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# OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS NEWS CLIPPINGS

19 February 2016

**Friday** 

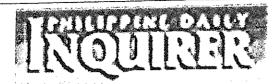
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Missiles 'serious concern,' says Kerry

WASHINGTON—US Secretary of State John Kerry on Wednesday slammed China for its increased "militarization" in the strategically important South China Sea, after Taiwan said Beijing placed surfaceto-air missiles on a disputed island there.

"There is every evidence, every day, that there has been an increase of militarization of one kind or another. It's of a serious concern," Kerry told reporters.

Fox News first reported missile launchers and a radar system had arrived on Woody Island, part of the Paracels chain, in the past week.

Taiwan's defense ministry later confirmed the existence of the missile system on the island.

Taiwan and Vietnam also claim Woody Island, which is known to the Chinese as Yongx- 1- Tel no. (02) 845-9555 Local: 5285, 5295 ingdao and to the Vietnamese

uring the land.

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## US hits China militarization

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Woody Island has an artificial harbor, an airport, roads, military posts and other buildings. Recent satellite imagery appears to show it is adding a helicopter base likely dedicated to antisubmarine warfare missions.

Beijing has controlled all of the Paracels, which are also claimed by Taiwan and Vietnam; since seizing several of the islands from South Vietnam in a brief, bloody naval battle toward the end of the Vietnam War.

#### Artificial islands

But tensions in the South China Sea, through which a third of global trade worth \$5 trillion passes every year, have mounted in recent months since China transformed disputed reefs in the Spratly islands further south into artificial islands capable of supporting military facilities.

Washington says China's move threatens free passage in a strategically vital area and has sent warships to sail close to the disputed islands to assert freedom of navigation, raising fears of escalation.

"We have said repeatedly with respect to China that the standard that should be applied to all countries with respect to the South China Sea is no militarization," Kerry said.

Kerry recalled that when Chinese President Xi Jinping came to Washington late last year, "he stood in the Rose Garden with President (Barack) Obama and said China will not militarize in the South China Sea."

"We had these conversations with the Chinese and I'm confident that over the next days, we will have further very serious conversations on this," Kerry said.

He said he hoped that Beijing would work to resolve the maritime disputes "not through unilateral action, not through force, not through militarization but through diplomacy and by working with other countries and claimants."

On Tuesday, Obama and the leaders of the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) called for "tangible steps" to lower tensions in the South China Sea after concluding a special summit in California.

#### Rival claims

members Brunei. Asean Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam dispute ownership of parts of reports that it had deployed ad-

the Spratlys with China.

The Philippines has taken its dispute with China to the United Nations Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague for resolution.

China has refused to take part in the proceedings, but the tribunal has went ahead with the case and is expected to hand down a ruling by April or May

After reports of the missile deployment spread on Wednesday, the US defense department urged all the claimants to deal with their territorial and maritime claims in accordance with international law, and to commit to peacefully manage or resolve their disputes.

"We call on South China Sea claimants to publicly commit to a reciprocal halt to further land reclamation, construction of new facilities, and new militarization of disputed features," said Navy Cmdr. Bill Urban, a spokesperson for the Pentagon.

A US official confirmed on Wednesday that China had placed a surface-to-air missile system on Woody Island, but said it was unclear whether the deployment was intended for the long-term. The official was not authorized to discuss the information publicly and so spoke on condition of anonymity.

"We believe the photos are accurate and that China has deployed SAMs to Woody Island," the official told Agence France-Presse (AFP), referring to surface-to-air missiles.

The official, referring to the Fox News photos, said the missiles appeared to be HQ-9s, which have a range of about 200 kilometers.

Experts say the missiles could be used to target enemy aircraft.

HIS Jane's Intelligence Review agreed with that conclusion in its assessment of commercial satellite imagery of the island.

The magazine's deputy editor, Neil Ashdown, said that depending on the version of the HQ-9 deployed, the system has a range of between 125 km and 230 km, and would be the most advanced surface-to-air missile system currently deployed on land in the South China Sea.

Ashdown described that as a significant military escalation.

Australian Foreign Secretary Julie Bishop on Thursday said in Beijing that China had "challenged"

vance surface-to-air missiles to Woody Island."

Bishop, the first senior Western official to visit China since the missile reports, said she had raised the issue of the South China Sea militarization in her talks.

"President Xi said in Washington last year that China did not intend to militarize the islands and we certainly hold China to that and that's been reiterated to me," she told reporters, after meeting China's top diplomat, State Councilor Yang Jiechi.

"In the case of the surface-to-air missile claim, that's disputed by China. We raised the matter and we've had a discussion about it," Bishop added.

Pressed on whether China was denying the presence of missiles on Woody Island, she said, "No, they did not deny, but nor did they admit that there were. It was challenged. The reports were challenged."

The Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson, Hong Lei, on Thursday would also neither confirm nor deny if the missiles were on Woody Island, repeating that China has had defense facilities on the islands for decades.

#### Media hype

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Wednesday accused Western media of hyping the issue and saying more attention should be paid to the "public goods and services" provided by China's development of its maritime claims.

Beijing has insisted it has the right to build "self-defense" systems in the region.

China needs to strengthen its "self-defense" in the South China Sea in the face of "more frequent provocations from the US military," the state-run tabloid Global Times wrote in an editorial on Thursday.

The paper, quoting the defense ministry, also said "China has deployed weapons on the island for a long time."

It did not specify which weapons were on Woody Island.

"Jet fighters from the United States, an outside country, may feel uneasy when making provocative flights in the region. To us, that's a proper result," it said, referring to the reports of the missile deploy-Reports ment on Woody Island. from AFP, AP and Reuters

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## Troops, BIFF clash anew

BY VICTOR REYES

FRESH fighting between government forces and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters erupted in Datu Salibo town, Maguindanao yesterday.

Four soldiers were injured. Troops from the 6th infantry Division were on routine security operation when they clashed with the BIFF men in barangay Tee at around 9 a.m. The firefight ended around 1 p.m. when the BIFF fighters withdrew, said Capt. Joann Petinglay, public affairs officer of the 6th ID.

Petinglay said the security op-

eration is ongoing, referring to the military's efforts to secure a construction company involved in the construction of a drainage system in Datu Salibo town.

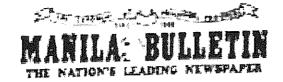
The BIFF has been trying to extort money from the construction firm, forcing the military to deploy soldiers to secure the firm's workers and equipment. The deployment has sparked on and off fighting with the BIFF for the past two weeks.

Petinglay said the BIFF refused to leave the barangay. "The area is their stronghold, that's why they refused to leave," the official said.

Last February 10, government troops clashed with Moro Islamic Liberation Front rebels in the nearby town of Datu Saudi Ampatuan town, leaving a soldier and an MILF rebel dead. The rebels opened fire at the soldiers who were pursuing a group of BIFF men.

The BIFF, composed of former MILF leaders and fighters, has about 200 men mostly based in Maguindanao. The group, along with the terrorist Abu Sayyaf, has pledged allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria.

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### BIFF tagged in series of Maguindanao bombings

CAMP SIONGCO, Maguindanao – The military yesterday blamed the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) for the spate of roadside bombings in Maguindanao targeting not only government forces but civilians as well.

"This is terrorism in action and we need the support of all people before we all become victims of this devious act," Capt. Joann Petinglay, regional Army spokersperson, said of the acts of the BIFF which pledged allegiance to international jihadist groups.

"Violence is going outside the battle zones in Datu Salibo and getting closer to civilian populace," she added

Petinglay said the projects being protected by the military is for the people of Maguindanao and the conflict was not inflicted by the military.

"The dredging project is for all of you, after the project is completed, the soldiers will leave the area," she added.

Last Tuesday, the treasurer of Datu Salibo town, along with three others individuals were killed when an improvised explosive device (IED) went off as their vehicle passed by.

The latest BIFF attempt to set off improvised bomb was along a highway in Gindulungan town in Maguindanao.

An alert infantryman noticed a bag left unattended at a roadside. Army bomb experts quickly responded and confirmed it was a bomb then defused it, Col. Feliciano Budiongan, 601st Army brigade commander, told reporters. A team of soldiers had just passed by the site when the IED was found.

Another IED exploded at a roadside in Barangay Crossing Taviran, about 700 meters away from an Army detachment and frequented by motorists.

"Luckily, no civilian commuters were hurt in the blast," he said.

The IED, according to Budiongan, was made of black powder, empty shells of ammunition, concrete nails, electrical wiring and chains for motorcycles.

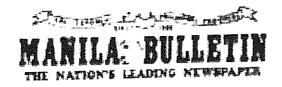
The bombings along Maguindanao highways came as the Army and BIFF have been trading bullets and mortars in Datu Salibo since Feb. 5 after the lawless group attacked a government dredging project in town.

As expected, BIFF spokesperson Abu Misri Mama denied his group was behind roadside bombings, including in Datu Saudi Ampatuan that left a town treasurer and three others.

Petinglay said the BIFF bombings were diversionary tactics to ease up pressures in Datu Salibo.

"They (BIFF) cannot sustain skirmishes with government troops so they are into diversionary tactics," she said. (PNA)

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## DSWD takes custody of NPA 'child warrior'

DAVAO CITY - The Department of Social Welfare and Development in the Davao region (DSWD-11) yesterday said that it will maintain custody of the alleged 'child warrior' wounded and captured after an encounter between government forces and New People's Army (NPA) rebels last week in Compostela Valley province.

The 14-year old boy is still recuperating from a gunshot wound in his left leg at the Southern Philippines Medical Center here.

"He is still at risk," said Pedrita Dimakiling, head of the DSWD-11 Protective Services Unit during the regular Armed Forces of the Philippines – Philippine National Police (AFP-PNP) Press Conference on Wednesday here at the Royal Mandaya Hotel.

Dimakiling cited the importance of keeping the minor under the DSWD's protective shelter and rehabilitation program after treating his gunshot wound.

"There's still a threat to his life. Right there is no need for him to immediately return home after medications," she emphasized.

Dimakiling also pointed out that the DSWD has nothing to do with the recent claims of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the NPAs regarding the 14-year old boy.

"The government will be on the side of the child especially on his protection and security," she said.

The boy, together with another wounded NPA member identified as Ronel Paas alias Dondon were

intercepted in a checkpoint mounted by the elements of 46th IB last February 9 after an armed encounter in Barangay Tibagon in Pantukan, Compostela Valley.

Paas, however, was declared dead on arrival at a hospital in Pantukan.

In the same press briefing, 10th Infantry (Agila) Division chief information officer Captain Rhyan Batchar said the army considers the 14-year boy as a child soldier who was used by the NPA rebels in their military and combat operations.

"This conclusion was based on the statement given to us by the boy himself. He told us that he is actively participating in the activities of the NPA rebels in the area," Batchar stressed. (Alexander D. Lopez) 0 February 2016



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Rebeis'
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A soldier stands
next to a vehicle
damaged late
last Tuesday by
a roadside
bomb along a
highway in Datu
Saudi
Ampatuan,
Maguindanao
which killed
three civilians.
Army and
Muslim rebels
have engaged
in sporadic
fighting for days
in the area

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# Router

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# Masbate security focus as 2,000 troopers sent in

LUCENA CITY—At least 2,000 soldiers and policemen would be stationed in Masbate for the election period, signifying a focus by law enforcement agencies on the province that has become notorious for political violence and where seven politically related

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killings had already been reported since the start of the year.

In a statement quoting the Philippine National Police chief, Director Gen-

eral Ricardo Marquez, the PNP said 350 more policemen would be sent to Masbate in addition to at least 1,000 already there.

In the statement, released by Lt. Col. Angelo Guzman, public information chief of the Armed Forces of the Philippines' Southern Luzon Command (Solcom), said 100 more soldiers would be tapped from the Army's 9th Infantry Division to reinforce 500 soldiers already in the province.

Marquez and Lt. Gen. Ricardo Visaya, Solcom chief, met with Masbate government leaders and candidates. led by Gov. Vicente Homer Revil, on Tuesday for a dialogue for peaceful elections on May 9.

The group will sign a peace covenant on March 4.

One of the main reasons law enforcement agencies are focusing on Masbate, according to Visaya, is the presence of New People's Army (NPA) rebels and private armed groups in the province.

Visava appealed to candidates to shun

private armies.

NPA rebels in Masbate. according to Visaya, are a "potent threat." Candidates, he said, should refuse to pay permit-to-campaign fees to the rebels which the Solcom chief said the police and military would stop as a "top priority" program.

Gov. Revil said while Masbate has gained notoriety for reports about private armies and "strong political rivalries," the province is on the police watch list of election hot spots mainly because of NPA rebels. Delfin T. Mallari Jr. and Mar S. Arguelles, Inquirer Southern Luzon

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## 2,050 cops,

## soldiers to Masbate

#### By Francisco Tuyay

TWO battalions of combined military and police troops will be mobilized in Masbate to contain the threat posed by New People's Army and criminal syndicates to the May 2016 elections.

Southern Luzon Command Chief Lt. Gen. Ricardo Visaya said the continued existence of local insurgents and private armed groups in the island province is a primary security concern for authorities. Masbate is also under the Comelec watch list of potential flash points.

"We appeal to the candidates not to use PAGs," Visaya said in a recent dialogue among stakeholders in Masbate, including local politicians led by Vicente Hommer Revil, Chief Supt. Augusto Marquez Jr., director of Police Regional Office-5. Visaya solicited the commitment of all candidates to make the elections peaceful and orderly in Masbate.

A total of 2,050 police and military personnel will be deployed to render election duties in Masbate, said Lt. Col. Angelo Guzman. De Guzman said 100 troops from the Reconnaisance Company of the 9th Infantry Division will be reassigned to Masbate to beef up the 500-strong personnel of the 9th Infantry Battalion.

Guzman said the additional deployment of troops would help contain the threat pose by the rebels and PAGs currently operating in Masbate.

Despite attempts by the military and police to free the province from NPA presence, Masbate remained a rebel-infested area for years. Politicians keep the NPAs or PAGs under their employ to intimidate or defeat their opponents.

For his part, Marquez noted the presence of NPAs is a serious threat to the electoral contest as NPAs collects permit to campaign and permits to win from political candidates.

"Giving in to their demands for PTC and PTW will allow the NPAs to increase their finances and resources and that will create another and bigger problem for the AFP and PNP," Marquez noted.

Visaya was elated by the attendance of local candidates during a recent dialogue.

"I am happy that despite their differences in political affiliations, they are one with the AFP and PNP in our common goal for a peaceful Masbate not only during the election period but more importantly for the greater future ahead," said Visaya.

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## Gov't, NDF came close to sealing peace deal

By Delfin T. Mallari Inquirer Southern Luzon

LUCENA CITY—Communist rebels waging one of the longest insurgencies in the world and the Philippine government came close to sealing a peace agreement in December 2014, when the Aquino administration sent emissaries to The Netherlands to hold secret, backroom talks with leaders of the local communist movement.

Luis Jalandoni, head of the peace panel of the National Democratic Front (NDF) of the Philippines, said a draft peace agreement was signed on Dec. 8, 2014, by NDF lead-GOV'T, NDF/AIO

#### From page A1

ers and a team of emissaries led by former Agrarian Reform Secretary Hernani Braganza

According to Jalandoni, Braganza's team went to The Netherlands in February, October and December 2014 for informal talks with the peace panel of the NDF, an umbrella organization of underground leftist groups supporting the communist insurgency in the country-side.

#### Truce, cooperation

Jalandoni, a former priest, said the draft peace agreement was authenticated by Elisabeth Slattum, Royal Norwegian government special envoy.

The Norwegian government is brokering peace talks between the Philippine government and the communist insurgents.

The document, according to Jalandoni, proposes "truce and cooperation within the term of the Aquino government."

He said Braganza's group returned on Feb. 18, 2015, and both parties drafted a proposal for truce and cooperation that would be presented to the government.

#### **Bad time**

But it was a bad time for the Aquino administration, which was facing its worst political crisis following the deaths of 44 police commandos in a covert counterterrorism operation that backfired in Mamasapano, Maguindanao province.

"These efforts were rebuffed and set aside by [Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process] Secretary Teresita Deles and not acted on by [the government and] President Aquino. The Braganza team was disauthorized," Jalandoni said.

He said the peace initiatives of Braganza's group, the NDF negotiating panel and the Royal Norwegian government special envoy "[came] to naught."

#### 'Check the facts'

Jalandoni disclosed the secret talks after presidential spokesperson Edwin Lacierda called the communist leaders liars, accusing them of being

uninterested in resuming peace talks with the government.

"[Lacierda] should check the facts before 'pronouncing the false claim that 'they (NDF) refused to come to the table," Jalandoni said in a statement on Thursday.

#### Refused

Lacierda spoke after six policemen were killed in an ambush by communist New People's Army (NPA) rebels in Baggao, Cagayan province, on Tuesday.

Lacierda said the NDF "refused to come to the table" and "made many conditions" for the resumption of peace talks.

Jalandoni said responsibility for the failure of the talks "lies squarely on Secretary Deles and President Aquino."

Jose Maria Sison, exiled founder of the Communist Party of the Philippines, said Mr. Aquino was no longer interested in the resumption of peace talks.

"Mr. Aquino does not care about the peace negotiation," Sison said in an online interview.

#### NPA surrender

He said Deles and former Armed Forces of the Philippines Chief of Staff Gen. Emmanuel Bautista did not want to pursue peace talks with communist rebels because they were "convinced that the government could defeat the NPA and what they wanted to achieve was force the rebels to surrender."

The NDF has been engaged in on-and-off negotiations with the government for the past 27 years. Formal peace negotiations have been stalled since February 2011.

#### NDF demands

The NDF has been demanding the release of detained communist leaders before the resumption of negotiations, saying the jailed rebels are covered by provisions of the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (Jasig) signed by rebel leaders and government officials in 1995.

The government, however, rejected the demand and kept the communist leaders in detention.

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# Private guards eyed for power towers

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY—A consensus is taking shape to deploy private security groups to protect transmission towers in Mindanao against attacks That lead to power supply interruption in areas already facing a shortage in electricity.

The proposal to send private armed contractors to guard power transmission sites and other facilities of the National Grid Corp. of the Philippines (NGCP) was made during a meeting held here by the House energy committee on the series of bombings that had toppled NGCP towers and disrupted power supply in many areas.

NGCP which maintains the towers and other facilities that bring electricity from power plants to distributors, said it is studying the proposal.

Cagayan de Oro Rep. Rufus Rodriguez, energy committee cochair, brought up the possibility of sending private armed contractors to guard power facilities, especially in areas where transmission towers had been targeted in previous bombings or are facing attacks.

Maj. Gen. Demy Tejares, deputy commander of the Army's 1st Infantry Division, said the idea is welcome, admitting that the military could not possibly guard all NGCP towers in Mindanao.

Cynthia Alabanza, NGCP spokesperson, said the NGCP is open to the idea. She said this is not the first time that the NGCP considered hiring private armed contractors to guard power facilities.

Alabanza, however, said the NGCP is taking a long, close look at the proposal, "making sure that everything is above board and everything is with legal basis."

At the meeting held by the House energy committee, a group of consumers in Mindanao raised the need for legislation to impose tougher penalties for attacks on power facilities which should be considered as acts of economic sabotage.

One of the recommendations put forward by the group Mindanao Coalition of Power Consumers is a prohibition on the planting of trees or construction projects near existing power transmission and distribution lines.

The group also urged the military to take the lead in protecting transmission lines, especially in areas the police could not secure.

The NGCP has reported that in 2015 alone, 14 transmission towers had been bombed.

The attacks took place in Lanao del Norte, Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Sultan Kudarat, North Cotabato and Marawi City

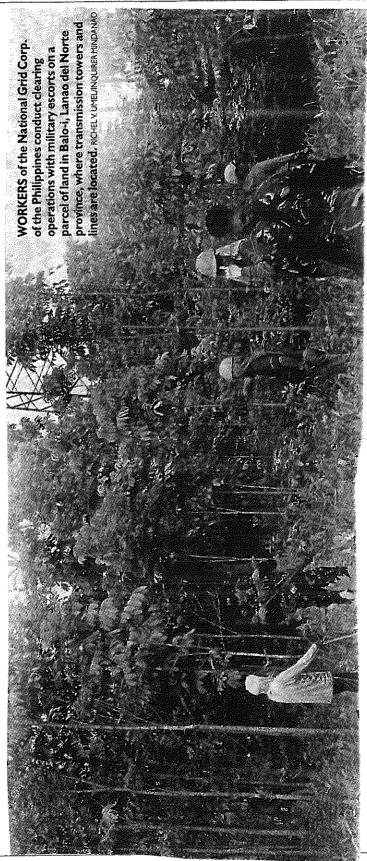
This year, two transmission towers in Aleosan, North Cotabato, and in Pantar Dimayon, Bubong, Lanao del Sur, were also bombed although they were not toppled, Alabanza said.

The attacks have brought outages to many parts of Mindanao. Shorter interruptions in the supply of electricity have been caused by trees and vegetation near transmission towers.

Police said they continue to hunt the suspects in the bomb-

ings.

Chief Supt. Isagani Nerez, head of the Philippine National Police's Directorate for Integrated Police Operations in Eastern Mindanao, said four suspects in one of the attacks had been charged. Jigger Jerusalem, Inquirer Mindanao



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### Develop Phl arms industry, group urges By JESS DIAZ

Party-list group Agham is advocating the development of the local firearms and ammunition industry.

"Our soldiers, policemen, law enforcers, and agencies needing guns will save a lot if they buy products produced by our own manufacturers," former congressman Angelo Palmones, Agham president, told the Usaping Balita forum at the Serve restaurant in Quezon City yesterday.

He said the money that could be saved from buying locally made firearms and ammunition could be used to procure other equipment and gadgets for soldiers, policemen and law enforcers.

He said Filipino manufacturers can produce good quality guns and bullets and are in our agencies is that they have

fact exporting their products.

Retired police director Leo Santiago, a member of Agham, said local gun makers like Armscor, Metro Arms and Shooters "have a following among civilians, who buy guns for self-defense, for sport or to collect."

However, he lamented that the Philippine National Police (PNP), Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), National Bureau of Investigation and other agencies prefer to import firearms and ammunition, instead of buying them from local suppliers.

"Our Filipino gun makers can compete with their foreign counterparts in terms of quality. The problem with

a bias for foreign products," Santiago, who once headed the PNP Special Action Force (SAF), said.

He said Cebu-based Filipinos designed the major part of the Armalite M-4 rifle that an American manufacturer has been selling to the PNP, AFP and other agencies.

He said several M-4 rifles bought by the PNP from this particular manufacturer were among the firearms lost by PNP-SAF troopers in the Jan. 25, 2015 Mamasapano incident

#### Imports favored

Santiago said the government arsenal, which is supposed to manufacture firearms and ammunition for the AFP, seems bent on continuing with

"The arsenal launched a defense eco-zone in Bataan last year. However, the plan is to invite foreign manufacturers to use the eco-zone as their hub to make guns for export to the Philippines and other countries," he said.

He also claimed that the Bureau of Corrections, PNP and the Presidential Security Group bought Glock 9mm pistols from the same supplier at about P30,000, P20,000 and P19,000 apiece, respectively.

The former PNP official said he could not understand why the same pistol was bought from the same supplier at different prices.

Palmones said Agham is inquiring into the anomalous procurement.

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# MILF tells members: Maintain ceasefire

The head of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) yesterday urged his followers to maintain a ceasefire with the government despite failure to pass a bill implementing a peace accord.

MILF chairman Murad Ebrahim made the appeal in a statement carried on the

group's Facebook page.

"In spite of the non-passage of the (bill), the MILF will continue to uphold the peace process and ensure that all the gains will be preserved," his statement read.

"Our military forces will at all times maintain its defensive posture," he added.

Lawmakers this month failed to pass a bill that would have implemented a peace agreement forged between the 10,000-strong MILF and the government, which raised fears of fresh violence.

President Aquino, whose six-year term ends in June, had lobbied hard for the passage of the bill, which would have granted the nation's Muslim minority an autonomous southern homeland.

But he was unable to muster enough support in the lower house of Congress to secure a vote before the legislature adjourned this month ahead of national elections in May.

The MILF signed a peace accord with Aquino's government in 2014 to end its struggle for independence, which began in the 1970s.

Four decades of fighting in the south have left 100,000 people killed according to official estimates.

Most political analysts say Aquino lost lawmakers' support for the autonomy bill after 44 police commandos were killed during a raid into MILF territory last year. – AFP

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# US bases would have deterred China - Trillanes

Vice presidential candidate Sen. Antonio F. Trillanes IV said yesterday that China could not have reclaimed and occupied the islands in the West Philippine Sea that the Philippines and China are contesting had the Senate extended the PH-US Military Bases Agreement on September 16, 1991.

"Kailangan<sup>3</sup> siguro alalahanin natin kung sino mga nagpaalis dahil malaking problemang ginawa ngayon. They (China) won't even be there to reclaim and occupy those islands. Yes. The presence of US troops will be enough. Tapos there is freedom of navigation patrol din sila. It ensures Filipino fishermen to fish in these territories, no commercial vessels that they could stop," Trillanes, a former Navy officer and chairman of the Senate Committee on National Defense, said.

Trillanes said that the US has been sending its patrol sea and aircraft to enforce the internationally-accepted freedom of navigation in the South China Sea despite protests from China.

During a press briefing at the regular Kapihan sa Senado, Trillanes said that the controversial PH-US Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement designed to complement the 1957 US-US

Mutual Defense Treaty rectifies the "mistake" in 1991 when the extension of the PH-US MBA was rejected.

At present, the US is not on seeking to establish military bases in the country, he added.

Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago, a noted constitutionalist, maintained that the EDCA should have been transmitted to the Senate for ratification as a treaty.

The Supreme Court, however, ruled that the EDCA is not a treaty but an executive agreement.

Filipinos should bear in mind that there were no Chinese incursions on Philippine-claimed territories when the PH-US MBA was existing, Trillanes said.

"Malaking pagkakamali 'yong pinalayas natin ang US military bases. Kung sino man ang mga senador na bumoto against that, kailangan maalala natin huwag ng natin e-glorify. Kailangan natin question-nin 'yong wisdom nila bakit nagpadala doon sa mga makakaliwang grupo," Trillanes said.

Voting 12-11, the Senate led by Senate President Jovito R. Salonga rejected the continued stay of the US military bases despite a last ditch appeal by President Corazon C. Aquino. (Mario B. Casavuran) 19 February 2016



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## Navy ship dispatched to fetch rescued fisher

THE military has sent a Philippine Navy ship to fetch a Filipino fisherman rescued by Vietnamese forces near their occupied island in the South China Sea or West Philippine Sea more than a week ago, a military official disclosed yesterday.

Vice Adm. Alexander Lopez, commander of the military's Western Command, said the logistics ship BRP Laguna is now on its way to Vietnam's Sin Cowe Island after leaving the Philippine-occupied Pag-asa Island.

Earlier reports said the fisherman, Anthon Gradule, 34, of Batangas, was rescued by Vietnamese forces last Feb. 8 while clinging to a fishing boat that capsized due to big waves. His four companions are still missing.

Lopez said BRP Laguna departed from the Pag-asa Island last Wednesday

The ship initially left Puerto Princesa City last Feb. 4 mainly to bring supplies to Filipino troops stationed at the Pag-asa Island and eight other Philippine-occupied territories in the South China Sea.

After delivering supplies at the Rizal Reef, the ship's engine broke down last Feb. 8, forcing it to return to Puerto Princesa City for repairs. It resumed the resupply mission last Sunday and arrived at Pagasa Island two days later. — Victor Reyes

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### Sketches

By ANA MARIE PAMINITUAN

#### Because it can

Critics scoff that nothing solid was achieved beyond a friendly tete-a-tete; others saw a baby step in the right direction. The just concluded first-ever special summit between the United States and the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations will henceforth become an annual event. This is according to the joint US-ASEAN statement is-



sued at the end of the summit in Rancho Mirage,

Rancho Mirage in Sunnylands is also where US President Barack Obama laid out the red carpet for his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping on June 7-8, 2013, just half a year after Xi assumed the top post from Hu Jintao.

In its pivot or rebalance to Asia, Washington has engaged in a delicate dance with Beijing, which is challenging American dominance in the region.

The special summit with ASEAN is seen as Obama's way of reasserting US influence in the region. It's doubtful though if it will stop the Chinese from staking their expansive territorial claims in disputed waters.

Beijing understands the language of force. And so far, no force has stood in its way as it continues its creation of artificial islands throughout the South China Sea. The islands weren't built for vacation resorts, so it's not surprising that the news accompanying the Sunnylands summit was about China deploying a surface-to-air missile system on Woody Island in the Paracels chain.

The Chinese are rapidly developing an airport on another island claimed by the Philippines. Chinese military ships, submarines and aircraft have started using the contested islands.

Those occasional low flybys conducted by the US military? They're just gnats to be shooed away by the Chinese. The joint US-ASEAN statement? Sticks and stones may break bones, but words will not hurt Beijing or stop it from its reclamation activities.

That was a nice group photo in Sunnylands, but not even the promise of an annual summit between the regional grouping and Uncle Sam will deter Beijing.

There was no specific mention of China in the joint US-ASEAN statement. It did reaffirm the "key principles that will guide our cooperation going forward."

Among the notable principles:

 "Mutual respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, equality and political independence of all nations by firmly upholding the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, the ASEAN Charter and international law."

 "Firm adherence to a rules-based regional and international order that upholds and protects the rights

and privileges of all states."

 "Shared commitment to peaceful resolution of disputes, including full respect for legal and diplomatic processes, without resorting to the threat or use of force in accordance with universally recognized principles of international law and the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).'

 "Shared commitment to maintain peace, security and stability in the region, ensuring maritime security and safety, including the rights of freedom of navigation and overflight and other lawful uses of the seas, and unimpeded lawful maritime commerce as described in the... (UNCLOS) as well as non-militarization and self-restraint in the conduct of activities."

It would be interesting to see how those commitments will be manifested as Beijing ignores calls to stop its island reclamation. So far its response to such

calls has boiled down to "make my day."

That part calling for "full respect for legal and diplomatic processes" supports a statement issued by the US and the European Union, urging Beijing to respect whatever ruling is handed down by the UNbacked arbitral tribunal in The Hague on the case the Philippines filed, seeking a definition of our maritime entitlements under UNCLOS.

The US and EU statement indicates that the international community is also seeing the possibility that China. which has boycotted the arbitration proceedings, may simply brush aside the court ruling, expected later this year. The ruling is final and cannot be appealed, but it cannot compel compliance by the affected parties.

Diplomats from several non-Asian countries have told me that they believe Beijing will ignore the ruling

of the arbitral court.

In unity there is strength, and it's good that ASEAN has finally organized its common economic community. But China is bigger than all 10 ASEAN states and is asserting its size, and telling countries outside the region to stay out.

It is also intriguing that ASEAN members such as Vietnam agreed to a portion of the joint summit statement in which the leaders reaffirmed their commitment "to ensure opportunities for all of our peoples, through strengthening democracy, enhancing good governance and adherence to the rule of law, promoting and protect-ing human rights and fundamental freedoms, encouraging the promotion of tolerance and moderation ...

I guess the summit needed a one-size-fits-all statement and individual states couldn't quibble too much about the wording of what amounts to a best-efforts pledge.
The statement covered US-ASEAN cooperation on

a wide range of issues including climate change, law enforcement, human trafficking, terrorism, unregulated fishing, illicit trafficking of wildlife and timber, sustainable development, and cyberspace security "consistent with norms of responsible state behavior."

Not all ASEAN states are concerned about maritime territorial conflicts and are in fact looking to strengthen

relations with Beijing

Even Washington is heavily engaged economically and in many other areas with Beijing. Obviously, the US-ASEAN summit is meant to bring Uncle Sam closer to the Southeast Asian community. But it won't change the status quo in disputed waters, which is that China will continue doing whatever it likes to do.

No question about it: China now rules the South

China Sea. Because it can.

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#### **EDITORIAL**

### **Pestilence**

Today six families are mourning the loss of their loved ones to a rebellion that has lost its cause. The six, all members of the Regional Public Safety Battalion of the Cagayan police, were killed last Tuesday when they pursued New People's Army rebels who torched heavy equipment being used by the National Irrigation Administration to build a dam in Baggao town.

Insurgencies thrive on oppression and other forms of social injustice. The Marcos dictatorship became the best recruiter for the communist movement and, in Mindanao, Islamic separatism. The restoration of democracy in 1986 blunted the communist cause. Democracy has its warts, but several administrations have generally given Filipinos fewer reasons to support armed insurgencies.

Around the world, communist regimes have also imploded. The handful that remain are hardly models for free societies that value civil liberties and governance by

Today six families are mourng the loss of their loved ones to rebellion that has lost its cause. when they embraced the free ne six. all members of the Remarket.

> In the Philippines, the communist New People's Army has been reduced to armed extortion. It has aggravated poverty in the countryside by scaring away investments in areas where jobs and livelihood opportunities are most needed. The NPA has become a public pestilence in the areas where it has destroyed power transmission and telecommunications towers. Its leaders, who refuse to go home for fear not only of state forces but also of their own comrades, have sought refuge in one of the world's most liberal nations.

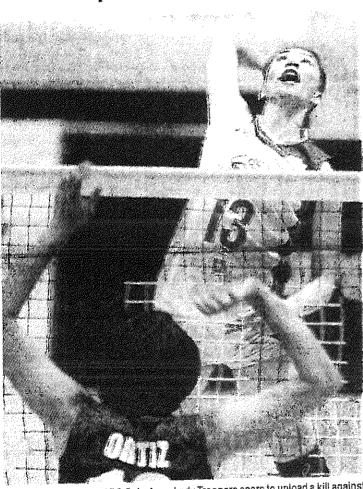
Several individuals who left the insurgency have found that advancing their causes through the political arena is far more effective than taking up arms. Power that emanates from the barrel of a gun cannot be sustained. The deaths of the six policemen should serve as another nail in the coffin of a discredited movement.

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# Lady Troopers turn back Toplander in big comeback



Rachel Anne Daquis of RC Cola-Army Lady Troopers soars to unload a kill against Malka Ortiz of Foton Toplander during their match in the PSL Invitational at San JORY MENDOZA JE Juan Arena

Germa tomatrow (Malotos Sports and Convention Center) p.m. - F2 Logistics vs RC Cola-Army 3 p.m. - San Jose Builders vs Foton

RC Cola-Army came out strong off a threeconference hiatus, crushing Foton, 25-17, 25-9, 25-22, last night in an impressive start in the 2016 Philippine Superliga (PSL) Invitational Conference women's volleyball tournament at The Arena in San luan.

Drawing solid games from veterans Honey Royse Tubino, Jovelyn Gonzaga and Rachel Anne Daquis, the Lady Troopers pounced on the Toplander's sloppy floor defense in the first two sets then held off their rivals in the third to fashion out the romp

Tubing spearheaded the team's attack with 10 hits and a block for a game-high 11 points while Ganzaga and Daquis backed her up with nine and eight markers, respectively, as the Lady Troopers served notice of their title drive in the inter-club tourney backed by Asics, Mikasa, Senoh, Mueller and Grand Sports and was aired live over TV5.

"It's good to be back. We are very excited to play our first game after a three-conference absence. Everything looks familiar," said RC Cola-Army coach Kungfu Reves shortly after their 44-minute domination of the reigning Grand Prix champions.

Also making a homecoming is Daquis, who towed Petron to a pair of titles before returning to Army, which dominated the league in the 2013 All-Filipino. 2013 Grand Prix and 2014 All-Filipino conferences.

There was really no adjustment," said Daguis. "I spent a total nine years with Army right after college. So, I played more relaxed and more comtortable in my first game with them after a long while."

The Lady Troopers jumped the gun early and raced to an 11-0 start in the second set. With Foton struggling on both ends, Tubino and Gonzaga imposed their might upfront with the Toplander failing to neutralize the power-hitting duo.

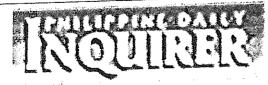
Fatty Orendain tried to rally Foton in the third

as the Toplander kept the game close, only to commit an attacl, error before Tubino scored off the block to clinch the win for RC Cola-Army

Orendain finished with eight attacks and block for 11 points while newcomer Danna Hereson chipped in five points for the Toplander, scates lev Perez and libero Bia General to the

OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS - Email add: oacpa.army2012@( who temporarily lost prized blocker Jaja Santiago, 95

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# PSL: RC-Army crushes Foton

#### By Marc Anthony Reyes

RC COLA-Army wasted no time in announcing its return.

The three-time champion Lady Troopers, coming back to the league after a hiatus, scored an easy straight sets victory over an incomplete Foton Toplander lineup last night at the start of the Philippine Superliga Invitational Cup at FilOil Flying V Arena.

RC Cola-Army wasn't threatened by the Toplander throughout, flashing its old championship poise and impeccable teamwork to score the lopsided 25-17, 25-9, 25-22 win.

Rachel Anne Daquis also returned to the team, scoring seven points.

"I may not be the most senior or the best player in the team but I provide the 'positive vibe," said Daquis. "I communicate to my teammates and try to boost their morale on and off the court."

Daquis played for Petron for two confer-

ences in the absence of the Army franchise.

"I didn't have to make a big adjustment," said the 2015 All Filipino Most Valuable Player.

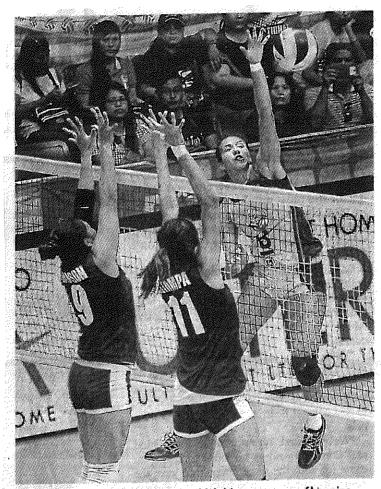
Honey Royse Tubino topscored with 11 points, while team captain Jovelyn Gonzaga had nine for the Lady Troopers, who won the first three conferences of the league from

2013 to middle of 2014.

"We can't hide the smiles," said RC Cola coach Emilio "Kungfu" Reyes. "We are very happy and thankful that PSL and GAMES TOMORROW (Malolos Sports and Convention Center) 1 p.m.—F2 Logistics vs RC Cola-Army 3 p.m.—New San Jose vs Foton

RC Cola allowed us to come back to the league. It's a good homecoming for us."

Foton missed the services of middle spiker Jaja Santiago and setter Ivy Perez, who are fulfilling their duties to National University in the ongoing UAAP.



JOVELYN Gonzaga of RC Cola-Army (right) hammers one of her nine points past Samantha Dawson and Royce Estampa of Foton. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

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### ONLINE NEWS

#### 19 FEBRUARY 2016

## 4 soldiers wounded in fresh clash with BIFF in Maguindanao – Army

By: <u>Karlos Manlupig</u> Inquirer Mindanao

06:00 PM February 18th, 2016

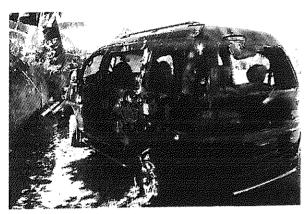
DAVAO CITY — At least four soldiers were wounded in yet another clash in Datu Salibo, Maguindanaoon Thursday

Capt. Jo-ann Petinglay, spokesperson for the military's 6th Infantry Division, said by phone that a company of soldiers were conducting combat patrol in Barangay Tee at around 9 a.m. when they clashed with an undetermined number of Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters gunmen. Petinglay did not identify the wounded soldiers.

Both forces were still exchanging gunfire as of this posting and that two helicopters had been deployed to conduct air support and to evacuate the wounded government soldiers, she said. Clashes between the Philippine Army soldiers and BIFF rebels have been on and off in Maguindanao for weeks now. **SFM** 

# Military warns of more BIFF attacks in Maguindanao

By John Unson (philstar.com) | Updated February 18, 2016 - 2:50pm



The van of Datu Salibo municipal treasurer Carlos Macabangen, damaged by a powerful roadside bomb Tuesdaynight. Facebook/Bobby Benito

MAGUINDANAO, Philippines - The military on Thursday warned the public against possible escalation of attacks by the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) on non-military targets following Tuesday's bombing in Datu Salibo that killed five innocent non-combatants.

Army bomb experts promptly foiled what could have been another deadly roadside bombing at the border of Maguindanao's Datu Saudi and Guindulungan towns late Wednesday by promptly defusing a powerful improvised explosive device (IED) found along the highway by passersby.

Captain Joann Petinglay, spokesperson of the Army's 6th Infantry Division, said Tuesday's bombing, which killed Datu Salibo municipal treasurer Carlos Macabangen, his son Kenneth and companions Alex Alpas and Bensar Agapay, was an indication that the BIFF targets non-combatants.

"The victims were civilians very obviously, riding a civilian vehicle," Petinglay said.

Bobby Benito, executive director of the Mindanao Human Rights Action Center (MinHRAC), on Wednesday wrote on his Facebook that a five-year-old girl, daughter of the municipal treasurer, also perished in the Datu Salibo roadside bombing.

The MinHRAC, involved in various peace advocacy projects complementing the Southern Mindanao peace process, had gathered photos of the bomb victims and their vehicle, riddled with shrapnel holes, as part of its continuing documentation of armed conflicts in Maguindanao.

Benito condemned the bombing and urged the Malaysian-led International Monitoring Team (IMT), which helps enforce the 1997 ceasefire pact between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), to help investigate on the incident.

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

The IMT, compromised of soldiers from Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia and Libya, and non-uniformed conflict resolution experts from Norway, Japan and the European Union, have been monitoring the government-MILF interim truce since late 2003.

The BIFF, however, do not recognize all security agreements and written amity protocols between the government and the MILF, from where it splintered from in late 2010.

Police and Army investigators said the roadside bomb the BIFF used in the attack was fashioned from an 81 millimeter mortar projectile rigged with a blasting mechanism that can be activated from a distance and packed with metal fragments with jagged edges.

Petinglay said they have been receiving persistent feedback from the local communities that the BIFF will perpetrate more bombings and harassments of non-military targets to avenge the deaths of members killed by soldiers in sporadic firefights that started more than a week ago.

The recurring hostilities in the tri-boundary of Maguindanao's Datu Salibo, Datu Piang and Datu Saudi towns began last week when BIFF gunmen shot with rifles the equipment of a construction outfit implementing a flood control project in the area, apparently to intimidate construction workers and force their employer to shell out "protection money."

Macabangen and his companions were on their way to the town proper of Datu Salibo on board a Mitsubishi Delica Van when a powerful IED, planted along a secluded stretch of a highway, went off as their vehicle passed by.

Local officials said the improvised explosive device used in the attack was identical with the home-made bombs the BIFF used in earlier roadside bombings in the municipality.

### 'Air to ground assault' isinagawa nang militar vs BIFF sa Maguindanao

By Bombo Garry FuerzasPosted in Latest NewsThursday, 18 February 2016 19:15

www.bomboradyo.com

COTABATO CITY - Naglunsad nang matinding air strike ang Philippine Air Force (PAF) sa lalawigan ng Maguindanao.

Binomba ng dalawang MG-520 attack helicopters ang mga miyembro ng Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF).

Tinatayang umaabot sa 300 mga rebelde ang nakasagupa ng militar sa Sitio Tampuad, Brgy. Sambolawan at Brgy. Tee, Datu Salibo, Maguindanao.

Sinasabing grupo nina Kumander Abunawas, Kumander Abu Nasria, Kumander Roman at Kumander Abu Saiden ng BIFF ang nakasagupa ng mga tropa ng pamahalaan.

Dahil sa dami ng mga rebelde ay agad nagsagawa nang airstrike ang PAF para tulungan ang napapalabang ground forces.

Habang lumilipad sa himpapawid ang dalawang MG-520 attack helicopters ay tina-target din ito ng BIFF gamit ang Barret sniper rifle na may bala ng 50 caliber machine gun.

Sa ngayon hindi pa matiyak ang mga nasawi at nasugatan sa magkabilang panig dahil nagpapatuloy pa ang kalat-kalat na sagupaan ng militar at BIFF.

Lomobo naman ang bilang ang mga sibilyan na lumikas sa bayan ng Datu Salibo, Maguindanao.

Tuloy-tuloy din namang namimigay ng tulong sa mga evacuees ang ARMM-HEART at ang provincial government ng Maguindanao.