disputed area.

The underwater vehicle was taken around 50 nautical miles (90 kilometers) northwest off Subic Bay

in the Philippines late Thursday in a non-violent incident, said Capt. Jeff Davis, a Pentagon spokesman.

In Manila, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana yesterday said they are not aware that the US Navy has been using an underwater drone in its oceanographic survey of the South China Sea.

“None. That is between the US and

China. And we did not know the US is using one in SCS (South China Sea),” he added.

The event unfolded as the civilian-crewed USNS Bowditch was retrieving a pair of “naval gliders” that routinely collect information on water temperatures, salinity and sea clarity.

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AFP/PNA

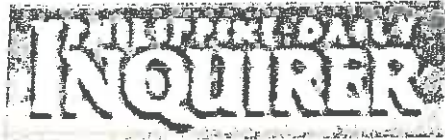
Heightened tensions

Davis said the seized vessel is off-the-shelf technology that is commercially available for about \$150,000. Data it gathers are unclassified and can be used to help submarines navigate and determine sonar ranges in murky waters.

The incident comes as President-elect Donald Trump has repeatedly infuriated Beijing, by questioning longstanding US policy on Taiwan, calling Beijing a currency manipulator and threatening Chinese imports with punitive tariffs.

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NEUTRAL STAND

DRONE SEIZURE DOESN'T CONCERN US, SAYS PH DEFENSE CHIEF

By Cynthia D. Balana
@cynchdbINQ

China's seizure of an underwater glider deployed by a US oceanographic vessel off Zambales province on Thursday should not concern the Philippines, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said on Saturday.

In a text message, Lorenzana refused to comment on the matter, saying he had no prior knowledge about the US using drones to collect unclassified scientific data in the West Philippine Sea.

"That is between the US and China; we did not know the United States [was] using [a drone] in the South China Sea," he said.

The USNS Bowditch said the unmanned underwater vehicle was lawfully conducting a survey in the West Philippine Sea when it was removed by a Chinese warship.

The Pentagon confirmed the incident at a news briefing in Washington, saying this was a serious matter because it involved a US property.

Bonnie Glaser, senior adviser for Asia at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said the glider was seized inside the exclusive economic zone of the Philippines, not China, and appeared to be a violation of international law.

It was not the first time that US drones had been found floating on Philippine waters.

In 2013, a 10-foot orange BQM-74e drone marked "Navy" was found by a Filipino diver off Masbate Island and had been turned over to local navy authorities.

In January and November this year, sea drones washed up on a beach at Masinloc, Zambales. INQ

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INQUIRER

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China seizes US Navy drone off Zambales

WASHINGTON—A Chinese warship has seized an underwater drone deployed by a US oceanographic vessel in the South China Sea, triggering a formal diplomatic protest and a demand for its return, US officials said on Friday.

The drone was taken on Thursday, the first seizure of its kind in recent memory, about 50 nautical miles northwest of Subic Bay, just as the USNS Bowditch was about to retrieve the unmanned underwater vehicle (UUV), officials said.

"The UUV was lawfully conducting a military survey in the waters of the South China Sea," one official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"It's a sovereign-immune vessel, clearly marked in English not to be removed from

the water, that it was US property," the official added.

The Pentagon confirmed the incident at a news briefing and said the drone used commercially available technology and sold for about \$150,000.

No response

Washington has issued a formal request through diplomatic channels to ask for the probe back.

Other than a brief acknowledgment that it had received the message, the Chinese ship did not respond, nor did Chinese officials.

But China's influential state-run tabloid The Global Times said China had already received a claim request for the equipment from the US side. Quoting an unidentified Chinese source,

the paper said "relevant parties from both sides have maintained smooth communication channels, and believe this issue will be smoothly resolved."

Aggressive posture

The seizure will add to concerns about China's increased military presence and aggressive posture in the disputed South China Sea, including its militarization of maritime outposts.

It coincided with saber-rattling from Chinese state media and some in its military establishment after US President-elect Donald Trump cast doubt on whether Washington would stick to its nearly four-decades-old policy of recognizing that Taiwan is part of "One China."

Also this week, a US research group said new satellite imagery

indicated China has installed weapons, including anti-aircraft and anti-missile systems, on all seven artificial islands it has built in the South China Sea.

Mira Rapp-Hooper, a senior fellow in the Asia-Pacific Security Program at the Center for New American Security, said the move was "highly escalatory," and that it was "hard to see how Beijing will justify it legally."

Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam have competing claims in the South China Sea, which is laced with the world's most heavily traveled international trade routes.

While the US takes no position on sovereignty claims in the South China Sea, it has repeatedly stressed that all maritime claims must comply with

international law.

The US military has conducted several "freedom of navigation" operations in which ships and planes have passed close to the sites Beijing claims.

Angry rebukes

Such missions have provoked angry rebukes from Beijing, which accused Washington of provocation and increasing the risk of a military mishap.

The seizure incident is the latest maritime encounter between China and the United States.

In March 2001, the same survey ship was confronted by a Chinese frigate inside China's exclusive economic zone.

After the United States filed a diplomatic protest, the ship returned to the area with an

armed US escort to continue its mission.

In April 2001, a mid-air collision between a US Navy surveillance aircraft and a Chinese fighter jet about 70 miles from China's Hainan island caused the death of a Chinese pilot.

The 24 US crew were detained for 10 days until the US sent expressing sorrow over the Chinese pilot's death.

In March 2009, Chinese ships surrounded and harassed a US Navy mapping ship, the USNS Impeccable, on international waters off China.

Coming within 25 feet of the US vessel, the ships strewed debris in its path. The Impeccable returned to the site the following day, escorted by a guided-missile destroyer. —REPORTS FROM AP, AFP AND REUTERS

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DUTERTE TO SET ASIDE UN TRIBUNAL RULING INVALIDATING BEIJING CLAIMS IN SOUTH CHINA SEA

By Leila B. Salaverria
@LeilasINQ

President Duterte said on Saturday the Philippines would not insist that China recognize an international arbitration court's ruling invalidating its claims to nearly the whole of the South China Sea, despite a recent report suggesting that Beijing was ramping up its militarization in the disputed waters.

"In the play of politics now, I will set aside the arbitral ruling," President Duterte said in Davao City. "I will not impose anything on China. Why? Because the politics here in Southeast Asia is changing."

Mr. Duterte made the remarks when asked if a US think tank report that China installed anti-aircraft and antimissile weapons on its new artificial islands in the disputed waters would affect his perception of Beijing.

The Philippines claims the reefs that were turned by China into man-made islands.

Mr. Duterte, who took office in June, has taken steps to mend relations with China that grew hostile during the time of his predecessor, Benigno Aquino III, over the long-unresolved territorial disputes.

The Aquino administration took the disputes to international arbitration in a move backed by Washington after China seized a disputed shoal in 2012.

kindest soul of all

Mr. Duterte threatened to abrogate a treaty that allowed US troop visitations here after Washington raised concerns over his deadly war on drugs but expressed gratitude to China for offering aid to the Philippines.

"China has the kindest soul

of all," Mr. Duterte said, adding that China had pledged billions in aid, including the construction of another drug rehabilitation facility next year.

Recently, Chinese businessman Huang Rulun funded the construction of a "mega" drug rehabilitation facility inside the military's Fort Magsaysay, which could house up to 10,000 patients.

The Philippines "will never be ready to fight with China," Mr. Duterte said, as he accused the United States of instigating hostilities between Manila and Beijing.

"It is you who is egging [on] a fight there," the President said.

No power

Foreign Affairs Secretary Perfecto Yasay said on Friday that the Philippines had no power to stop Beijing's expansion in the disputed waters.

The Philippines, he said,

Beijing rejected the decision.

Mr. Duterte spoke of wanting to set aside the ruling for the meantime, as he pursued friendship with China.

After his state visit to China in October, Filipino fishermen were granted access to the area around Scarborough Shoal without being harassed by the Chinese Coast Guard.

Chinese Coast Guard ships had blocked access to the area since 2012, and the change of tack came after President Duterte met his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping in Beijing.

The Philippines and China have no formal agreement regarding the area, which both claim as part of their traditional fishing grounds.

Coast guard

The Philippine Coast Guard meanwhile said it was looking to set up a "Joint Coast Guard

Committee" with its Chinese counterpart as both sides met for their first organizational conference last week.

The joint committee would be inaugurated when both sides meet again in February next year, Filipino Coast Guard spokesperson Commander Armand Balilo said.

The Department of Foreign Affairs, the Office of the Foreign Affairs Leading Group of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs took part in the meeting.

It was the first ever meeting of the two sides, during which concerns such as fighting drug trafficking and other maritime crimes, marine environmental protection, maritime search and rescue and capacity building were discussed. —WITH REPORTS FROM JULIE M. AURELIO AND AP INQ



I will not impose anything on China. Why? Because the politics here in Southeast Asia is changing

would just continue to pursue peaceful means to try to prevent China's activities.

The Philippines, under the Aquino administration, had taken China to the Permanent Court of Arbitration after it seized Scarborough Shoal. The United Nations-backed international tribunal eventually ruled in Manila's favor in July, though

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Rebels, ASG told: Go on vacation, let's have peace

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte yesterday urged rebels and the Abu Sayyaf Group to take a vacation for a peaceful Christmas and New Year.

"I'd like to greet everybody, lahat na, the Filipino people, the law-abiding and of course if they find it in their hearts, though this is not really something for the Moro... na we can have a peaceful Christmas. I hope

that you would just, isa d'yan, ang mga Abu Sayyaf, [to] take a vacation," Duterte said during his visit at the Armed Forces of the Philippines' Western Mindanao Command headquarters in Zamboanga City.

Duterte disclosed that he was supposed to make the formal appeal to the rebels and bandit groups in a "good speech" that he was preparing.

"[I'd like] to greet everybody, the communists, the Abu Sayyaf, lahat sila. In behalf of sa taong Pilipino, I greet everybody Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year for all," he said.

The President even promised to treat the rebels and the bandits to a dinner "if they happen to pass by Davao."

He added that the dinner could be arranged by his daughter-in-law, Lovely Sangkula, a native of Jolo.

"So nakikiusap ako sa lahat na can we have a peaceful Christmas? Maybe we can resume fighting some other day," he added.

Even as he asked rebels and the bandits for a truce, Duterte said he will not do the same for criminals, especially drug personalities.

"Yung mga shabu? Bigyan mo ako ng isang platong shabu... ipakain ko. Galit ako sa kriminal, hindi ako galit sa rebolusyonaryo," he said.

Duterte's administration has renewed peace efforts with all the Moro rebel groups, including the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the Moro National Liberation Front.

The government has also revived peace talks with the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army.

Late last month, the President had also said he was ready to talk with the Abu Sayyaf Group.

Aside from the Abu Sayyaf, the military has also launched an intensified offensive against the Maute Group based in Lanao del Sur.

Efren Montano

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AFP conducts Governance Forum Lecture for key officers

Philippine News Agency

In line with its commitment towards positive change, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) conducted a Governance Forum Lecture for its key leaders Thursday.

AFP public affairs office chief Col. Edgard Arevalo said the event was held at the AFP Commissioned Officers Club, Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City.

The activity is part of a series of quarterly lectures in line with the AFP Transformation Roadmap (AFPTR).

"The Governance Forum-Lecture started in January and is part of the many efforts of the AFP in transforming its various commands, units, and offices into a stronger and more credible public institution that is built on good governance," Arevalo said.

The AFP Office of the Strategic Studies and Strategy Management (OSSSM) head Brig. Gen. Paterno V. Morales, spearheaded the event.

"This historic event is a breakthrough to the modernization of the military. Undeniably, our institutionalization inspires us to exert more effort for the betterment of our armed forces," he added.

Meanwhile, Bishop Noel A. Pantoja, Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches chair, was the guest speaker on the final iteration of the forum-lecture.

He also sits as the general secretary of the Philippine Relief and Development Services Inc., which provides humanitarian assistance to the poor and underprivileged communities.

"It takes longer to build something than to demolish something, just the same in the AFP Transformation Roadmap, it may take longer to build, but each person's involvement in the transformation is necessary," Pantoja said.

"With character, competence, and courage, transformation will happen. AFP Transformation begins in the light of every individual. It's not only your dream, AFP 2028 is ours -- world-class Armed Forces," he concluded.

After the lecture, the AFP Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans, led by Major Gen. Guillermo A. Molina Jr, launched the official website of the AFPTR.

The website displays the electronic balanced scorecard of the AFP Chief-of-Staff as well as the other AFP staff offices and units.

The AFPTR website also promotes transparency as it provides easy-access to relevant information needed by internal and external stakeholders such as the AFP Multi-Sector Governance Council (AFP MSGC).

The AFP was declared Performance Governance System (PGS) institutionalized by the Institute of Solidarity in Asia last Nov. 29.

It also won the Silver Trail Blazer Award. The Institutionalization is the fourth and final stage of the PGS which indicates great progress on transparency and good governance.

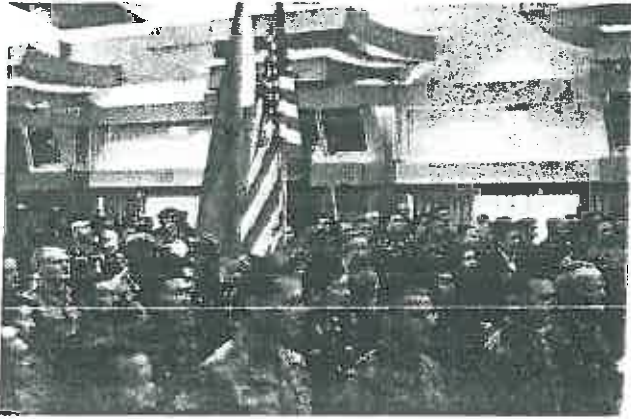
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Army Core Purpose: Serving the people. Securing the land.

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

Duterte threatens to scrap VFA after US-led MCC defers aid grant

Alexis Romero



*U.S. and Philippine military officers stand at attention during the entrance of the colors at the opening ceremony of the annual joint U.S.-Philippines military exercise dubbed Balikatan 2016 (Shoulder-to-Shoulder) Monday, April 4, 2016 at Camp Aguinaldo, in suburban Quezon city, northeast of Manila, Philippines. **AP Photo/Bullit Marquez, file***

MANILA, Philippines — President Rodrigo Duterte has threatened to scrap the Philippines' Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) with the US as he assailed Washington anew for supposedly treating Manila like "garbage."

Duterte made the statement as he was reacting to the decision of the US-led Millennium Challenge Corp. (MCC) to defer a \$433-million funding grant to the Philippines over "concerns around rule of law and civil liberties" under his administration.

"I understand that we have been stricken out of the Millennium Challenge, well good. I welcome it," the president said.

"They (US) do not look at us kindly. We have this huge problem... Actually, we do not need it. We can survive without American money. But you know, America, you might also be put to notice. Prepare to leave the Philippines. Prepare for the eventual repeal or the abrogation of the Visiting Forces Agreement," he added.

Signed in 1998, the VFA allows American and Filipino troops to conduct joint trainings in Philippine soil.

The US has criticized Duterte's brutal war on illegal drugs, which has left more than 4,000 suspected drug offenders dead. Critics said the anti-drug campaign effectively endorsed human rights violations and extrajudicial killings but Philippine officials have denied the allegation.

Angered by the criticisms on his narcotics crackdown, Duterte had said he would review all military agreements with the US and scrap joint drills that, he claimed, were only beneficial to Americans.

Duterte also declared that he would "separate" himself from the US but his subordinates explained later on that he was just stressing the need for a more independent foreign policy.

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

The MCC, which assesses potential recipients using indicators for economic freedom, investment of people and rule of law, deferred the giving of aid to the Philippines amid accusations that the government is setting aside due process to punish drug lords.

Duterte said the US has been treating the Philippines like a "doormat" and "garbage" and has been using aid to impose its will on Filipinos.

"Huwag naman tayong babuyin ng ganun (They should not malign us that way). We have this four million (drug addicts) and you are treated as if you are garbage or a doormat," the president said.

The president's estimate of 4 million drug addicts is not supported by official government data.

"And the Philippines historically is like a doormat because every time that they criticize us, it's always tied to a statement na mawala ang indiong assistant (that the aid given to its assistant will be lost). Sons of b***** You picture us as if we are patay gutom (very hungry)."

Indio is a term used to refer to Filipinos during the Spanish colonial period.

Duterte said the US should just leave the Philippines if it thinks the country is too dangerous. He also chided the US for raising human rights issues while "turning a blind eye" on the Philippines' drug problem.

"If you think that there is crime there because we execute people... So why don't you just leave and if you think that there is extrajudicial killing here—it's a prevalent one, it's a virulent practice, you know. So why are you here? What is your purpose in this Visiting Forces Agreement?"

'China, Russia willing to help'

"We will never be ready to fight with China. It is you who is egging a fight there. We will never fight with Russia. That's too far away and besides, we are friends," he added.

Duterte also cited the US State department's move to halt the sale of some 26,000 rifles to the Philippine National Police because of alleged human rights violations under his watch. He said the Philippines can always source firearms from other sources like Russia and China.

"Russia came forth and said 'no problem.' As I use the word, buy one take one. China is actually, I'll tell you now... China has been communicating with us everyday and I think I think I'll send the Defense secretary. They said the guns are ready," the president said.

He claimed that the military would oust him if he asks them to obey an illegal order.

Duterte is convinced that MCC's decision to defer the giving of aid to the Philippines was a last ditch effort of the Obama administration to undermine him.

"Somebody gave me a document that was passed on to me in Hong Kong, it says about undermining Duterte. Maybe they would agitate, well you know, and I said, God says I am a president. God says you are only President for six months, fine, I'll go," he said.

Duterte noted that incoming US president Donald Trump was not hostile or antagonistic to him.

He (Trump) said that you know, I know that we have a bad fix between our two nations. I said, 'yes sir. And I'm sorry for that, but it is not really your institutions but people there in the Washington DC,'" Duterte said.

He was very nice, very courteous, I could not sense any hostile drift, or even the manner he was saying it ... I'll just wait. I will let Obama fade away and if he disappears then I will begin to reassess."

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Duterte was all praises though for newly-appointed US Ambassador to the Philippines Sung Kim, whom he described as "a very good ambassador" and "very courteous."

'China has the kindest soul'

Duterte said he does not mind losing the MCC grant because China has pledged to provide the Philippines billions in aid.

"China communicated to us. They're giving us 50 billion. So what do I need America for?" he said.

"We are glad that we are freed from proving anything to the United States. We do not need the money. China said they will provide... we will give you the money. So, bye-bye, America and work on the protocols that would eventually move you out from the Philippines."

While he is not inclined to forge new military alliances, Duterte said he would send soldiers to Beijing for training on Chinese weapons.

The Philippines and China are embroiled in a territorial dispute over some areas in the South China Sea (West Philippine Sea), where about \$5 trillion in trade passes through annually. China claims about 90 percent of the area but this is being contested by the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan.

In 2013, the Philippines under President Benigno Aquino III challenged the legality of China's sweeping maritime claim, calling it "exaggerated" and "excessive."

An arbitral tribunal in the Hague ruled in favor of the Philippines last July and declared that China's claim has no legal basis. China has refused to recognize the ruling, saying it was "illegal since Day One."

Duterte had said he would set aside the arbitral ruling "in the meantime" but maintained that he would not bargain with China on the issue.

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Defense dept says unaware of US underwater drone in South China Sea mapping

Philippine News Agency

Department of National Defense (DND) Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said Saturday they are unaware that the US has been using an underwater drone in its oceanographic survey of the South China Sea.

He made the statement when asked about his reaction on the incident involving the People's Republic of China's seizure of a US underwater drone, some 50 nautical miles northwest off Subic Bay, Zambales.

"None. That is between the US and China. And we did not know the US is using one in SCS (South China Sea)," Lorenzana said.

The incident took place Thursday night as the USNS Bowditch was about to retrieve the underwater drone.

<http://www.gmanetwork.com/news>

Duterte gives early Christmas gifts to wounded soldiers in Mindanao

By JESSICA BARTOLOME, GMA News

Wounded soldiers in Zamboanga City were gifted with brand new cellphones and cash by no less than President Rodrigo Duterte on Saturday afternoon.

Duterte gave the early Christmas gifts to the wounded soldiers and their families in his visit at the Armed Forces of the Philippines' Western Mindanao Command Headquarters in the city.

In an interview during his visit, Duterte told reporters that he gave the soldiers money and mobile phones. "Just to ease up their pain and their suffering... Kagaya ng trabaho ko is to visit them tapos magbigay ng konting pera at mga bagong cellphone nila," the President said.

"So bigyan ko sila, mas maganda pa sa inyo," he added.

Duterte reiterated that the government must take care of soldiers for they are laying their lives to protect the Filipino people.

"We should take care of our soldiers. They are giving up their lives for this Republic," Duterte told reporters.

On orders of Duterte, the military intensified its operations against the Abu Sayaf Group and Maute Group in Mindanao.

Earlier this month, a member of the Philippine Army's Scout Ranger Battalion conducting operations against the Maute Group was killed in Lanao del Sur. Several soldiers have also been wounded since the operation was launched against the bandit group last month. —ALG, GMA News

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US alerts PH after China seized its underwater drone off Subic

Rappler

Philippine Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenza says the security cluster has yet to discuss how the Philippines will react to the incident between the US and China that happened within its exclusive economic zone



The Philippines was not aware that the US Navy was operating an unmanned underwater vehicle (UUV) off the coast of Subic Bay until after it was seized by China on Friday, December 16.

"No, we were not (aware). Our embassy in DC was informed after the UUV was seized and was not returned by the Chinese," Lorenzana told Rappler in a text message.

China's action is feared to heighten tension between the two military superpowers in the disputed seas especially after reports that China has installed more weapons on reefs it illegally reclaimed.

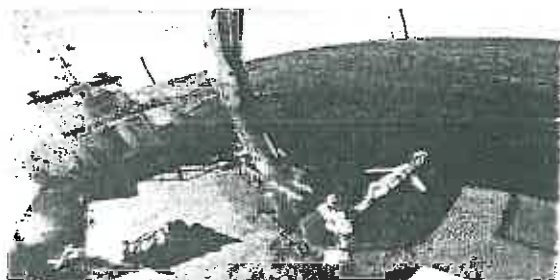
Lorenzana said the security cluster has yet to discuss how the Philippines will react to the incident between US and China that happened inside its exclusive economic zone.

US wants its underwater drone back

Pentagon press secretary Peter Cook said the US Navy was "conducting routine operations in accordance with international law."

The US is calling on China to immediately return the underwater drone, an unclassified "ocean glider" that gathers military oceanographic data such as salinity, water temperature, and sound speed.

According to the Pentagon, the Chinese Dalang-III class submarine launched a small boat that seized the UUV just as US Navy ship USNS Bowditch was attempting to retrieve it off Subic Bay. The US Navy successfully retrieved a second UUV.



YELLOW DRONES. This photo shows the recovery of US ocean gliders off the coast of Scotland. A similar unmanned underwater vehicle was seized by the Chinese Navy off the coast of the Philippines. Photo from the Pentagon web site

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

The US Navy sent radio messages to demand the return of the underwater drone but the Chinese Navy ignored the calls.

"The UUV is a sovereign immune vessel of the United States. We call upon China to return our UUV immediately and to comply with all of its obligations under international law," said Pentagon Press Secretary Peter Cook.

Once the site of a large US naval base, Subic Bay in Zambales province continues to host US naval ships under the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA).

Zambales is also the land mass nearest to Panatag (Scarborough) Shoal, the reef that was practically occupied by the Chinese Coast Guard after a 2014 standoff with the Philippine Navy there. A number of US target drones have been found floating in the area in recent years, too.

Policy shift

The administration of President Benigno Aquino III had counted on the US, the country's oldest and most powerful ally, to help defend its maritime territories against China's aggressiveness. Talks between the Philippine and US militaries back then aimed to allow Americans to build facilities again in the former US naval base.

The US' primary concern is to maintain freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, a multibillion dollar trade route where its cargoes pass through.

Cooperation plans between the Philippines and US changed under the new administration of President Rodrigo Duterte, who has been vocal in his dislike for the US and has declared he wants warmer ties with China.

Duterte had said he wants to scrap both the VFA and EDCA. EDCA is an executive agreement that Duterte may choose to scrap after notifying the US. But VFA is a treaty that only the Senate may scrap.

A possible game changer is the victory of US President-elect Donald Trump who, unlike President Barack Obama, complimented Duterte on his controversial war on drugs.

Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Perfecto Yasay Jr had said the Philippines won't confront China over its weapons in the South China Sea.

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China 'unlawfully' seizes US naval probe in South China Sea: Pentagon

InterAksyon



A Chinese ship and helicopter participate in a search and rescue drill near the Paracel islands in the South China Sea in this July 14, 2016 file photo. REUTERS

China "unlawfully" seized an unmanned US naval probe in international waters in the South China Sea, the Pentagon said Friday, a move sure to heighten tensions around Beijing's military presence in the disputed area.

The underwater probe was taken around 50 nautical miles (90 kilometers) northwest off Subic Bay in the Philippines on Thursday afternoon in a non-violent incident, Pentagon spokesman Navy Captain Jeff Davis said.

The event unfolded as the civilian-crewed USNS Bowditch was retrieving a pair of "naval gliders" that routinely collect information on water temperatures, salinity and sea clarity.

A Chinese Dalang-III class submarine rescue ship then stopped within 500 yards (meters) of the Bowditch and snatched one of the probes. The Americans safely hoisted the other one back onto their ship.

'We did not know'

Sought for reaction to the incident, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said they did not know the Americans had been using drones for the oceanographic survey.

"None. That is between the US and China. And we did not know the US is using one in SCS (South China Sea)," Lorenzana said.

Davis said he could not recall another time when something like this has happened, and the Pentagon issued a statement calling on Beijing to "immediately" return the probe that it had "unlawfully seized."

The US personnel "were asking over bridge-to-bridge radio to please leave it there," Davis said.

Other than a brief acknowledgment that it had received the message, the Chinese ship did not respond.

"The only thing they said after they were sailing off into the distance was: 'We are returning to normal operations,'" Davis said.

Washington has issued a formal request through diplomatic channels to ask for the probe back.

"It is ours. It is clearly marked as ours. We would like it back, and we would like this not to happen again," Davis said.

Pentagon press secretary Peter Cook said China had acted unlawfully.

"The UUV (unmanned underwater vehicle) is a sovereign immune vessel of the United States. We call upon China to return our UUV immediately, and to comply with all of its obligations under international law," Cook said in a statement.

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7th Marine Battalion returns after 10-year deployment to Mindanao

Philippine News Agency

The 7th Marine Battalion, which has been deployed to Mindanao for 10 years, is finally home at the Marine Barracks Rudiardo Brown in Taguig City for retraining and refurbishment.

Philippine Marine Corps spokesperson, Capt. Victor Donque, said the battalion had helped secure the 2007 ASEAN Summit, and had sent personnel for security and anti-terrorism operations in central and western Mindanao.

The unit arrived in Manila early this week.

"They were instrumental in most of the anti-terrorism campaigns of the government against the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), and remnants of the Jema-ah Islamiyah hiding in the islands of Mindanao. Their latest deployment was to NPA-influenced areas," he said, referring to the New People's Army.

The 7th Marine Battalion lists among its major accomplishments the combat operations against ASG terrorists in the provinces of Sulu and Basilan, neutralization of some personalities identified as kidnap-for-ransom groups or lawless elements in Cotabato City and Palimbang, Sultan Kudarat, and its participation in the anti-drug campaign.

"They also performed significant non-traditional roles, such as civil-military operations that have gained superb appreciation from the natives, as well as stakeholders at said areas," he added. Donque said the unit is to undergo a six-month retraining and refurbishment before its next deployment.

While undergoing training, the 7th Marine Battalion will serve as a component of the Philippine Marine Ready Force in Metro Manila.

"Along with the training program are booth lectures and practical exercises on administrative matters, military tactics, simulated military planning, live-fire maneuvers, marksmanship and rigid physical fitness activities. Part of the refurbishment is the issuance of new sets of combat clothing, individual equipment, mobility assets, communications equipment, issuance of the newly acquired R-4 rifle, integration of Marine Corps Operating Concept, and civil military operations," Donque added.

Unit inspection and de-briefing will be conducted prior to a short rest and recreation, which will be given to the soldiers to relieve them of stress from combat fatigue and to rejoin them with their families and loved ones.