

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



ARMY

Serving the people. Securing the land.

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OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS NEWS CLIPPINGS

04 February 2016

Thursday

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

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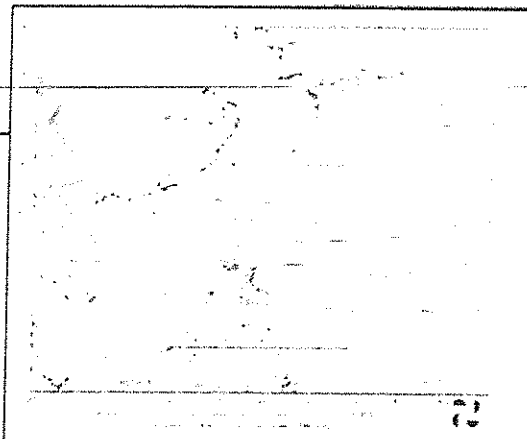
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FEBRUARY 2016

RPMM 030600
AREA SYNOPSIS AND 24-HOUR SHIPPING FORECAST
BEGINNING 031200



SYNOPSIS: STRONG TO GALE FORCE WINDS ASSOCIATED WITH THE NORTHEAST MONSOON PREVAILING OVER THE SHIPPING AREA NORTH OF ONE EIGHT NORTH X SCARBOROUGH AREA NORTH OF ONE SEVEN NORTH X MODERATE TO STRONG EASTERLIES TO NORTHEASTERLIES PREVAILING OVER MOST OF THE FORECAST AREA PD

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CENTRAL PHILIPPINE AREA NORTH OF ONE THREE NORTH X CLOUDY SKIES WITH LIGHT RAINS X WINDS NORTHEASTERLY UP TO ONE FIVE METERS PER SECOND X SEA MODERATE TO ROUGH NORTHEAST X

REST OF CENTRAL PHILIPPINE X SOUTH PHILIPPINE X PARTLY CLOUDY TO CLOUDY SKIES WITH ISOLATED RAINSHOWERS OR THUNDERSTORMS X WINDS EASTERLY TO NORTHEASTERLY UP TO ONE THREE METERS PER SECOND X SEA MODERATE TO ROUGH EAST TO NORTHEAST X

INLAND X MINDANAO X SULU AREA NORTH OF ONE ZERO NORTH X CLOUDY SKIES WITH LIGHT TO MODERATE RAINS AND ISOLATED X WINDS NORTHEASTERLY UP TO ONE ONE METERS PER SECOND X SEA MODERATE TO OCCASIONALLY ROUGH NORTHEAST X

REST OF SULU X MORO X PARTLY CLOUDY TO CLOUDY SKIES WITH ISOLATED RAINSHOWERS OR THUNDERSTORMS X WINDS NORTHEASTERLY UP TO ONE ZERO METERS PER SECOND X SEA SLIGHT TO MODERATE NORTHEAST EXCEPT DURING THUNDERSTORMS X

PREPARED BY: JSG

END OF FORECAST

CHECKED BY: GMQ

04 February 2016

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

Page: 1

Renewed fighting feared

Without BBL, MILF might go to war again – Sulu solon

By NONOY E. LACSON

ZAMBOANGA CITY – The failure of the national government to complete the peace accord with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) might push the largest secessionist group in the country today to “go again into war” with government authorities in Mindanao, a congressman warned Tuesday.

Sulu 1st District Rep. Habib Tupay Loong said “we cannot allow war to prevail as an option for the government and the Bangsamoro people to settle their conflict as it will only bring death and destruction to the nation and will only divide the people of Mindanao.” ►4

Renewed fighting feared ◀1

But Loong said he cannot stop the Bangsamoro people if they opt to traverse the dangerous and destructive path of war to preserve their religion, protect themselves, and recover their ancestral homeland after Congress failed to pass the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL).

The congressman from Sulu expressed hope that the Bangsamoro will not opt to return to the battlefield and start a shooting war to pursue their aspirations.

In a privileged speech he delivered at the Lower House last Monday, Rep. Loong said the Bangsamoro people went to war more than 43 years ago to liberate themselves from internal colonization, injustices, and discrimination.

He said the moros are ready to die for the cause of their people, their faith, and their homeland, because to them such death is a blessed one, according to Islamic teachings.

Loong stressed that Islam is a religion of peace, the reason the Bangsamoro people sincerely accepted the challenge to negotiate and enter into peace agreement with the Philippine government which ended in failure.

He said Congress failed to pass the BBL because of differences in belief among members of the House of Representatives.

But Loong emphasized that he was sure, each one of them (congressmen), has the best interest of the nation in their heart but in spite of their best intention,

they cannot reconcile their differences of belief.

According to Rep. Loong, most congressmen failed to provide the legislative support necessary to finally end the Bangsamoro secession problem and bring peace and unity in Mindanao.

Loong added that government cannot continue to stretch and exhaust the patience of the “oppressed people to wait and hope” because waiting and hoping have their “ultimate time limits.”

As former rebel leader of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), which has reconciled with the Philippine government, he believes that the “Bangsamoro problem is not a constitutional problem, but a political problem which should be solved politically.”

Loong claimed that after all efforts have been exerted, the BBL failed to pass at the Lower House.

"I am sad that, after more than 17 years of arduous negotiation between the Philippine government and the MILF, the BBL, as an instrument of peace, congressmen failed to pass it," he said.

Loong said the passage of BBL was also adversely affected the unfortunate Mamasapano incident on January 25, 2015.

On that fateful day, Loong said, 44 commandos of the PNP Special Action Force were killed during the misencounter with the elements of the MILF, Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), and armed civilians in Mamasapano, Maguindanao.

The PNP-SAF commandos were on a secret mission on that day to arrest or neutralize wanted Malaysian terrorist and bomb-maker Zulkifli Abdir, alias Marwan.

The unfortunate incident led some

congressmen to believe that MILF cannot be trusted as partner in fostering peace, Loong said. The Mamasapano incident adversely affected the views and opinions of the legislators that eventually led to the non-passage of the BBL.

With the failure of the 16th Congress to pass the BBL, Senate President Franklin Drilon said whoever wins in the May, 2016 elections should give priority to the stalled discussions on the proposed law and eventually pass the measure that would ensure long-term peace in Mindanao.

"I would urge whoever is elected President - and I think it makes a lot of sense for him or her - to pursue this peace process and bring it to conclusion," Drilon said in an interview over ANC Headstart. (With a report from Hannah L. Torregoza)

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Samar soldiers get new assault rifles

CATBALOGAN CITY – Soldiers belonging to the 20th Infantry Battalion (IB) have been issued new assault rifles as part of the Army's modernization program.

Maj. Gen. Jet Velarmino led the distribution of Remington R4 assault rifles to the soldiers, led by Lt. Col. Hilarion Palma, at Openiano Field here yesterday.

"One of the most important elements of a strong democratic country is a strong and reliable armed forces... It is imperative that soldiers are equipped with modern military hardware and provided with advanced military training to successfully perform its mission," Velarmino said in his address to the troopers.

"Lighter yet powerful, gas-operated and with a trigger mechanism with fire selector and safety button, this weapon ideally designed for troops on the ground especially those in the frontlines," Velarmino said, referring to the R4 rifles.

The Armalite and baby Armalite rifles previously issued to the soldiers will be recalled and turned over to the Army's reserve command and members of the Citizens Armed Force Geographical Units.

At least 24,300 R4 rifles have so far been distributed to Army units while 19,866 are undergoing ballistic tests. – Ricky Bautista

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Gov't forces hunting down Bukidnon plantation attackers

BUTUAN CITY – Government security forces on Wednesday are hunting down the suspects who attacked a food company by setting on fire farming equipment then destroying a packing center, and 600 fully-grown banana trees in Bukidnon province on Tuesday, a sketchy report reaching this city yesterday said.

Elements of the Valencia City Police Station (VCPS) and the 403rd Infantry (Peacemaker) Brigade are now pursuing the suspects who are believed to be members of New People's Army (NPA), armed

wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines.

Attack helicopters of the Philippine Air Force's (PAF) strike wing of the Tactical Operations Group (TOGs) have also been deployed to extend air cover to the pursuing government troops.

The new attack of Sumifro Philippines Incorporated by suspected NPAs damaged a crop-sprayer truck worth ₱8 million in the outskirts of Valencia City, police report said.

The suspects also burned down four 10-wheeler trucks and the

packing house of DOLE Philippines at nearby Panantukan, also in Bukidnon province.

No one was hurt during the attacks in Valencia and Panantukan, police report added.

Last week, NPAs belonging to guerilla-Front Committee 6 of the CPP-NPA North Central Mindanao Regional Committee (NCMRC) carried out two separate attacks and destroyed heavy equipment belonging to Del Monte Philippines Inc. and Lapanday Pineapple Plantation Company at Hagwaon, Gabunan and Impalambong areas,

all in Malaybalay City.

According to police and military reports the perpetrators damaged a mega spray truck of Dole Phils., Inc. and also destroyed two bulldozers of Del Monte Phil., Inc. Another boom spray owned by Lapanday Pineapple Plantation Company was put a-blaze by the suspects.

Declassified intelligence sources said these companies suffered the ire of the NPAs because of their continuous refusal to give in to their demands for revolutionary tax. (Mike U. Crismundo)

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POLICE FILES

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2 NPA todas sa engkwentro sa CamSur

PATAY ang dalawang miyembro ng New People's Army (NPA) sa naganap na engkwentro sa pagitan ng militar sa Bato, Camarines Sur kahapon.

Inaalam pa ng mga awtoridad ang pagkakakilanlan ng dalawang nasawing rebelde.

Sa report na nakarating sa Camp Aguinaldo, 12:50 ng tanghali nang maka-engkwentro ng mga elemento ng 2 Infantry Battalion ang may 10 mga rebelde sa Brgy. San Isidro, Bato.

Nagsagawa ng operation ang mga elemento ng 2IB Bravo Company sa pamumuno ni 1LT Estaris nang makatanggap ng report na may mga armadong grupo na umiikot sa nasabing Barangay.

Habang nagpapatrulya ang mga sundalo ay nasabat ang mga rebelde at nagsimula ang bakbakan.

Ang engkwentro ay tumagal ng ilang minuto na nagresulta sa pagkasawi ng dalawang rebelde habang tumakas naman ang ilan sa iba't ibang direksyon.

Narekober ng mga sundalo ang apat na M16 rifle sa pinangyarihan ng engkwentro.

(Mark Obleda)

Army sergeant shoots self after firing at businesswoman in Zamboanga City

By: Julie Alipala

or Julie S. Alipala

Inquirer Mindanao

02:54 PM February 3rd, 2016

AMBOANGA CITY—An Army sergeant fatally shot himself after firing at a businesswoman in Barangay (village) Malagutay here last Tuesday evening, the police said Wednesday.

Superintendent Luisito Magnaye, the city police director, said both the suicide and his victim were in critical condition at the Brent Hospital.

Major Filemon Tan Jr., spokesperson of the Western Mindanao Command, said the incident took place in Katatagan Mutual Homes around 8 p.m. last Tuesday.

Magnaye said businessman Eriinda Aizon, 52, a resident of Barangay Pasonanca, earlier went to Master Sergeant Arnold Cudal's house to collect the money the soldier owed her.

However, instead of paying, Cudal, who was assigned to the Western Mindanao Command's Adjutant's Office, shot her instead. Cudal was reportedly under the influence of liquor when Aizon went to his house.

Aizon was hit on the shoulder and in the abdomen, according to Magnaye.

"After committing the crime, Cudal shot himself in the head," Tan said.

The .45 caliber pistol used by Cudal had been recovered along with five empty shells, a live ammunition and two slugs. *RAM*

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114 M-113A2 units to be commissioned Thursday

From the Philippine News Agency (Feb 3): 114 M-113A2 units to be commissioned Thursday

The Mechanized Infantry Division (MID) on Thursday will formally receive and commission the 114 M-113A2 armored personnel carriers (APCs) acquired through the US Excess Defense Articles (EDA).

This was disclosed by Army spokesperson Col. Benjamin Hao in an interview Wednesday.

The first 77 units were shipped on December 9, 2015 while the remaining 37 units were delivered on December 14, 2015.

The 114 M-113A2 will be formally turned over to Army commander Lt. Gen. Eduardo Ano who will then hand it to MID head Major Gen. Edgar Gonzales during short ceremonies in Camp O' Donnell, Capas, Tarlac Thursday.

All weapons, radios and other equipment of these APCs are installed, making them mission-capable.

"These equipment will be brought down the line to complete the Table of Equipment (TOE) (of all MID battalions) and will enhance our speed (of deployment) and our personnel protection," the Army spokesperson said.

The MID has five mechanized battalion with the theoretical TOE of 36 armored vehicles each.

The EDA Program grants excess US military equipment, without cost, to qualified allied countries.

The transfer is a result of a formal request made by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to assist in their defense modernization efforts.

The M-113A2 was developed to provide a survivable and reliable light tracked vehicle that allows troops to be brought forward under armor for dismounted operations.

Commissioning of these vehicles will greatly boost the numbers of the 343 armored vehicle-strong MID.

The AFP virtually got these additional armored assets for free saved for the shipping costs which amounted to PHP67.5 million and refitting of .50 caliber machine guns to the APCs.

<http://www.pna.gov.ph/index.php?idn=1&sid=&nid=1&rid=853530>

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Army honors soldier injured in encounter

From the Visayan Daily Star (Feb 3): Army honors soldier injured in encounter

The Army's 3rd Infantry Division commended a soldier, who was injured during an encounter with suspected New People's Army rebels linked to the killing of an unarmed member of a Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit in Himamaylan City, Negros Occidental, recently.

Private First Class Ronald Dejilla, a member of the 11th Infantry Battalion, was conferred the Wounded Personnel Medal by Brig. Gen. Harold Cabrereros, 3ID commander, at Camp Peralta Station Hospital in Jamindan, Capiz.

The medal is awarded to members and civilians employed by the Armed Forces of the Philippines, who got injured in combat with enemy of the state.

Lt. Col. Jonathan Gayas, 3rd Civil Military Operations Battalion chief, said Dejilla is just one of the dedicated soldiers of the 3ID who continue to secure and protect the populace from lawless elements.

Gayas said the 3ID leadership also ensures that the sacrifices of its personnel are recognized and the wounded is given the best medical care.

Dejilla and his colleagues figured in an encounter with NPA rebels who had killed CAFGU member Uldarico Lumahan Jan. 16 in Himamaylan City.

<http://www.visayandailystar.com/2016/February/03/negor4.htm>

3ID 'Transformation Roadmap' supporters recognized

From the Visayan Daily Star (Feb 3): 3ID 'Transformation Roadmap' supporters recognized

Members of the Army's 3rd Infantry Division Multi-Sector Advisory Board were given recognition Monday for their continued support in promoting continuity, sustainability and shared responsibility for the 3ID Transformation Roadmap.

Brig. Gen. Harold Cabrereros, 3ID commander, awarded the certificate of recognition to Dr. Julius Drilon, chief of the Corazon Locsin Montelibano Memorial Regional Hospital in Bacolod City, Roberto Montelibano of PRISM Export Inc., Iloilo Rep. Jerry Trefias, Dr. Luis Sorolla Jr., president of West Visayas State University, Isabel Grace Villegas - president/founder of Kayang Kayang Mission International, Ana Burgos - director of the National Commission on Indigenous People Region 6, John Patrick Onggao - youth representative for Region 6, Toni June Tamayo - director of TESDA Region 6, Capiz Gov. Victor Tanco, and German Dollete of the Office of Disaster Coordinator, West Visayas University.

Lt. Col. Rey Tiongson, 3ID spokesman, said that Cabrereros thanked the MSAB members for encouraging the concept of shared responsibility in good governance, fostering continuity of policies and programs, providing expert opinion and advice on program execution, and helping generate additional resources that contributed to the attainment of the goals of the 3ID Transformation Roadmap.

The 3ID MSAB was organized September 9, 2014, with Trefias as its chairman and with members from key sectors of society in Western Visayas and the Negros Island Region.

Since it was organized, Tiongson said the 3ID MSAB held four meetings that resulted to the formulation and realization of projects, such as the donation of an ambulance to Camp Peralta Station Hospital, conduct of two batches of Computer Hardware Servicing NC II trainings to 3ID personnel and dependents, developing a Performance Survey on 3ID by external stakeholders through the academe (West Visayas State University), and the donation of 32 fishing boats to victims of typhoon Yolanda in Iloilo.

<http://www.visayandailystar.com/2016/February/03/negor3.htm>

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Army remains focused on attaining lasting peace

From the Philippine Information Agency (Feb 3): Army remains focused on attaining lasting peace

The Philippine Army vows to continue its effort to attain lasting peace.

Major Ray Tiongson, Public Affairs Office head of the 3rd Infantry Division, Philippine Army said that with the leadership of 3ID Commander Brig. General Harold Cabreros, they are committed to work together to secure and advance the gains in peace and security in the countryside.

This, he said, is possible through the concerted effort of the government troops, including those from the Philippine National Police and other stakeholders.

Tiongson said that last year, 67 members of the New People's Army, 44 of whom were from Panay Island and 23 were from Negros Island, have abandoned their armed struggle and joined the mainstream society.

In addition, six NPA members were arrested through the AFP-PNP joint enforcement operations and there were also four body counts as a result of the encounters.

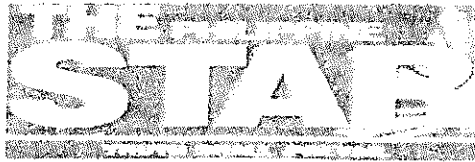
On the other hand, Cabreros has reminded all the unit commanders to remain focused on securing and advancing peace and security and adhere to the principles human rights and rule of law.

He also called on them to enhance partnership with the stakeholders in order to cultivate the culture of peace that will renounce armed violence.

<http://news.pia.gov.ph/article/view/991454485882/army-remains-focused-on-attaining-lasting-peace>

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Cops stand by drug raps vs Marcelino

The Philippine National Police-Anti-Illegal Drugs Group (PNP-AIDG) yesterday stood by its drug charges against detained Marine Lt. Col. Ferdinand Marcelino.

In preliminary investigation hearing at the Department of Justice (DOJ), the PNP-AIDG sought the indictment of the former Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) official for conspiracy in the manufacture and possession of illegal drugs under Republic Act 9165 (Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002) in its reply submitted to investigating

Senior Deputy Prosecutor Theodore Villanueva.

Marcelino denied the allegations last week and submitted his counter-affidavit. He insisted he was in the storage facility where P256 million worth of shabu was seized for a covert operation as a member of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (ISAFP).

In an earlier hearing, Marcelino submitted a certification from Intelligence and Security Group of the Philippine Army showing Marcelino is sharing intelligence information on alleged

involvement of Army personnel in illegal drug trade from September to December last year.

The PNP-AIDG, however, argued that Marcelino failed to prove his claim because he did not produce his mission order.

Marcelino was arrested on Jan. 21 with Chinese Yan Yi Shuo by joint operatives of PNP-AIDG and PDEA in the storage facility in Manila where they seized 64 kilos of shabu. He was sitting on a couch when the agents arrived.

The preliminary investigation has been concluded and the case submitted for resolution.

- Edu Punay

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ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Rebel leader surrenders

CAMP DIEGO SILANG, La Union – A rebel leader surrendered to the police here on Tuesday.

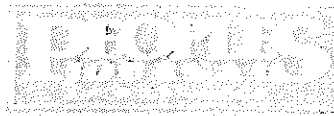
Manuel Arpid, alias Ka Manuel, was the political affairs officer of the New People's Army operating in the Ilocos and Cordillera regions, said Senior Superintendent Angelito Dumangeng, La Union police chief.

Arpid turned over an Armalite rifle. He said he decided to surrender because he felt he has not accomplished anything since he entered the movement in 1980.

Dumangeng gave assurance that rebel returnees would receive financial support through the Comprehensive Local Integration Program and other programs of the Departments of the Interior and Local Government and Social Welfare and Development.

– Jun Elias

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CA approves promotion of 29 military officials

By Bernadette E. Tamayo

TWENTY-NINE promoted military officials yesterday received their confirmation from the powerful bicameral Commission on Appointments (CA) but seven government officials, including Foreign Affairs spokesman Charles Jose, failed to get theirs after Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile blocked their nomination.

Enrile invoked Section 20 of the CA Rules which "automatically" suspends the deliberation of a candidate's confirmation before the bicameral committee. Among those who were not confirmed was Celia Anna Faria, the Appointments Secretary of President Benigno Aquino. He appointed her as ambassador to Spain. When Section 20 is invoked, it is non-debatable.

Enrile invoked Section 20 against the confirmation of Isabel Dasalla-Agito as commissioner of the Commission on Audit for a term expiring on Feb. 2, 2018; Nieves Osorio as commissioner of the Civil Service Commission (CSC) for a term expiring on Feb. 2, 2020; Charles Jose as ambassador to Malaysia; Denis Lepatan, as ambassador to Norway, with concurrent jurisdiction over Iceland, Denmark, Finland, and Sweden; Celia Anna Faria as ambassador to Spain; Uriel Norman Garibay as ambassador to Kenya with concurrent jurisdiction over Burundi, Union of Comoros, Malawi, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, Tanzania, Uganda, South Sudan, and as permanent representative to the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat); and Lilybeth Deapera as ambassador to Chile with concurrent jurisdiction over Peru and Ecuador.

Asked why he blocked the appointment of the five ambassadors to their next assignment, Enrile said that it should be the "next president" of the Republic who must make the new appointments, and not President Benigno Aquino who is set to step down from office on June 30. The next national elections will be held on May 9, 2016.

On the other hand, the military officials who got the CA nod were: Lt. Gen. Tanalgo, Lt. Gen. Glorioso Miranda, Lt. Gen. Mayoralgo dela Cruz, Maj. Gen. Arnold Ratael Depakakibo, Maj. Gen. Job Yococo, Maj. Gen. Benjamin Madrigal Jr., Rear Admiral Bayani Gaerlan, Rear Admiral Rafael Mariano, Rear Admiral Jorge Amba, Brig. Gen. Noel Clement, Brig. Gen. Ronnie Evangelista, Brig. Gen. Robert Arevalo, Brig. Gen. Dinoh Dolina, Brig. Gen. Arnel dela Vega, Brig. Gen. Geiry Amante, Brig. Gen. Rodel Mauro Alarcon, Brig. Gen. David Diciano Sr., Brig. Gen. Neha Valmonte, Brig. Gen. Gener del Rosario, Commodore Francisco Gabudao Jr., Commodore Danilo Rodelas, Col. Jonathan Gabor, Col. Harold Anthony Pascua, Col. Armand Arevalo, Col. Consolito Yecla, Col. Gerudel Dellosa, Capt. Adrin Doctor, and (reservist) Col. Raul Hernandez.

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POLICE FILES

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DND: US army facility, itatayo na sa CDO

KINUMPIRMA ni Secretary Voltaire Gazmin ng Department of National Defense (DND) na itatayo na ng United States (US) forces ang kanilang army facility sa dating Lumbia Domestic Airport sa lungsod ng Cagayan de Oro nitong taon.

Ito ang hayagang pag-amin ni Gazmin nang dumalo ito sa 46th founding anniversary ng Philippine Army's 4th Infantry Division na nakabase sa Camp Evangelista sa lungsod.

Sinabi ng kalihim na sa oras na makompleto na ang mga dokumento ay agad umanong sisimulan ng Es-

tados Unidos ang pagpatayo ng kanilang pasilidad sa lungsod.

Kaugnay nito, pinakalma ni Gazmin ang mga residente ukol sa itatayong US military facility at iginiit na walang dalang banta ng seguridad ang kanilang presensya.

Katunayan ay mapapabilis lamang ng Amerika ang kanilang ipapaabot na humanitarian assistance and disaster relief lalo na kung hagupitin ng kalamidad ang bansa.

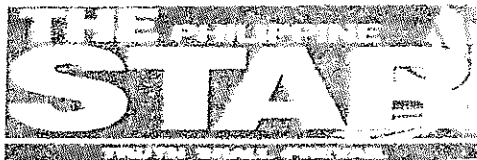
Sa ilalim ng Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA), papahintulutan ng Pilipi-

nas ang gobyerno ng Amerika na makadala ng kanilang defense equipment at maraming iba pa na mismo sila ang mayroong kontrol.

Kinampihan naman ni 4th ID commanding officer Maj/Gen Oscar Lactao ang pahayag ni Gazmin kung saan magbibigay umano ng karagdagang seguridad pabor sa Pilipinas laban sa China ukol sa isyu ng West Philippine Sea.

Una nang umani nang magkahalong reaksyon ang plano ng gobyerno mula iba't ibang sektor na ipagamit ang airfield ng Lumbia ng tropang Kano.

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US earmarks \$66 M for 8 Phl camps under EDCA

By PIA LEE-BRAGO

The US Congress has earmarked \$66 million for the construction of military facilities in the Philippines under the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA), Ambassador Philip Goldberg told a media forum yesterday.

"Let me point out that we have about \$66 million in foreign military funding in process for the Philippines and we expect that there will be additional sources of funds for both carrying out EDCA to military construction funds and also to increases in what we call the maritime security initiative," Goldberg said at the Pandesal Forum in Quezon City.

"So we will work through all of those figures and also working with our Congress, which of course you have to deal with as well in terms of what the Philippines may bring to the table," he said.

The ambassador also pointed out there would be no new military base under EDCA.

"EDCA is designed to support what the Philippines is trying to do in terms of building a minimum credible defense, in terms of modernizing and equipping its armed forces," he added.

He cited US assistance to the Philippine Coast Guard for the establishment and operation of a National Coast Watch Center.

Japan and Australia are also helping the Philippines as the country embarks on building a minimum credible defense system.

Joint patrols

Goldberg also said the US is open to the possibility of conducting joint patrols with the Philippines in the South China Sea. The Philippines calls its side of the waters within its 200-mile exclusive economic zone the West Philippine Sea.

"I'm not going to pre-judge what we're going to do or when we're going to do it, whether we're going to do it with the Philippines or with others. But we do discuss those principles with the Philippines and so I'm not discounting that possibility," he said.

"But we're not going to discuss that beforehand because it's our view that we have every right under international law to exercise freedom of navigation in the South China Sea/West Philippine Sea and we will continue to do so," he pointed out.

When asked if the US would have to deal with restrictions under EDCA for its planned joint patrols, Goldberg said, "I don't think there are any limitations on what the US can do."

But he clarified that EDCA itself was not designed to address the maritime disputes between China and its smaller

neighbors, particularly the Philippines.

The effort, he said, is to help the Philippines develop a dependable maritime security program.

"I don't want to announce publicly what those steps will be exactly and I'm not going to announce anything about joint patrols. I'm going to say that we'll continue with freedom of navigation operations," Goldberg said.

Aircraft landing

Manila protested when a commercial Chinese aircraft landed recently on one of several artificial islands Beijing has built on the Spratlys, and officials say China has essentially declared an air defense identification zone over the sea by issuing "provocative" challenges to Philippine military flights in the area.

Two US warships have sailed by China-claimed islands in the Spratly and Paracel island chains since October.

Tensions have risen in the last two years after China built islands on disputed reefs in the Spratly Islands chain that China's neighbors fear could be used to threaten their territories.

China and Taiwan have nearly identical claims to almost the entire South China Sea while the Philippines, Viet-

nam, Malaysia and Brunei say parts of the sea belong to them. The US does not claim any part of the territory but says it has interest in the peaceful settlement of the disputes and in freedom of navigation in waters critical for world trade.

"We seek the best possible relationship with China but we would also like to see the engagement of the entire region on solutions that are rules-based and not unilateral," the ambassador said. Forging of a code of conduct in the area "to us is the way to go," he added.

The Philippines and the US have committed to coordinate closely on the implementation of the EDCA.

Such commitment is embodied in the 2016 Joint Statement of the US-Philippines Ministerial Dialogue in Washington last month signed by Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert del Rosario, Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin, Secretary of State John Kerry and US Defense Secretary Ashton Carter.

Appeal vs EDCA

Meanwhile, militant lawmakers have asked the Supreme Court (SC) to reconsider its ruling last month upholding the legality of EDCA.

In a motion for reconsid-

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eration, petitioners led by Bayan Muna party-list Reps. Neri Colmenares and Carlos Zarate asked the high court to reverse its decision and instead declare EDCA unconstitutional.

Insisting that EDCA is a treaty that needs Senate concurrence, the petitioners said the 10 justices in the majority ruling erred in declaring EDCA as an executive agreement.

"The clear provisions of the Constitution were disregarded, in favor of a stretched-out argument to expand the powers of the President. The decision lacks legitimacy, especially in light of the Senate's demand to submit EDCA for deliberation by the legislature," they argued.

The militant lawmakers also insisted the agreement would set the stage for the reestablishment of US military bases in the country despite clear prohibition under the Constitution and the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA).

They added EDCA is no guarantee of immediate US help in the event of a direct confrontation with China.

"We cannot expect the US to fly to our side the moment confrontations escalate to defend our home front. No such promise has been made,

nor will be fulfilled," they stressed.

"If the SC does not reverse its decision on EDCA, we will repeat the errors and horrors of our military bases experience," petitioners claimed.

The majority decision penned by Chief Justice Ma. Lourdes Sereno ruled that EDCA is not constitutionally infirm as alleged by petitioners.

The SC rejected the arguments of petitioners – supported by the Senate through its Resolution No. 105 – that the agreement was a treaty similar to the VFA and Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT).

The high court pointed out that the law requires Senate concurrence and considers an agreement a treaty only when it serves as an "instrument that allows the presence of foreign military bases, troops or facilities."

In this case, the SC said EDCA is "not the instrument that allows US troops or facilities to enter as the VFA already has done that," citing its earlier ruling that upheld the validity of the VFA.

Associate Justices Teresita Leonardo-de Castro, Arturo Brion, Estela Perlas-Bernabe and Marvic Leonen gave dissenting opinions. – With Edu Punay, AFP

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INQUIRER

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US open to joint patrols with PH in S. China Sea

By Niña P. Calleja

THE UNITED States is open to the possibility of joint naval operations with the Philippines in the South China Sea, now that the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (Edca) between the two countries is in place.

"I don't think there is a limitation on what the United States can do," US Ambassador to the Philippines Philip Goldberg said at the Pandesal Forum, a weekly news forum in Quezon City, on Wednesday.

Goldberg was asked if there would be some limitations should the Philippines request for a joint

naval patrol in the West Philippine Sea, the name the Philippines calls its territorial waters.

Goldberg, however, refused to say whether there would be future joint maritime patrols.

"We do discuss that principle (joint patrols) with the Philippines. But I am not discarding that possibility," Goldberg said, adding that the United States will continue to conduct freedom of navigation patrols in the disputed sea.

"The United States will follow the international law and will continue to enjoy our right to sail into international waters and fly over international air space," he said.

The Philippines' interest for

joint maritime patrols with the United States was tackled during the 2+2 ministerial meeting among the defense and foreign officials of the two countries.

China earlier criticized the US' latest freedom of navigation patrol in which its guided missile destroyer, the USS Curtis Wilbur, sailed within the 12 nautical miles of Triton island, one of those occupied by China in the Paracel islands.

The island is being claimed by Taiwan and Vietnam.

The US ship docked in Manila Bay on Jan. 24 as part of its routine visit for maintenance and crew rest, according to the US

Embassy in Manila.

While the Edca was largely viewed as a deterrent to China's activities in the South China Sea, Goldberg noted that the "Edca itself was not designed to address the issue of the South China Sea."

"The effort is to help the Philippines develop its modernization program in the Armed Forces," he said.

Goldberg said the Edca sought to help the Philippines establish its minimum credible defense and help address "21st-century challenges," which include maritime security and maritime domain awareness.

Both sides, he said, are now

fleshing out details on how to implement the agreement, which

was recently declared constitutional by the Supreme Court.

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Congress buries Bangsamoro bill

By JOSE RODEL CLAPANO

The nation was urged to keep calm yesterday as Congress went on recess without passing the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) to create a Muslim homeland in Mindanao, raising the possibility of hostilities again breaking out.

"Let me state the fact: the proposed Bangsam-

oro Basic Law, in whatever shape or form, did not make it out of the 16th Congress," chief peace negotiator Miriam Coronel-Ferrer said, blaming what she called "sheer indifference and chronic absenteeism" of legislators in the House of Representatives.

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Congress From Page 1

She said Filipinos, particularly Muslims, who had expected its movement forward were "grieving, hurting and once again dreading what tomorrow may bring."

"However, the collective inaction of our legislators to complete the deliberation on the BBL did not, and will not, stop the momentum of the Bangsamoro peace process. At this low point, we call for sobriety and perseverance," she said.

Earlier, Lanao del Sur Rep. Pangalisan Balindong, Deputy Speaker for Mindanao in the House of Representatives, effectively threw in the towel on the BBL, saying the inaction of legislators had killed the peace process with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and potentially usher in a new round of fighting in the south.

He blamed the "sheer tyranny of the majority" for shutting the door on the BBL, the final piece of the puzzle which would give a legal framework

to the MILF's quest for self-rule, encapsulate a wealth-sharing scheme and spell out how to "decommission" rebel firearms and reintegrate the combatants to mainstream society.

Ferrer said all the efforts they had put to make sure the BBL was passed "amounted to nothing, along with millions of pesos of taxpayers' money used to finance these drawn out proceedings."

However, Ferrer stressed that the peace pact was a binding document for both the government and the MILF that remains valid.

"We need to take away the fear and distrust of the Bangsamoro for our country to become whole. We therefore urge our politicians and fellow citizens to take the time to study the history of the conflict and the peace process so as to get a better understanding of the road map and our unflinching efforts to see it through," she said.

The MILF has blamed hard-

line lawmakers for the failure to pass the BBL, and acknowledged that the Mamasapano incident was the main reason for the inaction.

"There are countless exceptions, but generally Filipinos are not ready for reconciliation. Congress had just shown it. They are making it very hard. They are still in the state of denial," an editorial of the MILF on its website *Luwaran.com* said.

"Their thinking and what they say are still reminiscent of the bloody days of Spain in this country. They still see the Moro as sub-human, not deserving of equal treatment," it said.

"The BBL is not the first agreement set aside by government. It seems it is already systemic," it stressed.

It said the police commandos were the ones to blame for last year's tragic incident at Mamasapano by deliberately ignoring the chain of command and a ceasefire agreement requiring "prior coordination in case of movement of troops or police actions."

"They also tagged a partner in peace, the MILF, as 'enemy,'

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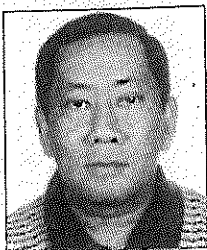
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Shooting Straight

By BOBIT S. AVILA

For history's sake, keep the AFP museum open

Remember the old saying by George Santayana... "Those who do not remember the past is doomed to repeat them." This was the quotation that came to my mind after watching ANC news with David Celdran yesterday about the imminent closure of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Museum because it could not pay its power bill worth P1.347 million. This facility is run by my cousin, former Police General Rufino Iba, Jr. who told me of the many rare artifacts, many of them military artifacts that are available for people to see when they visit the AFP Museum.



The Philippine Military has a glorious past... especially when you include the Filipinos fighting the Americans (including the Moro Wars) at the time of Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo, which our historians dub as the Philippine American War, while the Americans call it the Philippine Insurrection. I dare you visit the Iwo Jima monument in Arlington Cemetery where on its side is emblazoned the "Philippine Insurrection." Pundits of history after all, say, "History is written by the victors."

But I dare say that the next Philippine President whoever he or she would be should force the Americans to change this part of our common history and tell the truth about our wars, first against our Spanish colonizers then against the Americans who took over the Philippines from Spain. Then there is always the still unfinished case of the Bells of Balangiga, which today has never been returned to Samar. Again, the Aquino regime literally "invited" the Americans back to their former US bases here... without even resolving the issue of the return of the Bells of Balangiga. If indeed America is a friend of the Philippines, they must make that small gesture to return the Bells of Balangiga for the massacre of Filipinos in Samar in September 1901.

With this piece, I urge the Aquino Regime to salvage and come up with the money to keep the AFP afloat so that history and the artifacts inside would be preserved. Perhaps Malacañang doesn't know that since the movie "Heneral Luna" was shown months back... Filipinos are now waking up to what happened in those years in our history.

Last December we just launched our coffee table book "War in Cebu" and it was perhaps the most successful book launch ever to happen in Cebu and the University Press of USC said that the first edition is now almost sold out. This means... our people want to keep our history preserved and that's what President Aquino should be doing.

Speaking of Philippine history... someday the infamous Mamasapano massacre should also be featured in the AFP Museum. Well, last Tuesday evening I watched Lynda Jumila interview Rep. Rufus Rodriguez and Prof. Miriam Coronel-Ferrer, chief negotiator for the Philippine Government and Mohagher Iqbal, chairman of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) Peace Panel and Government Peace Panel (over the phone) on what happened to the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL).

Clearly Prof. Coronel-Ferrer and Iqbal blamed Congress for the death of the BBL and in fairness to Rep. Rufus Rodriguez (who supported the BBL) he too admitted that there were unconstitutional provisions in the BBL, which is why they came up with their version, the Basic Law on the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region (BLBAR), which the two rabid pro BBL Iqbal and Ferrer said that the MILF rejected. In short those two idiots wanted the entire BBL that Malaysia was pushing to become a law of the Philippines. This is why many Filipinos dub them as "traitors!" Someone even suggested that P-Noy did not push hard enough for the BBL!

In fairness to P-Noy... the BBL was the backbone program of his administration and Rep. Rodriguez pointed to the 52 hearings on the BBL, but alas... the BBL on its own is just unacceptable to the Filipino people represented by their Congressmen and women. More than anything... how many times did P-Noy call his allies in Congress to push for the BBL, but in the end they just couldn't sell this to the Filipino people.

Now what is left is the blame game. Shame on you Prof. Ferrer and your pal Iqbal for selling to the Filipino nation the BBL based on the false promise of peace because you excluded the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). Even the ordinary man on the street believes that a peace agreement with only one group of Muslims would not usher any peace in Mindanao. This is not to mention the many armed groups like the New People's Army (NPA) that continually fight the military in Mindanao and elsewhere.

Meanwhile former Department of Justice Secretary Leila de Lima said that the Mamasapano reinvestigation backfired on Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile. While I agree that he should have presented that audiotape, he was able to pin the President's role on Mamasapano. But all THE panelists agree that it was the Mamasapano massacre that killed the BBL.

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ONLINE NEWS

04 FEBRUARY 2016

Anti-EDCA petitioners file MR with high court

By: InterAksyon.com

February 3, 2016 3:51 PM

InterAksyon.com

The online news portal of TV5

MANILA, Philippines -- Petitioners filed a motion for reconsideration Wednesday before the Supreme Court seeking the reversal of the decision upholding the constitutionality of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement with the US.

Among those who filed the motion were former Senators Rene Saguisag and Wigberto Tanada, among the Magnificent 12 who voted to boot out American military bases from the country in 1991, former University of the Philippines president Francisco Nemenzo Jr., and several activist groups affiliated with the *Bagong Alyansang Makabayan*.

After several deferments, the high court, voting 10-4-1 on January 12, ruled that the EDCA is an executive agreement, and not a treaty requiring Senate concurrence.

The SC ruled that Article XVIII, section 25 of the 1987 Constitution allows the president to enter into an executive agreement on foreign military bases, troops, or facilities if: (a) it is not the instrument that allows the presence of foreign military bases, troops, or facilities, or (b) it merely aims to implement an existing law or treaty and holding that the EDCA is one such executive agreement.

However, the motion for reconsideration pointedly called the SC decision wrong, faulting the tribunal for a "strict textual approach" while "ignoring relevant colonial historical and contemporary events" in interpreting the Constitution and the Mutual Defense Treaty and Visiting Forces Agreements, the pacts the EDCA is supposed to implement.

Parsing the arguments of the motion for reconsideration, Rachel Pastores, managing counsel of the Public Interest Law Center, which represents *Bayan*, said in a separate statement: "Divorced from history, the Supreme Court's decision on EDCA fails to address the stark reality that the President has committed serious breach and violation of the constitution."

She said the high court disregarded "clear provisions" of the Constitution "in favor of a stretched-out argument to expand the powers of the President."

"The decision lacks legitimacy, especially in light of the Senate's demand to submit EDCA for deliberation by the legislature," she said. "Neither the Court nor the executive (branch) has the monopoly of discussion on the presence of foreign military personnel and their war weapons and bases. The Constitution clearly accorded unto the Senate, by representation the Filipino people, the power to decide on the return of foreign military bases."

"If the SC does not reverse its decision on EDCA," Pastores said, "we will repeat the errors and horrors of our military bases experience."

Pastores also dismissed arguments the EDCA is necessary because of China's increasing aggressiveness in the South China Sea.

"Even if on the pretext that we are calling in a bully -- greedy and giddy one at that -- to scare off another bully, the EDCA decision is wide off the mark. We cannot expect the US to fly to our side the moment confrontations escalate to defend our home front," she pointed out.

"No such promise has been made, nor will be fulfilled," she added.

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2 suspected rebels killed in Camarines Sur clash

By: Mar S. Arguelles

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Inquirer Southern Luzon

04:04 PM February 3rd, 2016

LEGAZPI CITY—Two suspected communist rebels were killed in a clash with Army soldiers in Bato town in Camarines Sur province on Wednesday, a report reaching the Bicol regional police headquarters here said.

Senior Insp. Maria Luisa Calubaquib, Bicol police spokesperson, said the report did not identify the slain rebels but soldiers reported recovering four M-16 rifles from the clash site.

Calubaquib said a platoon of Army soldiers was patrolling the remote village of San Isidro in Bato at 12:50 p.m. Wednesday when they clashed with a group of 10 New People's Army rebels.