

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



TEAM ARMY

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08 February 2016

Monday

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

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

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The Manila Times

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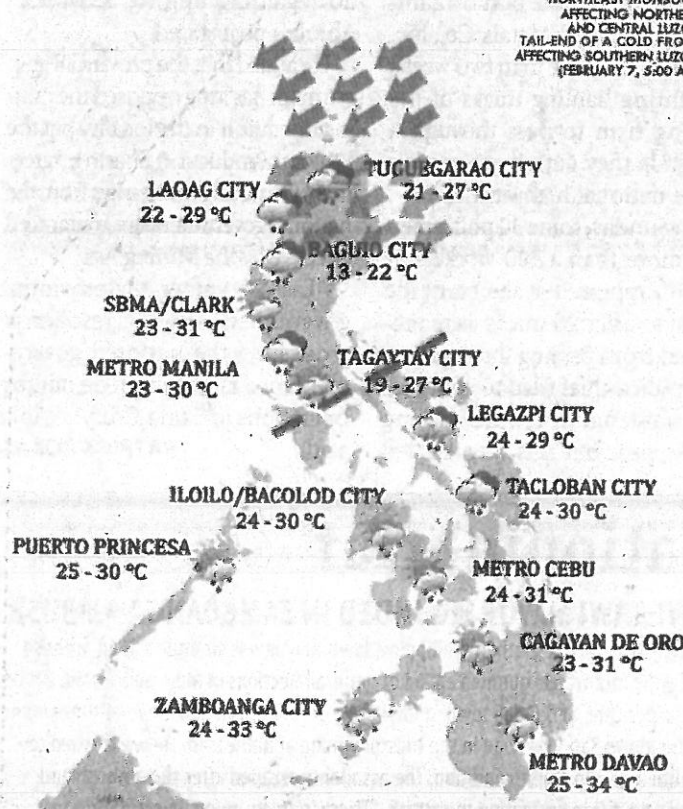


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TODAY'S WEATHER FORECAST

FEBRUARY 8, 2016 | MONDAY

NORTHEAST MONSOON
AFFECTING NORTHERN
AND CENTRAL LUZON
TAIL-END OF A COLD FRONT
AFFECTING SOUTHERN LUZON
(FEBRUARY 7, 5:00 AM)



LAOAG CITY 22 - 29 °C
FUGUEGARAO CITY 21 - 27 °C
BAGUIO CITY 13 - 22 °C
SBMA/CLARK 23 - 31 °C
TAGAYTAY CITY 19 - 27 °C
METRO MANILA 23 - 30 °C
LEGAZPI CITY 24 - 29 °C
ILOILO/BACOLOD CITY 24 - 30 °C
TACLOBAN CITY 24 - 30 °C
PUERTO PRINCESA 25 - 30 °C
METRO CEBU 24 - 31 °C
CAGAYAN DE ORO 23 - 31 °C
ZAMBOANGA CITY 24 - 33 °C
METRO DAVAO 25 - 34 °C

SUNRISE
6:23 AM

SUNSET
5:58 PM

MOONRISE
5:45 AM

MOONSET
5:41 PM

NEW MOON
FEB 8 10:38 PM


FIRST QUARTER
FEB 15 3:40 PM

LOW TIDE
5:23 AM
-0.23 Meter


HIGH TIDE
9:52 PM
1.08 Meter

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

	FEB 8 TUESDAY	FEB 9 WEDNESDAY	FEB 10 THURSDAY	FEB 11 FRIDAY	FEB 12 SATURDAY	FEB 13 SUNDAY
METRO MANILA	23 - 30 °C	24 - 31 °C	24 - 31 °C	13 - 22 °C	13 - 22 °C	14 - 23 °C
METRO CEBU	24 - 30 °C	24 - 31 °C	25 - 31 °C	24 - 31 °C	25 - 31 °C	25 - 31 °C
METRO DAVAO	24 - 34 °C	24 - 33 °C	24 - 33 °C	25 - 33 °C	24 - 34 °C	24 - 33 °C
BAGUIO						
PUERTO PRINCESA						
DORACAY						



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Gov't girds for OFW crisis

1.5M Filipinos face layoff in Mideast

By Daxim L. Lucas, *Business*

AN ESTIMATED 1.5 million Filipinos classified as temporary workers in the Middle East are likely to be the first to be displaced if the region's oil industry starts to shed personnel idled by overcapacity, according to Labor Secretary Rosalinda Baldoz.

The temporary workers account for about 75 percent of the 2 million overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in the Middle East.

Seeking to head off a poten-

tial employment crisis, President Aquino has ordered labor officials to prepare measures to soften the impact of the precipitous slide in oil prices on OFWs in the Middle East.

Presidential Communications Secretary Herminio Coloma Jr. said on Friday that the President had been informed of the possible job losses that may occur if low oil prices forced companies in the oil industry to cut costs and trim staff.

"As a contingency measure, the President has ordered the DOLE to draw up plans and come up with programs to address the issue, even if there is no indication yet that this is happening," Coloma said in a press

GOV'T/A23

From page A1

briefing with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and its agencies on Friday.

“The President is being very proactive on this so we will be prepared,” he added.

Oil prices have sunk to below \$30 a barrel, the lowest level in 12 years, before making a slight recovery amid a glut due to additional supply in the United States, refusal of the Oil Petroleum Exporting Countries to cut production and slowdown in China. The end of Western sanctions on Iran is expected to worsen the glut.

Since the middle of 2014, the price of a barrel of crude has fallen more than 70 percent.

Because of the prolonged price slump, Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest oil exporter, suffered a budget deficit of about \$100 billion in 2015, forcing it

to cut subsidies and scale down public projects.

Other oil exporters in the Middle East are in similar straits.

Saudi Arabia employs 892,000 Filipinos, mostly in the oil industry, while the United Arab Emirates employs an additional 567,000.

Other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states with a large number of Filipino workers are Kuwait (207,000), Qatar (198,000), Bahrain (101,000) and Oman (33,000). Iran, a non-GCC state, employs slightly more than 4,000 Filipinos in its oil sector.

Jobs lost

Worldwide, some 250,000 oil industry jobs have been lost since prices started declining in 2014, according to The New York Times.

Despite these retrenchments across the globe, Philippine la-

bor officials said the crisis scenario involving massive job losses in the Middle East was far from happening.

Baldoz pointed to the latest data from the DOLE's field offices in the Middle East showing that job losses for the January reporting period had so far been either negligible or altogether nonexistent.

In the eastern Saudi region (where the bulk of its oil industry is based), labor officials reported a 1.1-percent decrease in job orders or employment contracts processed between December 2015 and January 2016.

“However, these cannot be directly attributed to the oil price decline, but possibly due to the ‘Saudization’ [policy] and fiscal constraints of companies,” Baldoz said. “Aramco (Saudi's state-owned oil company) has no reported problem, but there are reports of its con-

tractors having put projects on hold.”

In Riyadh, Baldoz said officials monitored no drop in job offers and demand. In fact, the DOLE's record of job orders over the last three years have shown a continued increase, she added.

Moderate retrenchment

"The reported sponsorship releases and employment, transfer and termination notices of the Saudi Binladen Group and subcontractors are hardly traceable to the oil price drop," Baldoz said.

"Saudi businessmen point to a possible moderate retrenchment or mere temporary slowdown in hiring in construction. Other industries are expected to remain stable," she added.

In Abu Dhabi, the labor secretary said, officials monitored an 82-percent decline in job orders in January from 85 job open-

ings in the first week to only 16 in the fourth week. Thirty-two job contracts were terminated, but these were due to reasons ranging from redundancy to absenteeism, and the affected workers received end-of-service benefits.

Retail sales

Labor officials in Dubai recorded an 18-percent decline in job orders, but these involved nonoil sector concerns like the hospitality and retail sales industries, as well as facilities management.

No reports of declining job orders were received in Kuwait.

Despite these developments, Baldoz said the government was taking no chances and had come up with a menu of contingency measures in case a worst-case scenario would unfold.

"Using a scenario of 10-20 percent returning OFWs for the

semi- and low-skilled category, there are available local jobs for them in construction, transport and the logistics sectors in the country if they wish to avail [themselves] of such," she said.

The increasing pace of infrastructure project rollouts under the government's public-private partnership (PPP) program, Baldoz said, offered potential employment for returning OFWs, particularly those in the semi-and low-skilled categories, especially in the construction sector.

"The PPP Center monitored 44,000 jobs created from the 12 PPP projects that have already been awarded," the labor secretary said.

The DOLE and its partner agencies also have existing programs that could help "re-tool" returning OFWs to address the current shortfall in service-related jobs available in the country.

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Election season revs up

The nation's raucous democracy cranks into top gear this week as campaigning begins for national elections, with familiar themes of corruption, dictatorship and celebrity star-power to dominate.

The three-month campaign launches tomorrow with most interest on a crowded contest to succeed President Aquino, who has won global applause for six years of strong economic growth and a bruising anti-graft campaign.

There are myriad other subplots, including a bid by dead dictator Ferdinand Marcos' son to take the vice presidency and eight-time world boxing champion Manny Pacquiao's run for a Senate seat.

The jailhouse campaigns of two politicians charged with murder who are running in local mayoral elections, as well as graft-tainted ex-president

Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's run for a third term as congresswoman while behind bars, fuel a sizzling political atmosphere of chaos and chicanery.

There are five major contenders in the battle to move into the presidential palace and most analysts predict the deciding factors will – as usual – be name recognition and charisma rather than ideology or policy.

"In the Philippines, elections are like a circus with the candidates trying to attract attention with their performances," Earl Parreño, an analyst at the Manila-based Institute

Turn to Page 14

for Political and Economic Reform, told AFP.

"Programs and policies are secondary... it's a personality contest."

Aquino won in a landslide six years ago largely due to the popularity of his parents, who led the democracy movement that saw Marcos flee into US exile in 1986.

Aquino, 56, is still relatively popular but the Constitution limits him to a single term.

His preferred successor is US-educated investment banker Mar Roxas, a trusted ally with many years governing experience who is vowing to continue the pair's "straight path" agenda of steady reforms and fighting graft.

But Roxas, 58, is trailing in polls and analysts say he has a huge task to ignite an electorate that generally perceives him as having little charisma.

"He is dry, he can't connect to ordinary people," Parreño said.

Binay denies the allegations, insisting they are part of a smear campaign by his opponents and that his family's new riches have been earned legitimately.

Meanwhile, he has sought via slick TV and Internet video clips to portray himself as the man of the poor.

Another top contender for the presidency is Grace Poe, 47, the adopted daughter of a dead movie star whose success so far can largely be attributed to her father's enduring popularity.

However the Supreme Court could knock her out of the race before the May 9 elections, with justices currently listening to arguments she is ineligible based on citizenship and residency laws.

The Constitution requires presidents have Filipino parents. But Poe does not know who her biological parents are. Complicating matters, she lived in the United States for many years and took US citizenship before renouncing it.

Binay and Poe have over recent months swapped top spot in popularity surveys. The latest poll, released on Saturday, showed Poe edging back ahead by a small margin.

'The Punisher'

The wildcard contender is Rodrigo Duterte, 70, a controversial figure nicknamed "The Punisher" for his ruthless but successful tactics fighting crime as mayor of Davao, a major southern city.

Human rights groups have accused Duterte of running vigilante "death squads" that killed suspected criminals.

Duterte has denied leading death squads but gave a speech late last year in which he bragged about killing drug

traffickers.

His vows to clean up crime and end corruption in the nation of 100 million people have won him many fans, both rich and poor.

Campus president

Then there is Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago, whose campaign has been hobbled by her poor health.

The feisty senator with a keen sense of humor has been dubbed the "campus president" because she keeps emerging as the choice of students in university polls.

A former judge, Santiago once said, "Eat death threats for breakfast."

She made an unsuccessful run for the presidency in 1992 and claims she was cheated by Fidel Ramos through vote shaving and padding or *dag-dag-hawas*.

Santiago has raised eyebrows by picking Sen. Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. as her running mate.

Marcos, only son of the dead dictator, has a strong chance of winning, currently placing second in polling.

His father and mother, Imelda, are accused of plundering billions of dollars from state coffers and overseeing widespread human rights abuses.

Marcos, a senator, says he has nothing to apologize for and is counting on voters — many of whom were born after the 1986 "People Power" revolution — to cement a remarkable political comeback for the family.

NCRPO to secure bets' events

The National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) will secure the shantytowns in Mandaluyong City and Tondo, Manila where two presidential bets would launch their campaigns tomorrow.

"We are ready to secure the

Charismatic campaigner

In contrast is Jejomar Binay, 73, a natural campaigner who grew up in poverty but rose to become one of the nation's most powerful politicians.

Binay heads the main opposition party and is the current vice president — the nation's two top posts are elected separately in the Philippines — but he has had to endure a barrage of corruption allegations.

A Senate committee recently recommended Binay be charged with graft for kickbacks allegedly taken during his long stint as mayor of the nation's financial capital, Makati.

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Photos show presidential candidates and their running mates (from top left) Vice President Jejomar Binay and Sen. Gregorio Honasan; Senators Grace Poe and Francis Escudero; Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte and Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano; Senators Miriam Defensor Santiago and Ferdinand Marcos Jr., and the administration's Mar Roxas and Camarines Sur. Rep. Leni Robredo.

AFP, MANNY MARCELO

two areas to prevent the outbreak of violence," said NCRPO chief Director Joel Pagdilao in an interview.

Pagdilao said they expect a huge crowd to show up at the launching of Binay's campaign in Welfareville

compound in Mandaluyong City and of Duterte in Tondo Tuesday.

He also directed Manila Police District (MPD) head Chief Superintendent Rolando Nana and Eastern Police District (EPD) director Chief Superintendent Elmer Jamias to see to it that proper security would be deployed at the two sites.

Pagdilao also tasked Nana

and Jamias to watch out for persons carrying firearms as the gun ban of the Commission on Elections is still in effect.

"We should accost persons carrying firearms as they may start trouble in the said areas. They should be brought to jail once they fail to show pertinent documents exempting them from the Comelec gun ban," Pagdilao said.

– AFP, Non Alquitran

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

Philippine Army ordered to guard security threats during campaign period

By Rosette Adel (philstar.com) | Updated February 7, 2016 - 3:45pm



The Philippine Army field commanders are tasked to ensure safe and fair election and to protect the country from security threats in connection with the May 9 polls. Army/File

MANILA, Philippines – Philippine Army (PA) commander Lt. Gen Eduardo Año on Friday issued an order directing all field commanders to be alert against security threats amid the campaign period which will start on February 9.

Año advised the field commanders to remain unbiased and ensure a safe and fair election.

The field commanders were also asked to concentrate on ending the insurgency within the year. Año said the Army headquarters will first support units engaged in the operations at the national priority areas.

"Everyone will contribute to the defeat of the NPA (New People's Army) and the Abu Sayaff Group in Mindanao," Año said.

The orders were issued at the annual Senior Leader's Conference in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City.

The gathering of senior Army major unit commanders was attended by 85,000 Philippine Army members including 10 infantry division commanders and some members of the coordinating staff at the PA Headquarters.

Aside from the first semester command, PA spokesman Col. Benjamin Hao said the conference also discussed the fiscal year 2015 Program Performance and Budget Execution Review.

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Malaya
The National Newspaper

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Military says no sign MILF will disturb peace in Mindanao

**BY VICTOR REYES
AND WENDELL VIGILIA**

A MILITARY commander in Central Mindanao said there are no indications that Moro Islamic Liberation Front rebels would resort to violence because of Congress' failure to pass the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law.

But Maj. Gen. Edmundo Pangilinan, commander of the Army's 6th Infantry Division based in Maguindanao said government forces are prepared for any eventuality. Several thousands of troops are operating in the region, a known bailiwick of the MILF which currently has around 10,000 fighters.

Administration allies, meanwhile, said the BBL will have the best chance of becoming a law under a Roxas presidency.

Akbayan party-list Rep. Ibarra Gutierrez, spokesman for the administration's "Daang Matuwid" ticket, said their standard

See MILITARY > Page B6

MILITARY

bearer Manuel Roxas II is committed to continue what the Aquino administration has achieved in pursuit of lasting peace in Mindanao.

"To my knowledge, among all the candidates, Secretary Mar is the only one who has expressly committed to continuing the peace process in Mindanao," Gutierrez said.

The BBL will pave the way for the creation of a new Bangsamoro political region in Mindanao, as provided in the peace agreement signed by the Aquino government with the MILF in March 2014. Deliberations on the measure were stalled after the MILF and other armed groups attacked police commandos conducting an anti-terrorist

operation in Maguindanao in January 2015. Forty-four commandos died in the attack.

In 2008, MILF rebels attacked civilian communities after the Supreme Court declared the Memorandum on Agreement on Ancestral Domain as unconstitutional, leading to scores of lives lost.

Pangilinan implied that the pronouncement of the MILF leaders about their desire to continue with the peace process despite the non-passage of the BBL could have contributed to the favorable security condition in the region.

"Their leadership said that with or without BBL, they will pursue peace and that's a good sign... And similarly, they said they will even wait for the next administration to continue the talks. So that's a good

sign," Pangilinan also said. A new president is due to assume office on July 1.

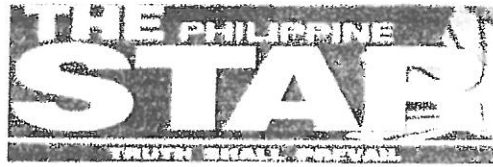
AFP spokesman Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla said peace is still prevailing in Mindanao because various peace mechanisms between the government and the MILF are still in place.

"There is also an assurance from the government side that this (BBL) will be pursued by the next administration," he said.

The House of Representatives buried the proposed BBL last week after congressional leaders declared the measure officially dead.

Cavite Rep. Elpidio Barzaga, a Roxas ally, said Roxas has vowed to improve and not just continue the accomplishments of the Aquino administration.

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Abu bandit in Sipadan kidnapping slain in Sulu shootout

ZAMBOANGA CITY – Army troopers shot and killed an alleged Abu Sayyaf bandit – tagged in a kidnapping on Sipadan Island in Malaysia – during an operation in Indanan, Sulu yesterday morning.

The military identified the fatality as a certain Haber, alias Abu Qudama, according to Brig. Gen. Alan Arrojado, commander of the Joint Task Group Sulu.

Arrojado said the soldiers tracked down Haber during an intelligence operation in Barangay Buanza at around 10.30 a.m.

He said a brief firefight erupted between Haber and the soldiers and resulted in the suspect's death.

Haber was reportedly a follower of Abu Sayyaf sub-leader Sibih Pisi, whose group is based in Indanan, Parang and Maimbung towns.

Arrojado said the suspect had been wanted for his participation in the Sipadan kidnapping and the foiled kidnapping at Pearl Farm, Samal Island in Davao del Norte in May 2001.

– Roel Pareño, Alexis Romero

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ASG man in Sipadan kidnappings killed

A member of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) involved in the 2000 Sipadan kidnappings was killed by government forces in Sulu, a military official said.

Brig. Gen. Alan Arrojado, Joint Task Group Sulu commander, identified the slain ASG bandit only as Haber, also known as "Abu Qudama".

Arrojado said the Haber was killed by government security forces conducting a special intelligence operations at Sitio Annur, Barangay Buanza, Indanan town in Sulu around 10:30 a.m. yesterday.

According to the JTGS commander, the bandit engaged a joint team of policemen and soldiers who were serving a warrant of arrest against him.

Haber reportedly belonged to the group of ASG sub leader Sibih Pish based in the municipalities of Indanan, Parang, and Maimbung.

He has warrants of arrest for his involvement in the April 2000 abduction of 21 people, including ten Malaysians, nine Europeans and two Filipino resort from a dive resort in Sipadan Island in Sabah, and also in the Pearl Farm kidnapping in Samal, Davao Del

Norte in May 2001.

In Maguindanao, soldiers continued their pursuit operations against members of the brigand Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) who attacked troops from the 22nd Mechanized Company, 2nd Mechanized Battalion guarding a government infrastructure project in Datu Salibu late Friday afternoon.

A junior officer was slightly injured in the attack that also forced hundreds of villagers to

evacuate.

A military official said the attack was carried out by groups of four BIFF commanders identified as Bungos, Abusaiden, Kagui Tatang and Ustadz Roman, which even employed snipers.

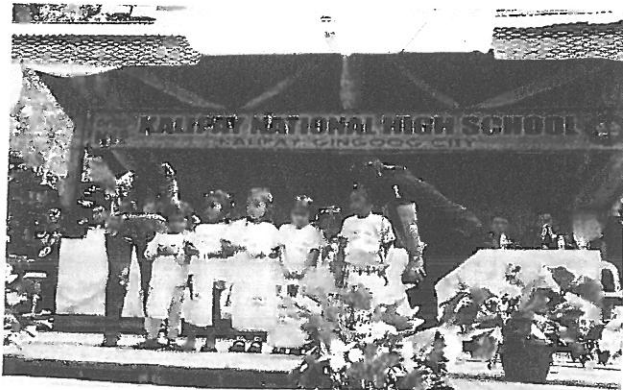
Capt. Jo-Anni Petinglay, public affairs officer of the Army's 6th Infantry Division, said additional forces were deployed to augment the 1st Mechanized Battalion in securing the government project. **(Elena L. Aben)**

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<http://retiredanalyst.blogspot.com/>

23,000 people benefit from humanitarian mission in Mindanao

From the Mindanao Examiner



The humanitarian mission conducted by various government agencies in Gingoog City in the southern Philippine province of Misamis Oriental.

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

Some 23,000 people have benefited from a two-day humanitarian mission by various government agencies in the southern Philippine province of Misamis Oriental where communist rebels are actively operating, officials said Sunday.

Government troops also joined the mission in Gingoog City dubbed as "National Serbisyo Caravan" participated by different military units under the Eastern Mindanao Command.

Captain Alberto Caber, a regional army spokesman, said the recent humanitarian mission was a convergence of concerned national agencies for the delivery of basic services. "The event also became the venue for consultation and dialogue between the community and government agencies," he told The Manila Times.

The project was spearheaded by the Office of the Presidential Assistant on the Peace Process under Teresita Deles and Undersecretary Emmanuel Bautista, and the Cabinet Cluster on Security, Justice.

Late last year, the communist New People's Army rebels freed a government soldier – Pfc. Adonis Jess Losiba – they captured in Gingoog City after 4 months in captivity. Adonis, a member of the 58th Infantry Battalion, was released following appeals from his family.

In 2013, rebels also ambushed and wounded Mayor Ruthie Guingona and killed two of her supporters. The political matriarch was heading home from a beauty pageant when gunmen ambushed her convoy. Guingona is the wife of former Vice President Teofisto Guingona and mother of Senator Teofisto Guingona III.

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

AFP to reconfigure armored personnel carriers from US

By Jaime Laude (The Philippine Star) | Updated February 7, 2016 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines - The military will reconfigure some of the 114 armored personnel carriers (APC) recently acquired from the US into armored infantry fighting vehicles for territorial defense.

This was according to Brig. Gen. Edgar Gonzalez, commander of the Army's Mechanized Infantry, who said the changes would be made as soon as funds become available. Gonzales' command is based in Camp O'Donnell in Capas, Tarlac.

The US officially turned over M113A2 tanks to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) last Thursday. Gonzales did not say how many of the APCs would be retrofitted for combat purposes. The reconfigured vehicles would be armed with 25mm automatic cannons.

The US has been helping the Philippines build a credible defense system.

The country has long neglected territorial defense as its military had focused on quelling communist insurgency and the Muslim separatist movement in Mindanao. China's growing aggressiveness in asserting its claims over almost the entire South China Sea and West Philippine Sea has prompted the Philippines to rethink its military focus.

Currently, the Army only has five mechanized infantry battalions and two cavalry battalions with less than 400 armored assets.

Gonzalez said Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin has given him the green light to proceed with the reconfiguration plan for the APCs.

Part of the reconfiguration plan is the replacement of the APCs' engines with more powerful 265 horsepower engines. The units would have anti-aircraft guns and well as hi-tech communication systems.

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AFP: No threat from MILF over BBL

The military does not expect a falling out with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) because of the failure of Congress to pass the proposed

Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL). Armed Forces spokesman Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla said the mechanisms of the

By ALEXIS ROMERO

peace talks are working and the people have seen the benefits of the peace process.

"It seems that both sides are

(bending over backward) and there is an assurance from the government side that the peace process will continue under

the next administration," Padilla said yesterday.

Padilla cited the Ad Hoc Joint Action Group, which is

tasked to isolate and interdict criminal groups and terrorists. The mechanism allows the government and the MILF to work together to maintain peace and order.

Padilla, however, admitted that spoilers would continue to express their opposition to the peace talks.

"People have seen the positive effects of peace. There are many projects and their lives have improved. But of course, spoilers cannot be avoided," he said.

Some sectors have expressed concern over the bypassing of the proposed BBL, believing this could lead to conflict.

Sulu Rep. Tupay Loong previously warned of a "shooting war" involving people who are fighting for freedom, justice and their own interests.

Lanao del Sur Rep. Pangalian

Balindong, Deputy Speaker for Mindanao, said radical secessionists could exploit the failure to pass the measure.

Such view was echoed by Vicariate of Sulu parish coordinator Fr. Romero Villanueva, who believes the non-passage of the BBL could prod radicals to seek independence.

Maj. Gen. Edmundo Pangilinan, chief of the Army's 6th Infantry Division, said his unit has not monitored any movement by the MILF after the bypassing of the proposed BBL.

"Their (MILF) leadership has given assurance that with or without the BBL, they will pursue peace and that's a good sign that peace will be sustained," Pangilinan said.

Pangilinan, however, maintained the military is prepared for any eventuality. The MILF has about

10,000 fighters based on military estimates.

The proposed BBL, which would have implemented the 2014 peace deal signed by the government and the MILF, was bypassed in Congress despite being a priority bill of the Aquino administration.

The measure aims to set up a new Bangsamoro political entity with greater political and economic powers.

President Aquino has ordered the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process to coordinate with all concerned parties so that peace efforts would be sustained after he steps down from office.

MILF officials said they remain committed to peace despite the failure to enact the proposed BBL. However, they believe the non-passage of the measure showed that Filipinos are not yet ready for reconciliation.

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AFP: No MILF violence yet despite BBL failure

By Mario J. Mallari

The military does not see any indication that the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) would resort to violence following the “death” of its proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL).

Maj. Gen. Edmundo Pangilinan, commander of the Army’s 6th Infantry Division (ID) where the bulk of MILF forces are present, said the military has not monitored any movement from the MILF ranks so far.

Pangilinan cited as a “good sign”

the MILF leadership’s pronouncement that they will continue to pursue peace even after the non-passage of the BBL by the Senate and the House of Representatives.

“We do not feel anything, there is no manifestation. Their (MILF) leadership said that with or without BBL they will pursue peace and that’s a good sign,” Pangilinan said.

It will be recalled in 2008, MILF fighters launched wide-scale atrocities in Central Mindnao following the Supreme Court’s decision junking the Memorandum

of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MoA-AD) between the MILF and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP).

Dozens of people were killed while thousands were displaced during the atrocities led by the late Ameril Umbra kato, founder of MILF’s breakaway group Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF).

“I do not feel or see any movement from the MILF. So that’s a good sign that peace would continue,” Pangilinan said.

“What is good is the

pronouncement of the MILF leadership that with or without BBL they will pursue peace and they will even wait for the next administration to continue to the talks,” he added.

Pangilinan, however, maintained that the military is prepared for any eventuality.

“We are prepared for any eventualities,” Pangilinan said.

Pangilinan said that the MILF’s strength remained unchanged but he did not give numbers.

For his part, Armed Forces of the Philippines spokesman Brig.

Gen. Restituto Padilla Jr. said that the peace mechanisms remained intact in spite of the non-passage of the BBL.

Padilla said that the GRP-MILF Ad Hoc Joint Action Group (AHJAG) remains functional as part of the peace process.

“Both sides are leaning forward and there is assurance from the government side that this (peace process) will be continued by the next administration and the Armed Forces if committed to pursue peace,” Padilla said.

Padilla, however, said that

there are still “peace spoilers” lurking to prevent peace from reigning.

But Padilla is banking on the benefits of peace that were enjoyed by the people of Mindanao.

“They saw and received peace dividends...trade and economy and investments are leaning forward to, pouring into their areas,” Padilla said.

The BBL, agreed upon by the GRP and MILF peace panels, was not passed by the Senate and House of Representatives despite persistent calls from Malacañang.

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CdO airport for relief not military use — Palace

The Palace defended the government's decision to offer the use of an old airport in Cagayan de Oro City (CdO) for the use of American forces under the coverage of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) that the Supreme Court recently upheld as an executive agreement saying it is not exactly a military installation but a depot for humanitarian assistance.

Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO) Secretary Herminio Coloma Jr. said



COLOMA

the former Cagayan de Oro City's Lumbia airport would serve as storage depot for equipment necessary for rescue operations during calamities.

Coloma made the clarification following reports that the Lumbia airport would be converted into a United States military depot.

Lumbia airport, which is five kilometers southwest of Cagayan de Oro City, stopped commercial operations after the opening of the new airport in

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Laguindingan, Misamis Oriental in 2013.

"We would like to clarify that the facility mentioned will be used as a storage depot to respond to calamities. It is part of the program of HADR (Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief) which is a crucial element in the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA). In the event of a typhoon, earthquake or other calamities, the facility will be instrumental in the need for immediate response for affected communities," Coloma said.

The 500-hectare former Lumbia airport complex is currently home to the 10th Tactical Operations Group of the Philippine Air Force (PAF).

Earlier, Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin on Saturday confirmed the conversion of the Lumbia airport into a military depot. He also said the use of the airport is covered by EDCA.

"Our understanding is that inside the former Lumbia airport, a small part of it was what was pointed out by Secretary Gazmin where a physical facility will be

used for storage. We all know that the setting up of a military base will not be allowed and what is being implemented are provisions of the Visiting Forces Agreement where only rotating presence (of foreign troops) will be allowed," Coloma added.

"The identification of facilities that can be used by the Philippines and the United States needed to be agreed on by the governments of both countries. On the part of the Philippines, the basis would be in accordance with the welfare of the nation and the interest of the people. That is the position of our panel during meetings of the Mutual Defense Board and the Security Engagement Board," he added.

"Under EDCA, the new element in the agreement is its focus on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief because we all know, when calamities strike, the first responders are the members of the Armed Forces because of their organization, equipment, and it is an integral part of their mission which is the provision of immediate assistance to those affected by calamities," Coloma added.

The Supreme Court has declared the

EDCA constitutional. The EDCA allows increased US military presence in the country and the use of Philippine military bases by the foreign troops.

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Gazmin: It's a military depot

Earlier, Gazmin said that the Lumbia airport will be converted into a US military depot which will be under the coverage of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA).

"As a depot, the airport would be utilized for military equipment necessary for rescue operations during emergencies," he said.

Gazmin said as soon as documents are completed, US troops can "move in" to begin the construction of their facilities.

The US and the Philippine governments are discussing the use of eight former American military bases in the country among the shared facilities under the EDCA.

The 500-hectare airport complex, owned by the Department of Transportation and Communications, is currently home to the 10th Tactical Operations Group of the Philippine Air Force.

A pending House bill, however, urged the national government to return the lot to the city government of Cagayan De Oro.

Cagayan de Oro Representative Raul Rodriguez said the House committee on transportation has approved the bill authored seeking to make the city, the owner of the old domestic airport in Barangay Lumbia.

The 547-hectare property is now being used as a minor air base of the Philippine Air Force.

Rodriguez said the city wanted the old airport to be utilized for housing, recreational and commercial purposes and a future site of City Hall.

Rodriguez is set to defend the bill in the plenary on March 23 and, if approved, a counterpart bill will be filed in the Senate.

Rodriguez said he would also write letters to Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin, Department of Transportation and Communication (DOTC) Secretary Joseph Emilio Abaya, and Caap officials.

"They should look for other air bases not Lumbia because it's near the population," Rodriguez said.

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DND slams NoKor rocket launch

By ALEXIS ROMERO

The Department of National Defense condemned the latest rocket launch of North Korea and stressed the need for all countries to just focus on activities that could bring peace.

"We condemn this act and continue to remind our neighbors to instead concentrate on activities that lead to peace and development of our region," defense department spokesman Peter Galvez said in a statement yesterday.

He said that countries in the region should stop actions that affect regional security.

"Let us all refrain from complicating the already volatile regional security state we are all in," he added.

Galvez said they have received initial information that the debris of the rocket fell somewhere in the Pacific Ocean.

"We have no information yet as to where exactly," he said.

National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council spokesperson Mina Marasigan said regional civil defense units have been instructed to undertake precautionary measures to avoid untoward incidents.

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Conversion of CDO airport into US military depot denied

Malacañang has clarified reports that the Lumbia Airport in Cagayan de Oro would be converted into a US military depot, saying it will be used as storage for equipment needed in rescue operations.

Presidential Communications Operations Office Secretary Herminio Coloma Jr. said over the weekend that the move was part of the humanitarian assistance and disaster relief program, a vital element of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA).

"This facility can help in the swift delivery of services and assistance in times of typhoon, earthquake and other calamities," Coloma said.

The airport stopped its commercial operation after the Laguindingan Airport in Misamis

By **DELON PORCALLA**

Oriental was opened in 2013.

The 500-hectare complex is currently home to the 10th Tactical Operations Group of the Philippine Air Force.

Coloma said one of the elements in EDCA that needed focus at this point is the humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, wherein soldiers will serve as first responders in times of disasters.

Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin earlier confirmed the conversion of the Lumbia Airport into a military depot. He said the use of the facility is covered by EDCA.

Meanwhile, the House committee on transportation has endorsed the transfer of the Lumbia Airport to the

city government for development.

The committee, chaired by Catanduanes Rep. Cesar Sarmiento, voted to approve House Bill 6388 authored by Cagayan de Oro Rep. Rufus Rodriguez and his brother Maximo of the party-list group Abante Mindanao.

The Rodriguezes said since the Lumbia Airport has been abandoned following the opening of the Laguindingan International Airport in nearby Laguindingan town, "the property can be used as a site of a new city hall and a government center housing national government offices."

They added that the old airport complex can also be opened to investors under joint venture or lease agreements. – With Jess Diaz

ONLINE NEWS

08 FEBRUARY 2016

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Pemberton to be moved inside ISAFP compound

ABS-CBN News

Posted at 02/07/16 6:40 PM

MANILA - Authorities are planning to move US Lance Corporal Joseph Scott Pemberton inside the compound of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (ISAFP) in Camp Aguinaldo.

Pemberton, who is detained inside a container van, is currently inside the compound of the Philippines-United States Mutual Defense Board-Security Engagement Board, also inside Camp Aguinaldo. He is being secured by joint Philippines and US forces.

Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) director Ricardo Rainier Cruz on Sunday said they are just waiting for an engineering unit from the US before they move Pemberton's detention van.

Cruz added that US officials have already coordinated with ISAFP regarding Pemberton's transfer.

Upon transfer, the same set up will be followed, meaning Pemberton will be secured jointly by BuCor and American personnel.

A military official said the transfer is just temporary, pending the construction of a detention facility inside the ISAFP compound.

Officials earlier announced that an existing detention facility inside the ISAFP compound will be improved to accommodate Pemberton. The plan includes the installation of closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras and barbwire for security.

Pemberton has been detained inside the van even before an Olongapo City court convicted him last December for the October 2014 killing of transgender Jeffrey "Jennifer " Laude. Pemberton was sentenced to six to 12 years of imprisonment for homicide.

<http://retiredanalyst.blogspot.com/>

NPA belies military claims

From the Sun Star-Davao

THE New People's Army (NPA) belied the claim of the military and some tribal leaders that the rebels were behind the killing of the 15-year-old Grade 3 student of the Salugpongan School in Talaingod town in Davao del Norte last month.

In a statement emailed to Sun.Star Davao yesterday, Tano Paragas, spokesperson for the NPA's Davao-Bukidnon Sub Regional Command, Southern Mindanao Region, said Alibando Tingkas was killed by Alamara which is run by military.

Paragas said there is no truth about what has been earlier claimed by the members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). He added that the United States-Aquino Regime, military and the Alamara has long been targeting the lumads.

Paragas said Joven Salangani, who was tagged in killing Tingkas, is a member of the Alamara, the group who killed the leader of the Salugpungan Datu Manliro Landahay. The latter was murdered last November 7 by Donato Salangani.

Datu Lumansad Sibogan, member of the board of trustees of the Ata-Manobo Tribal Council of Elders Association in Talaingod, earlier said that Alamara is a myth. He added that it has nothing to do with the threats and killings in town.

Sibogan also said that Salangani is a member of the communist movement under a certain Kumander Jose. He added that the motive behind the incident was personal grudge, after Donato Salangani was killed by the NPA rebels as well.