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OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS
NEWS CLIPPINGS

26 December 2016

Monday

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BusinessMirror

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BusinessMirror



TODAY'S WEATHER

DECEMBER 26, 2016 | MONDAY
TYPHOON "NINA" (NOCK-TEN)
LOCATED AT 250 KMS. EAST OF
VIRAC, CATANDUANES
(As of 5:00 AM - Dec. 25, 2016)

3-DAY EXTENDED FORECAST

	DEC 27 Tuesday	DEC 28 Wednesday	DEC 29 Thursday
METRO MANILA	23 - 29 °C	24 - 30 °C	24 - 31 °C
TUGUEGARAO	23 - 28 °C	24 - 27 °C	25 - 28 °C
LAOAG	24 - 30 °C	25 - 30 °C	24 - 30 °C
BAGUIO	14 - 23 °C	17 - 22 °C	16 - 22 °C
SBMA/ CLARK	25 - 30 °C	27 - 30 °C	27 - 30 °C
TAGAYTAY	21 - 28 °C	19 - 27 °C	22 - 28 °C
LEGAZPI	25 - 28 °C	26 - 29 °C	26 - 30 °C
PUERTO PRINCESA	24 - 30 °C	25 - 30 °C	25 - 31 °C
ILOILO/ BACOLOD	26 - 31 °C	27 - 30 °C	27 - 30 °C



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26 December 2016

Page: 1

Rody vows gifts: Food, jobs, safety

By ALEXIS ROMERO

President Duterte vowed to create jobs, grow the economy and make the country safer in his first ever Christmas message as chief executive.

Duterte urged the nation to reflect on the significance of the birth of Christ, as he proffered an olive branch to all threat groups.

"The true essence of Christmas is, thus, built on the message of both peace and generosity. Peace remains as one of my main thrusts in governance. We, in the government, are walk-

ing the extra mile to offer the olive branch of peace to all," Duterte said in a statement released on Christmas Eve.

"Generosity, on the other hand, is sharing what we have with the poor, the downtrodden, and the marginalized. As your President, I will bring food on the table, create more job opportunities, and make our people feel safer and more

comfortable," he added.

The Duterte administration has resumed peace talks with communists, three years after the negotiations bogged down because of disagreements over the demand to release rebel leaders with criminal cases.

The President has also vowed to work for a lasting

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political settlement that will be acceptable to all Moro groups to put an end to the decades-old conflict in Mindanao.

Duterte's economic team is also planning to pull nine million Filipinos out of poverty by boosting agriculture and manufacturing and by investing in infrastructure.

He is hopeful that Christmas will serve as an inspiration in bringing lasting peace and in

attaining inclusive economic growth. He also called on Filipinos to "join hands to build a peaceful and progressive Philippines."

"Our celebration of Christmas is the world's longest – a testament that we, Filipinos, are a peace-loving nation. Christmas is also a season of giving and sharing. This wonderful feeling is seen in the faces of our hopeful children,

and reflects in the hearts of our loving and cheerful family members and friends," the President said.

"I join the Filipino nation in celebrating this year's most festive season. As we gather with our family and loved ones, let us reflect the significance of the birth of Christ. The Nativity story of more than 2,000 years ago is

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observed by the Christian faith as a season of peace," he added.

Duterte said he wishes peace, order and progress for the Philippines this yuletide season.

The Philippines is a predominantly Christian country with more than 85 percent of the population adhering to the faith.

Santa to cancer kids

In Davao City, President Duterte played Santa Claus to cancer-stricken children at the "House of Hope," a dormitory-like two-story building within the Southern Philippine Medical Center (SPMC) here on Christmas Eve.

The President has been doing these rounds for the longest time, never missing the chance to spend the holidays with sick children at the transient home.

The President brought holiday cheer to the children through food and toys, as he always did in the past years as mayor of Davao City.

The President hugged and



A cancer-stricken child kisses President Duterte during his visit to the Southern Philippine Medical Center's Children's Cancer and Blood Disease Unit in Davao City on Christmas Eve.

talked with each of the young patients.

Dr. Leopoldo Vega, SPMC executive director, said the children always look forward to Duterte's visit, even when he was still mayor and more so now that he is the country's President.

"There is nothing new to it. He has always been doing that. Playing Santa to the children with cancer. That is

the soft side of the President, as he also visits the ward section, where patients happen to be confined at Christmas time," Vega said.

The President is a "permanent fixture" at the SPMC, visiting patients in the other wards of the hospital.

The House of Hope has served about 2,700 patients and 4,000 caregivers, since it began in 2007. The patients,

mostly from outside Davao City, stay in the dorm-like facility and are provided each with two caregivers, who make sure the facility is kept clean.

When he was still Davao mayor, Duterte also converted a house in Villa Margarita Village here into another halfway house for cancer-stricken children in 2011.

The House of Hope also has similar facilities in Barangay Bangkal and in Tagum City in Davao del Norte.

Vega said the President looked elated to see SPMC's new Cancer Institute building, which was inaugurated two weeks ago.

Vega said the President also promised to help establish an orthopedic institute and an eye center in the SPMC.

"We are working on making the SPMC come up with specialized services as we already have a Mindanao Heart Center and soon we will have other areas of specialization," Vega said.

SPMC is Mindanao's largest public hospital.

— With Edith Regalado

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

26 December 2016



Page: 1

Christmas Eve attack: 16 wounded in Cotabato

By JOHN UNSON

NORTH COTABATO – Sixteen were hurt in a grenade explosion in the vicinity of a Catholic church in Midsayap town at 9:30 p.m. Saturday, as people were attending a mass to celebrate Christmas.

Investigators said two men on a motorcycle lobbed the grenade at the entrance of the Archdiocesan Shrine of Sto.

Turn to Page 3

Christmas From Page 1

Niño. Father Jay Virador of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate was then giving communion to churchgoers.

Acting Gov. Shirlyn Macasarte condemned the attack as she called on residents to help probers identify the culprits and on the police to build an airtight case.

President Duterte reportedly visited the town for a quick briefing with local officials. Several FM stations in the province reported that the Chief Executive also inspected the church surroundings.

Some residents posted on Facebook photos of the presidential chopper hovering over the town proper past 3 p.m. yesterday.

Supt. Romeo Galgo Jr., spokesman for the Regional Police Office-12 based in General Santos City, said one of the victims was SPO4

Johnny Caballero, a member of the Midsayap municipal police.

Sources from the town's peace and order council said the perpetrators actually targeted the police pickup truck parked near the church entrance. The grenade hit the hood and fell on the concrete pavement before it went off.

"The explosion caused a commotion inside the church," said 36-year-old worshiper Tina Monde.

Fr. Virador said he was giving communion when they heard a loud explosion outside the worship site, forcing many churchgoers to duck for cover. Others scampered in different directions.

Hurt in the incident were Roger Pedrosa, Ronald Celis, Chesser Rosete, Jofer Asis, Amel Silvano, Jenelyn Silvano, Ejimar Loquiz, Princess Capunday, Jessa Mae Banlawi, Little Joy Singco, Jonel Orquiola, Kent Steven Pacquiao, Arissen Bagot, Ronald Duga and Caballero.

They were immediately rushed to different hospitals by responding policemen and barangay officials.

Gov. Mujiv Hataman of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao told reporters via text message that he sympathizes with the victims even as Midsayap is not a component area of ARMM.

Midsayap, a booming agricultural town in the first district of North Cotabato, is 41 kilometers northwest of the ARMM's regional capitol in Cotabato City.

"Whoever were behind the attack do not have religion. They are savages," Hataman said in his text message.

Local officials are convinced the outlawed Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, which boasts of allegiance to the Independent State of Iraq and Syria, was responsible for the attack.

Army intelligence sources said the attack could be in retaliation for the arrest of five

Maute terror group members in Barira town in Maguindanao last Thursday.

One of the five arrested terrorists, a former policeman named Jessy Vincent Original, had confessed to his involvement in the Sept. 2 Davao City bombing that left 15 people dead and injured more than 60 others.

The five Maute extremists were searching for a secluded area in Barira to hide six vehicles they planned to rig with improvised explosive devices when they were intercepted by policemen and the Army 37th Infantry Battalion.

Since early this month, the Midsayap municipal police have been on heightened alert because of the bombing threats made by the Maute group and its ally, the BIFF.

The Maute group is based in hinterland towns in the first district of Lanao del Sur while the BIFF operates in the second district of Maguindanao and nearby towns in North Cotabato.

– With Roel Pareño

✓

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Page. 3

Army, police officer, 2 others linked to QC shooting incident fall

QUEZON City policemen arrested four persons implicated in a shooting incident, including an Army and a police officer.

The suspects were identified as Ardulkadil Kadir Usman, 52, a staff sergeant of the Philippine Army and a resident of 17-A Basilan St.; PO1 Raheb Usman, 31, assigned at Caloocan City Police Station and a resident of 13-A Basilan St.; Thong Kusain, 45, security guard, of 10 Basilan St.; Maguid Pasandalan, 35, driver, of 112 Lanao St., all of Salaam Compound, Bgy. Culiati, QC.

Slain during the shooting were Abdushakur Bawaduli, alias "Tang", 31, of 30 Basilan St., 504-G, and Benjie Katol, 24, of 122, Libyan St., also of Salaam Compound.

The wounded victims were identified as Thong Jadid Galmak, 21, of 10 Basilan St., Dimar Adjah Jamiri, 29, of 11 Maguindanao St., Salaam Compound, and PO3 Nelson Abejo Jr., 38, a member the of responding QCPD-SWAT team.

Report said the incident happened on Dec. 23, 2016 at about 12:30 p.m. in front of 17 Basilan St., Salaam Compound.

Police said Usman allegedly shot victim Bawaduli while the other three suspects -- PO1 Raheb Usman, Thong Kusain, Maguid Pasandalan and Benjie Katol -- positioned themselves a few meters away as lookout, also shot the victim.

Usman proceeded to the balcony of

the second floor of one of the houses and fired indiscriminately, hitting three men, who were walking along Basilan Street.

A QCPD SWAT team, together with PS-3 operatives, responded to the scene. During the shootout with the suspects, PO3 Nelson Abejo Jr. was hit on the right side of his neck and shoulder. He was rushed to New Era Hospital and was later transferred to PNP General Hospital.

After a brief negotiation between PS-3 commander Supt. Mendoza with the suspects, Usman, PO1 Usman and Kusain voluntarily surrendered, while suspect Pasandalan was arrested along Basilan St. Katol was killed during the shootout.

Recovered at the crime scene were 17 fired cartridge cases for cal. 45, three fired cartridge cases for cal. 5.56mm, five fired cartridge cases for cal. 40, seven fired cartridge cases for cal. 9mm, 12 deformed fired bullets, a fired bullet and a metal bullet jacket for unknown caliber of firearm.

Evidence recovered at the second floor of the house at 13 Basilan Street were a bushmaster cal. 5.56mm loaded with 26 live ammunition, a sarcilmas 12-gauge shotgun with six live ammunition, a cal. 45 1911 Taurus with one magazine loaded with six live ammunition, two magazine for Glock cal. 40 with 18 live ammunition and three magazines for cal. 5.56mm loaded with 87 live ammunition.

Melnie Ragasa-Jimena

24 December 2016

The
Standard
DEFINING THE NEWS

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AFP hails hike in Medal of Valor cash award

THE Armed Forces of the Philippines said the decision of President Rodrigo Duterte to increase the gratuity of Medal of Valor awardees from P25,000 to P75,000 effective next month shows the Chief Executive's appreciation for the sacrifices and bravery shown by Filipino soldiers in the battlefield.

AFP public affairs office chief Col. Edgard Arevalo said this will inspire soldiers to perform even better.

"This shows the Chief Executive's appreciation of the heroism and gallantry of our soldiers in the field, especially those whose bravery have earned them the Medal of Valor, our highest decoration and honor in combat,"

Arevalo said.

"This also serves as a challenge for our troops to do their utmost in securing the peace and fighting enemies of the state," he added.

The Medal of Valor is the nation's highest combat medal, having being awarded to only 40 military personnel, of which 17 are still alive.

Of those who are still alive, six are still in the active service, namely Col. Bartolome Bacarro, Col. Custodio Parcon, Col. Cirilito Sobejana, Brig. Gen. Noel Buan, Lt. Col. Herbert Dilag, and Capt. Robert Salvador.

"This is an early Christmas gift. It will be a big help for our families," Bacarro said. PNA

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Pahina. 2

'71 probinsya communist insurgency free na' – AFP

Umaabot na sa 71 lalawigan sa bansa ang nalinis na sa hanay ng karahasang inihahasik ng mga rebeldeng New People's Army (NPA).

Sinabi ni Armed Forces of the Philippines Chief of Staff Gen. Eduardo Año sa ulat nito kay Pangulong Rodrigo

Duterte sa pagdiriwang ng ika-81 taong anibersaryo ng Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) kamakailan na maituturing na "conflict manageable" at handa na sa pagsulong ng kaunlaran ang mga lalawigan nalinis sa matitinding karahasan at terorismo na inihahasik ng mga rebeldeng komunista.

Ayon kay Año, sa taong 2016 lamang ay

nasa anim pang probinsya ang na-deklarang kontrolado na ang communist insurgency na kinabibilangan ng Agusan del Norte, Surigao del Sur, Agusan del Sur, Compostela Valley, Quezon at Occidental Mindoro.

Sinabi ni Año na sa pagdiriwang ng AFP anniversary ay kanilang maipagmamalaki ang patuloy na tagumpay sa misyong maipatupad at mapanatili ang matibay na alyansa para sa ikatatamo ng kapayapaan.

Idinagdag pa ng opisyal na ipagpapatuloy nito ang pagharap sa mga hamon para higit pang mapatatag ang

AFP. (Joy Santos)

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MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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BIFF blocks Cotabato to GenSan highway for 3 hours

GUINDULUNGAN, Maguindanao (PNA) – More troops were deployed along portions of the Cotabato-General Santos City highway in Maguindanao after elements of the outlawed Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) blocked part of the major thoroughfare in Barangay Baganin Guindulungan town for about three hours at dawn Saturday.

The blockade, which was set up at around 3 a.m., was taken down by the BIFF bandits at the break of dawn after sensing that government troops were about to arrive from Shariff Aguak and from Guindulungan's town proper.

When they arrived, soldiers from the First Mechanized Infantry Battalion and 19th Infantry Battalion found three trailer trucks and a private car that were left in the middle of the road, and may have been used as blockade by about 40 BIFF armed men.

One of the truck drivers, Isah Said, told reporters he and other motorists were told to go down their vehicles by men in fatigue uniform at about 3 a.m. "I thought they were soldiers so we abide only to be told to stay beside the highway if we want to survive," he said. "They took our ignition keys and cell-

phones."

"We were told not to run or we will be shot," Said also said, adding that other passenger vans were stopped but told to return.

Initial reports said two trailer trucks, a 10-wheeler truck and a car traversing the national highway were flagged down by armed men. The four drivers and their companions were ordered by the armed group to vacate the vehicles and to just stay on the side of the road.

One of the drivers, who refused to give his identity for security reasons, said the armed men pointed their guns at them.

"It was a case of sabotage for the holidays," said Chief Inspector Zukarnain Kunakon, Guindulungan town police chief who personally accompanied soldiers at the site after sunrise.

"Every start or end of special events like Ramadhan and Christmas, they do that, (it was) good now nobody was shot," Kunakon said.

Abu Misry Mama, speaking for the BIFF, admitted his group was behind the blocking of the highway. "We have information Army intelligence officers will pass by," he said. "There could have been encounters had any intelligence officer pass by," he added.

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Thousands flee 'Nina'

DARAGA, Albay — Babies, toddlers and old people were loaded onto military trucks in pouring rain in the Philippines on Sunday as tens of thousands fled the path of a powerful typhoon barreling towards the disaster-prone archipelago.

Officials warned of storm surges up to 2.5-metres (eight-feet) high, landslides and flash floods as Nina closed in on the Bicol peninsula and nearby islands.

The typhoon threat, on one of the biggest holidays in the mainly Christian nation, triggered mass evacuations that officials said could eventually displace hundreds of thousands of people.

One provincial governor offered roast pig at evacuation centers to entice people to forsake celebrations at home.

"We went around with megaphones and gave instructions to our people to eat breakfast, pack and board the military trucks," Alberto Lindo, an official of Alcala, a farming village of 3,300 people near the active Mayon volcano, told AFP.

About 100 babies, toddlers, parents and elderly people were the first to be trucked off to a school some seven kilometres (four miles) away as rain and strong winds shook trees at midday.

"There are large ash deposits on the slopes (of Mayon). Heavy rain can dislodge them and bury our homes in mud," Lindo added.

Philippine and international weather

services said Nock-Ten, named after a bird found in Laos, was set to hit Bicol on the south of the main island of Luzon on Sunday evening.

'Forced' evacuation

The US Joint Typhoon Warning Center has forecast sustained winds of 231 kilometres (144 miles) an hour and gusts of 278 km when Nock-Ten makes landfall at the now-isolated island province of Catanduanes, home to 250,000 people.

The government has forced more than 12,000 residents to move away from the Catanduanes coast after the state weather service warned the landfall could be as early as 6:00 pm (1000 GMT), said provincial vice governor Shirley Abundo.

"Please evacuate now while you still have time," she said in a live appeal on ABS-CBN television.

In Camarines Sur province near Catanduanes, governor Miguel Villafuerte said on his Facebook page that nearly 90,000 residents have been evacuated as part of his goal to achieve "zero casualty".

In another post on Twitter, the governor hinted at the difficulty of convincing people to recognize the approaching danger amid the revelry.

"Please evacuate, we will offer roast pig at the evacuation centres," he tweeted.

AFP

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Suspect in BIR exec's slay falls

By MELNIE

RAGASA-JIMENA

QUEZON City Police District (QCPD) director Chief Supt. Guillermo Lo-renzo T. Eleazar has announced the arrest of the alleged gunman in the killing of a BIR executive.

Eleazar identified the suspect as Allan Manalo, 43, who claimed to be a CAFGU active auxiliary, and a barangay banod,

of Sampaloc St., Bgy. Batasan Hills, QC.

Investigation showed that CIDU operatives, led by SPO3 Roberto Ramirez, were conducting an anti-criminality patrol on board a police mobile on Dec 23, 2016 at 3:40 p.m. on Hill St., Bgy. Batasan Hills, QC, when they were flagged down by a concerned citizen, who reported that an unidentified man was indiscriminately firing a gun.

The operatives imme-

diately responded and saw a man wearing a green Army shirt and short pants, carrying a black sling bag and holding a gun.

The policemen approached the man and asked to present proof of his authority to possess and carry a firearm but failed to produce any so he was arrested.

The CIDU operatives recovered from the suspect's possession a cal. 45 Colt pistol with de-

faced serial number, with magazine loaded with two live bullets, a hand grenade, a firearm holster and 58 live ammunition for cal. 45.

The operatives also recovered at the scene three fired cartridge cases for cal. 45, believed to be fired from the confiscated gun found in Manalo's possession.

When the suspect was subjected to tactical interrogation, several investigators of CIDU no-

ticed the resemblance of his face with the artist's sketch of the suspect in the killing of Jonas Amora, BIR Region 8 director. To confirm their suspicion, they called-up the witnesses, who upon seeing the suspect, positively identified him (Manalo) as the one they saw on Nov. 21, 2016 outside the Filinvest East Subdivision whom they followed as he exited from the Toyota Innova of Amora.

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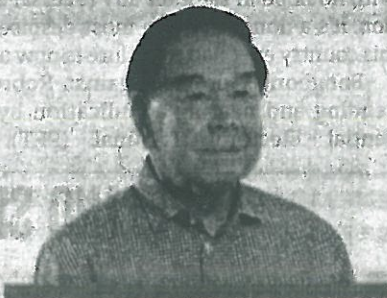
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From barracks to battlefields

The date was Dec. 7, 1941. Cadets of the Philippine Military Academy (PMA) were in parade formation, two battalions of 300-strong. It was the traditional Sunday evening parade being carried out in a pageantry of color and precision, accompanied by martial music. That particular Sunday was cloudless, with cold winds blowing across the parade ground, causing spectators to wrap their coats a bit tighter than usual.

The cadets were in full dress uniform with highly polished buttons, buckles, and breastplates. Their officers sported black feather plumes and red silk sashes with sabers at their side. It was a sight that always elicited admiration from an appreciative audience, many of whom were visitors from the lowlands.

No one among the cadets had the premonition that this would be their last performance not just for the year, but also for the next few years of Japanese occupation.



REVEILLE

RAMON J. FAROLAN

Commonwealth Act No. 1, also known as the National Defense Act, was promulgated by the National Assembly of the Philippine Commonwealth on Dec. 21, 1935. Among many other provisions, the act prescribed a four-year course of instruction for cadets at the PMA. Under the new curriculum, two batches—class 1940 and class 1941—graduated and were commissioned in the Philippine Army.

Incidentally, for reasons not clear to me, the above date Dec. 21, is observed as AFP Foundation Day. How can legislation enacted by a Commonwealth government loyal to a foreign entity be the basis for the establishment of our armed forces? But then, there are a number of issues concerning the history of our military organization that remain controversial. We live with the existing situation even as we continue to search for the truth.

In December 1941, the academy had four classes undergoing training. The first class cadets, members of class 1942, were scheduled to graduate in March 1942 just three months away.

On Monday morning following the Dec. 7 Sunday evening parade, the cadet mess hall's radio blared out the news of an attack on Pearl Harbor: "War, the Japanese have bombed Pearl Harbor." The report was sketchy, stating only that carrier-based bombers and fighters had attacked Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, home of the US Pacific Fleet. That same morning, Camp John Hay was bombed. We were at war with Japan.

INSTEAD, THEY WERE BEING SHIPPED OUT TO BATTLEFIELDS IN BATAAN TO FIGHT AGAINST A DEADLY AND EXPERIENCED ENEMY FORCE

The cadet corps was hastily assembled and in a convoy of civilian buses and six army trucks, it proceeded to Manila. On the way, the convoy would be strafed by low-flying fighter planes with the red ball insignia on their wings and fuselage. The corps arrived at the campus of the University of Santo Tomas, where the chief of staff of the Philippine Army, Maj. Gen. Basilio Valdes, accompanied by the PMA superintendent, Col. Fidel Segundo, met the group. Here the adjutant read the general orders that spelled out their status in the armed forces.

The members of the two upper-most classes of 1942 and 1943 were commissioned as third lieutenants of the Philippine Army effective Dec. 13, 1941. The chief of staff then administered their oaths of office and gave a short talk of advice and encouragement. The new officers were granted a few days' leave to bid goodbye to loved ones, but were ordered to report to their assignments not later than Dec. 21. In happier times, their thoughts were focused on graduation and, possibly, marriage to cadet sweethearts. Instead, they were being shipped out to battlefields in Bataan to fight against a deadly and experienced enemy force.

The members of the two lower classes of 1944 and 1945 were given indefinite leaves of absence. In effect, they were disbanded and sent home. Many members of these disbanded units would fight as volunteer-enlisted men in Bataan. After the surrender of Bataan and Corregidor, they would head for the hills, organizing guerrilla units to continue resistance. Among them were Eleuterio Adevos, Juanito Ferrer, and Frisco San Juan.

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In the case of classes 1942 and 1943, many would serve as platoon leaders and distinguish themselves in fierce actions that took place during the war. Assigned to the First Regular Division was a member of class 1942, Lt. Eliseo D. Rio. In his book "Rays of a Setting Sun," Rio relates one particular encounter known as the "Battle of the Pockets." (Pockets refer to enemy units that were trapped within sectors controlled by allied forces.)

"In the 'Battle of the Pockets' we had pulled off what undoubtedly was a signal and decisive victory. For the first time in the war, we had engaged the enemy in a major offensive operation and wiped out an entire battalion of about a thousand men. Moreover, we estimated the enemy must have suffered at least another thousand casualties in the waves of 'banzai' attacks they hurled against our frontlines in their desperate attempts to rescue their trapped countrymen."

Rio also recalls that "leadership at the critical levels of command were provided mostly by the young Third Lieutenants who, a little over two months before, were jolly and care-free cadets of the Philippine Military Academy... somehow with their training and fortitude they were transformed overnight into highly effective leaders on the fields of battle."

The PMA would close its doors and suspend operations on Dec. 21, 1941. It would reopen six years later, on April 1, 1947, at Camp Henry T. Allen, Baguio City.

In March 1948, formal graduation ceremonies were held for 72 members of class 1942. It was six years past the original scheduled date. At the belated graduation rites, 18 members of the class were absent. They lay in peace at their final resting places in Bataan and elsewhere around the country. While they had close relatives representing them at the ceremonies, their assigned places were left vacant so that "their spirits could be with us to partake of a ritual that for them came a bit too late."

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End goal: just and lasting peace

President Duterte's election campaign slogan "change is coming" raised hope among Filipinos that, under his presidency, their lives would improve. People imagined basic socioeconomic rights long denied them—e.g., three meals a day, decent housing, regularization for contractuales, work for the unemployed and underemployed. They looked forward to building peace by bringing justice to communities and people.

Though improvements and changes have been felt in the recent months, the people have mainly been served promises and rhetoric. They still long for the Duterte administration to deliver more basic services, to further streamline access to government offices, to vigorously pursue peace-building, and to engage in development that upholds the dignity and rights of the Filipino people.

But even as President Duterte talks about peace and has gone as far as to open formal negotiations with the National Democratic Front (NDF), the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police, under his command, repeatedly sow fear and terror in various rural and urban communities. Encampments in schools and villages, as well as military operations in the guise of humanitarian services, show the continuing pursuit of Oplan Bayanihan in the countryside. State forces are violating their own unilaterally declared ceasefire, even as Mr. Duterte insists that there must be a bilateral ceasefire agreement.

Even worse, the President refuses to recognize the obligation of the Philippine government (GRP), under previously signed GRP-NDF agreements, to release political prisoners. They are not criminals, gangsters or drug lords; they are committed to justice and peace work, they champion democratic rights. Some of them may have taken the revolutionary path—but this option requires both courage and principles, and they seek to put an end to the people's suffering and to oppressive imperialism and state violence.

It is disturbing that in the barely six-month-old Duterte presidency, the discourse on human rights has become unnecessarily controversial. Rather than hearing out the true concern of Filipinos, Mr. Duterte prefers to be on the defensive as the people assert their rights. When people decry and demand accountability for the escalating extrajudicial killings linked to the so-called war on drugs, he meets them with steely indifference. Meanwhile, police officers allegedly involved in drugs have been

COMMENTARY

NARDY SABINO

given every support to defend themselves. Even more, policemen alleged to have committed drug-related EJKs have been presented as if they are beyond criticism and above the law.

President Duterte must respect both the people's socioeconomic, civil and political rights. No amount of berating or belittling their importance will change the fact that the people's basic rights are non-negotiable.

We enjoin all church people to relentlessly uphold and protect the rights of the defenseless, as we affirm that genuine peace can only be made possible by affording justice to those who have been denied justice.

We call on all victims of human rights violations and their families to bravely make public the abuses and atrocities committed against them and their loved ones by state forces. We must speak out if we want to make sure that the rights of the people are not violated. Human rights are not freely given; we must fight for them.

We urge civil society and local communities to seek the truth and refrain from blind allegiance, and to insist on the truth from the state and from the victims themselves. We must not feel contented staying indifferent and passive in our comfort zones, when the vulnerable and the marginalized are falling prey to human rights violations. We must fight; we must dare to struggle—for our human rights and for the rights of those who cannot speak for themselves.

We call on President Duterte to seriously work for peace and to respect human rights; these two are inseparable. A just and lasting peace is only possible when human rights issues are properly addressed.

The faith community, at any time in history, must be able to expose the state's rebellious defiance of God's rule. Let us all be reminded that each person is created in the image of God, with holiness and dignity. Therefore, as we uphold and defend human rights, we proclaim the words of the Prophet Isaiah (32:14): "Because everyone will work for justice, there will be peace and security forever."

Nardy Sabino is the general secretary of Promotion of Church People's Response.

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'I have given my word, I am not going back' KA BART: FROM 'WARRIOR' TO 'PEACEMAKER'

Special Report On CPP anniversary

By PAUL M. GUTIERREZ

AS the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) celebrates its 48th anniversary today, it is not mere speculation to assert that it is one with the rest of the country in entertaining the possibility of a final peace agreement being signed with the government within the term of Pres. Rodrigo Duterte. Page 6

KA BART...

From Page 1

Aside from the country's top communist leaders headed by CPP chairman Benito Tiamzon, another ranking communist leader who is in a position to express this new-found optimism is none other than Tirso 'Ka Bart' Alcantara, the former spokesman and "commander" of the 'Melito Glor Command' (MGC), the main fighting force of the CPP's 'New People's Army' (NPA) operating in Southern Tagalog.

Background

Up to the middle of 2000, the military concedes that "STR" (Southern Tagalog Region), where Ka Bart holds sway since the late '70s as NPA "chieftain," is the "strongest" among the country's regions where the CPP-NPA operates.

With the MGC's growth seemingly unstoppable, the name of Ka Bart and his exploits took on the form of "folk legend" not only among the rural folks but also, among "activists" and "mass leaders" who all "revere" him and, among local officials, who all "feared" him.

Due to the danger this proximity of the growing MGC poses to the security of the nation's capital and the established order, the military, under President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, designated Southern Tagalog as part of its own "NPA" (national priority area) under 'Oplan Bantay Laya II' that targeted for "pacification" the northern, central and southern parts of Luzon.

As such, majority of the military's and the entire government's resources in suppressing the CPP-NPA were poured into the region during the latter part of the Macapagal Arroyo administration.

By the time Ka Bart was captured on January 4, 2011 in Lucena City, Quezon, the military, this time under 'Oplan Bayanihan' under Pres. Benigno Aquino III, had already boasted that the provinces of Cavite, Laguna, Batangas and parts of Rizal, Quezon and the island of Mindoro, have all been "cleared" from "communist infestation" and are now considered "peace and development ready."

"I give my word, I won't go back"

Privately, the military considers the capture of Ka Bart, now 63, as one of their "major" accomplishments, conceding that he has given the military a "big headache" the whole time that he has been commanding the NPA forces in Southern Tagalog.

Wounded near his buttocks after trying to shoot it out with his military captors, Ka Bart would spend nearly two years-20 months-in solitary confinement ("bartolina") inside the restricted compound of the Philippine Army's 'Intelligence Service Group' (ISG) inside Fort Bonifacio.

Indeed, while still recuperating at the Army hospital inside the camp from his bullet wound, a platoon of soldiers, armed to the teeth, were encamped just outside the hospital as an added security measure.

Slapped with at least 49 criminal cases rang-

ing from murder to arson, Ka Bart conceded that had it not been for the peace initiative by Pres. Rodrigo Duterte, a key component of which was freeing key leaders of the CPP-NPA like him for the peace talk, he is not likely to taste freedom, albeit temporary, again.

"Kung hindi sa peace talk (of Pres. Duterte) hindi na siguro ako makakalaya," he said, matter of fact. By his own reckoning, he has been behind bars for "5 years, 11 months and 8 days" before being set free for the peace talks.

But what would it be for him and other rebel leaders? "Temporary" liberty as granted by the court while the peace talk is ongoing?

Or, would it mean taking the opportunity to go back to living "underground" and reassume his preeminent role as CPP-NPA leader in Southern Tagalog?

Here, Ka Bart also revealed that his "comrades" have been pressing him to "go back" to the armed revolutionary movement because he is "needed" but he refused.

"Nagbigay na ako ng aking salita; hindi na ako babalik, bagaman ang 'puso' ko ay nasa kanila (underground armed revolutionary movement), iba na ang 'trabaho' ko ngayon, sa usaping pangkapayapaan na," he said.

Ka Bart said he made the "promise" even to the three different court judges who have been hearing his assortment of criminal cases and who asked him of his intention before allowing him to join the peace talks.

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Pahina. 4

Permanenteng ceasefire sa CPP-NPA-NDF, MILF at MNLF



Ngayong araw na ito, Disyembre 26, ang ika-48 anibersaryo ng Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) na siya ring araw ng kapanaganan ni Mao Zedong na kilala bilang chairman ng Communist Party of China na unang partido komunista sa Asya na nagtagumpay sa kanilang armadong rebolusyon at nakapagtatag ng unang sosyalistang republika noong Oktubre 1, 1949.

Kabilang ang CPP sa patuloy na sumasalig sa Kaisipang Mao Zedong at sa katunayan ay kaa-rawan ng ama ng People's Republic of China ang napili ng mga

lokal na grupo ni Jose Ma. Sison para pormal na itatag ang "reestablished" CPP.

Base na rin sa akdang Philippine Society and Revolution na isinulat ni CPP founding chairman Sison (a.k.a. Amado Guerrero), mas angkop sa Pilipinas ang mga teorya ni Mao hinggil sa protracted people's war at istratohiyang "surrounding the cities from the country sides" dahil sa pagiging atrasado ng agrikultural na ekonomiya ng bansa gaya ng sa China noong dekada 30 hanggang 40.

Sa kasalukuyan, ang CPP at ang armadong hukbo nitong NPA ang bukod tanging rebolusyonaryong kilusan sa buong mundo na patuloy na tumatalima sa teorya ni Mao hinggil sa digmang bayan at pakikidigmang gerilya.

Sa ika-48 anibersaryo ng CPP, mahigit dalawang henerasyon na ng mga rebolusyonaryo ang nailuwal ng digmang bayan sa Pilipinas na wala pa ring katiyakan kung kailan magkakaroon ng lohikal na konklusyon.

Pitong presidente na rin ang dinaanan ng CPP mula sa diktador na si Ferdinand Marcos hanggang sa kasalukuyang Presidente Rodrigo Duterte at marami na rin ang nagtatanong kung hanggang kailan pa tatagal ang matagalang digmang bayan na isinusulong ng CPP, kasama ang armed wing nitong New People's Army (NPA) at political arm na National Democratic Front (NDF).

Sa ilalim ng administrasyong Duterte, malaki ang posibilidad na magkaroon ng permanenteng tigil-putukan sa pagitan ng Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) at NPA dahil na rin sa positibong itinatakbo ng usapang pangkapayapaan sa pagitan ng mga negotiating panels ng gobyerno at ng NDF.

Magandang senyales ang deklarasyon ni President Rody ng holiday ceasefire hindi lamang sa CPP-NPA kundi maging sa Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) at Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) ni Nur Misuari.

Ipinahayag ni Duterte ang kanyang unilateral holiday ceasefire sa pagdiriwang ng ika-81 anibersaryo ng AFP sa Camp Aguinaldo noong Disyembre 22. Tininyak ng Pangulo na walang magaganap na mga military operations mula Disyembre 23-27 at Disyembre 31-Enero 3, 2017.

Ito ang naging pahayag ni President Duterte: "To the NPA or the CPP, although you did not declare any cessation of hostilities somewhere, I would like to invite everybody. leave your arms where they are now and you can come down to the city or wherever you live; you visit your family. I would like you to come down and be with your family on Christmas Day. I guarantee you that there will be no arrests, no oppression, none of this. And if you come face to face with a soldier of the Philippines, my soldier, shake hands with each other or if you do not want to, just don't look." (SUNDAN SA PAHINA 5)

OUT... mula sa pahina 4

Nakasalalay sa kahinatnan ng peace talks sa pagitan ng CPP-NDF at gobyerno ni Duterte ang pagkakaroon ng permanenteng ceasefire sa pagitan ng AFP at NPA. Gayundin sana sa mga grupo ng MILF at MNLF na nasa yugto na rin ng pakikipag-usap ng kapayapaan sa pamahalaan.

Just and lasting peace ang pinakamahalagang legacy na puwedeng iwanan ni Pangulong Duterte sa mga susunod na henerasyon nang sa gayon ay hindi na nila danasin ang hirap ng pagkakaroon ng giyera sibil sa pagitan ng mga rebelde at puwersa ng gobyerno.

At kung magkakagayon ay puwedeng magkatotoo ang linya ng kantang pamasko na nagsasabing "Araw-araw ay magiging Pasko lagi." Sana nga.

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