

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



# **ARMY**

**Serving the people. Securing the land.**

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## **OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS NEWS CLIPPINGS**

**20 February 2016**

**Saturday**

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

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The Manila Times

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The Manila Times

PANAHON TV

TODAY'S WEATHER FORECAST FEBRUARY 20, 2016 | SATURDAY

NORTHEAST MONSOON  
AFFECTING NORTHERN LUZON  
(FEBRUARY 19, 5:00 PM)

SUNRISE SUNSET

6:18 AM 6:02 PM

MOONRISE MOONSET

3:59 PM 4:08 AM

FIRST QUARTER FEB 15 3:46 PM FULL MOON FEB 23 2:19 AM

LOW TIDE HIGH TIDE

4:10 AM 9:26 PM  
-0.17 Meter 1.00 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 21<br>SUNDAY | FEB 22<br>MONDAY | FEB 23<br>TUESDAY |                 | FEB 21<br>SUNDAY | FEB 22<br>MONDAY | FEB 23<br>TUESDAY |
|--------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| METRO MANILA | 22 - 31 °C       | 23 - 32 °C       | 23 - 32 °C        | BAGUIO          | 14 - 23 °C       | 14 - 24 °C       | 13 - 23 °C        |
| METRO CEBU   | 24 - 32 °C       | 25 - 32 °C       | 25 - 32 °C        | PUERTO PRINCESA | 24 - 31 °C       | 24 - 32 °C       | 25 - 32 °C        |
| METRO DAVAO  | 24 - 31 °C       | 25 - 32 °C       | 24 - 32 °C        | BORACAY         | 25 - 32 °C       | 24 - 31 °C       | 24 - 32 °C        |

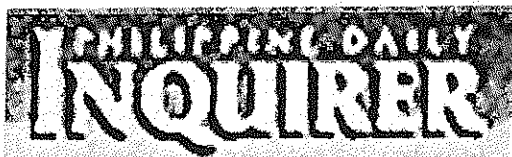
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# Gov't workers get pay hike;

## President issues EO authorizing increase

By Nikko Dizon, Tarra Quismundo and Kristine Felisse Mangunay

IT WAS one homecoming that government workers particularly relished.

Hardly had President Aquino warmed his seat back in Manila on Friday after attending the two-day Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) summit in the United States when he signed the Salary Standardization Law (SSL) that would raise the salaries of some 1.5 million government employees.

The President signed Executive Order No. 201 after Congress failed to approve the proposed bill that would give government workers the wage

hike that the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) had announced in November 2015.

Under the SSL of 2015, the country's 1.3 million government employees, except for incumbent elected national officials, can expect four rounds of yearly salary increases starting Jan. 1, 2016.

The increase, which would cost the government a total of P226 billion, will raise the minimum salary for government em-

GOV'T/A9

From page A1

ployees under Salary Grade 1 from P9,000 to P11,068 monthly, Budget Secretary Florencio "Butch" Abad said.

At the other end of the spectrum, the next President's salary will be raised from P120,000 a month to P388,000 by the fourth year.

### Not covered

The pay hike, however, does not cover Armed Forces of the Philippines personnel, as an increase in their base pay would have a negative impact on the AFP's pension funds. Instead, Abad said, these personnel will be given an increase in the hazard pay, provisional allowance and officers' allowance on top of the 14th month pay that they receive.

The EO also excludes from the salary increase and benefits those whose "services are engaged through job orders, contracts of service, consultancy contracts, and service contracts with no employer-employee relationship."

The increase was welcomed by several government workers, including a Senate employee who described it as "a parting gift" from the Chief Executive whose term of office ends in June.

Another source said the raise could encourage people to stay in government rather than transfer to the private sector, where the pay is generally higher.

On the average, government employees receive 55 percent of

what those in the private sector are getting, Abad said, adding that the pay hike would help government "attract and retain competent and committed civil servants."

### Incentive

A policeman assigned with the Aviation Security Group said the pay hike was a "big morale booster" and "incentive" for government employees "to strive to do more."

While this was not his first salary increase in his 20 years' service, the police officer said this was the biggest as far as he knew. "The timing is just right. Our salary really needs to be increased, what with the rising cost of commodities," he said.

While the increase was long overdue, a Taguig City Hall employee who also refused to be identified, said it was still a welcome development for government employees and he'd rather not give it any political color.

Not everyone was cheering on the executive order, however.

Vice President Jejomar Binay, who had previously described the President as "heartless" for refusing to increase the Social Security pension, again criticized the government for the timing of the pay raise.

### Meant to court votes

The United Nationalist Alliance (UNA) standard-bearer let out a meaningful laugh when asked about the executive order signed barely three months be-



## SSL 2015

| Salary Grade         | Current monthly pay | First Tranche | Second Tranche | Third Tranche | Fourth Tranche |
|----------------------|---------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| SG 11<br>(Teacher I) | P18,549             | P19,077       | P19,620        | P20,179       | P20,754        |
| SG 33<br>(President) | P120,000            | P160,924      | P215,804       | P289,401      | P388,096       |

SOURCE: EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 201, S. 2016 AND JOINT RESOLUTION 4, S. 2009

fore the May national elections.

"Pampa-pogi, syempre (it's meant to make government look good, of course)," Binay said, adding that the wage hike was a way to court votes.

At the same time, the Vice President twitted the government for its slow spending which, he said, hampers economic growth. "The government is there to spend for the benefits of its employees, to deliver quality services. That's government's job. It's not the job of the government to save," Binay told reporters on Friday.

In his speech before the Chinese-Filipino business community yesterday, the Vice President vowed to spend more. "I will be a President who will be spending money. Government is there to spend, not to save. There's a budget, but it's not being used," Binay said, adding that if elected, he would focus on infrastructure spending and allocate five percent of gross domestic product for it.

The former Makati mayor is facing plunder complaints for allegedly pocketing public funds in the construction of what has been described as an overpriced

parking building in the city. Binay, who did not face Senate hearings on the issue, had repeatedly denied the allegations, saying these were part of efforts to derail his presidential bid.

### Unequitable

Also unimpressed about the wage hike was a coalition of government workers' unions, that issued a statement describing the pay hike scheme as "unjust," "unequitable," and "abolishes Magna Carta benefits," and the EO as a bid by the Liberal Party to gain "pogi (brownie) points" in the coming elections.

"Only those already receiving higher salaries like government executives and officials are celebrating the EO," said Courage national president Ferdinand Gaité.

"(These highly paid executives) will benefit more with their windfall of pay adjustments, while low-salaried workers will receive a pittance in exchange for benefits that will be taken away from them and a four-year wage freeze," he added.

"...(G)overnment workers must persevere in the struggle to push for a national minimum

wage of P16,000 monthly which will bring our pay closer to the family living wage," Gaité said.

### DBM memo

But government workers at Manila City Hall might not be entitled to the salary increase after all, no thanks to a circular memo issued by the DBM, city administrator Jojo Alcovendaz said on Friday.

While the executive order raising the salary of government employees was "a welcome development," the DBM memo limits a local government's budget for personnel services to only 45 percent of its earnings, he said.

"For example, if we generated an income of P100 million in 2015, we can only allocate P45 million [for salaries]," Alcovendaz said in a phone interview.

He added, however, that Manila City Hall's budget for salaries currently stands at 47 percent of their total income. Despite that, the city administration decided to implement the fourth tranche of wage hikes in 2014.

"We had to bite the bullet since we were also being pressured to raise employees' wages," Alcovendaz explained. "Besides, we had the funds needed to do so," he added.

The official noted that the Estrada administration was more compliant with DBM's 45-percent rule compared to Lim's, which had allocated 60

percent of its income then for personnel services.

"That's because we were able to raise the city's income now," Alcovendaz said.

In a text message, Manila Police District director Chief Supt. Rolando Nana said the wage hike would "surely boost the morale of all uniformed personnel."

### Inflation

The last salary increase, Joint Resolution No. 4, was fully implemented in 2012 and mandated the review of compensation every three years.

"From then until 2015, the purchasing power... had been eroded due to inflation," Abad said.

The approval of the SSL faced delay when the congressional bicameral conference panel reached a deadlock over the pension indexation of military and uniformed personnel retirees, which would require an increase in the pension of retired police and military officials, along with a hike in the basic pay of those in active service.

This would be untenable and would leave the government bankrupt, Abad said, adding that as early as 2007, the pension paid retirees have "surpassed the salaries of those who are in active service."

The SSL also faced controversy when scientists and social and health workers expressed fears that it would scrap their Magna Carta benefits, which Malacañang denied.

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# P-Noy raises gov't pay sans Congress approval

About 1.5 million state employees are set to receive higher pay after President Aquino signed yesterday an executive order modifying the government's salary schedule and providing additional benefits to civilian and uniformed personnel.

The signing of EO No. 201 came two weeks after Congress adjourned without passing the proposed Salary Standardization Law (SSL) 4, which would have implemented a four-year salary increase program for government workers.

Lawmakers failed to reach an agreement over a proposal by the Senate to index the pension of retired military and uniformed personnel to the salary increases of their active duty counterparts.

The budget department previously said there are no funds in this year's budget for the indexation, which is expected to bloat the government's pension requirements.

The House of Representatives' version of the measure, meanwhile, did not hike the retired uniformed personnel's pension.

"We commend the President for his swift and decisive action in response to the congressional deadlock on the issue of the indexation of MUP (military and uniformed personnel) pension, which resulted in the non-passage of the proposed Salary Standardization Law of 2015," Budget Secretary Florencio Abad said.

"This action by the President leverages the benefits package in order to increase the take-home pay of government employees as stipulated in the proposed SSL bills," he added.

In the EO, Aquino said the salary adjustment would ensure that the compensation structure of government personnel is comparable with the prevailing rates in the private sector.

The new scheme will raise the minimum salary for Salary Grade 1 from P9,000 to P11,068.

Aquino said the adjustment would also maximize the net take-home pay of government workers through the inclusion of additional benefits.

Abad said the EO would implement compensation adjustment for this year as an interim measure to implement the first tranche of the proposed SSL.

He said the full-year requirement for the salary standardization has already been provided for in the national budget.

The modified salary schedule for civilian personnel will be implemented in four tranches.

The first tranche will be applied retroactively to Jan. 1, 2016. The succeeding tranches will be implemented every year until 2019.

The EO also grants civilian government personnel a mid-year bonus equivalent to one month's basic salary, and the productivity enhancement incentive worth P5,000.

By ALEXIS ROMERO

The salary adjustment, however, will not cover workers of government-owned and controlled corporations (GOCCs) that are governed by their respective charters.

Presidential Communications Operations Office Secretary Herminio Coloma Jr. said salary adjustments for employees of state-run firms are provided for in the GOCC Governance Act of 2011.

Abad said GOCCs not covered by the GCG may implement compensation adjustments charged to their corporate funds.

Military and uniformed personnel, meanwhile, will not enjoy increase in their basic salary but will be given higher hazard pay, a provisional allowance and officers' allowance.

Increasing the basic pay of active soldiers and uniformed personnel would also raise the pension of retired ones because of the law on indexation. Officials have previously called for pension reforms to reduce the funding requirements and avert a fiscal crisis.

The monthly hazard pay for soldiers will be raised from P240 to P390 this year, P540 next year, P690 in 2018 and P840 in 2019. The officers' allowance, meanwhile, will be given to those with the rank of captain up to four-star general and their equivalents. The allowance will range from P1,000 to P9,000 in the first

tranche, P3,000 to 18,000 in the second, P4,500 to P25,000 in the third and P7,000 to P35,000 in the fourth tranche.

"LGUs (local government units) may also implement the compensation adjustments subject to the Personnel Services limitation under the law," Abad said.

Compensation adjustments for the president, the vice president and members of Congress will only take effect after the terms of the incumbent officials expire.

"We trust that Congress will pass the SSL when it resumes so that the proposed compensation adjustments to be implemented in four tranches over four years will be permanent," Abad said.

"With its passage, we will be able to achieve the desired outcome of the proposed SSL, which is to bring the compensation of all government workers to at least 70 percent of the market rate," he added.

Under the bill, basic salaries of the 1.53 million state employees and military personnel will rise by an average of 27 percent over a four-year period beginning this year.

From 2016 to 2019, the monthly basic salary of those under Salary Grade (SG) 1 will rise to P11,068 from P9,000. The president, who tops the salary ladder at SG 33, will see a pay increase to P388,096 from P120,000.

The pay adjustments will

cost the government P225.82 billion from 2016 to 2019 divided as follows: P57.906 billion in 2016, P54.393 billion in 2017, P65.976 billion in 2018 and P47.544 billion in 2019.

### **Lawmakers welcome salary hike**

Senate President Franklin Drilon lauded the President for finally signing the EO to raise the salaries of government personnel and vowed to work on getting the SSL4 approved in the next administration.

"I am glad that the President has finally signed the EO which will start the long-awaited pay hike for our dedicated and hardworking government employees," Drilon said.

"However, given that the President's EO will only cover the salary hike for this year, the challenge to implement the full four-year salary hike as envisioned remains with lawmakers," he added.

Drilon said that this issue would have to be settled by Congress in the next administration and that if he succeeds in his bid for reelection, he would personally see to it that the SSL4 is one of the first bills taken up.

Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV, the sponsor of SSL4, said that the move of the President to implement the pay hike through an EO was welcome but would have been better had he included the increase

in the pension of the military and police.

Trillanes said that he would continue to push for this provision in the SSL4 in the next administration.

Sen. Ralph Recto said that the EO issued by the President effectively "makes the provisions of the deadlocked bill on SSL4 permanent."

"It does not merely implement the congressionally authorized funding for the first tranche but prescribes a new pay classification system, which must be funded in the coming years," Recto said.

Leyte Rep. Martin Romualdez yesterday lauded Aquino's decision to sign the EO.

"We laud this act of the President although it was long overdue. But since the EO will only cover this year's pay hike, we should continue to remain steadfast to pass a law that would sustain the increase for the next three years, as originally planned," he said.

"The big challenge is for the incoming Congress and the next president to guarantee that the increase will happen again in 2017, 2018 and 2019 to complete the objective of this four-year pay hike plan," he said.

Meanwhile, government employees nationwide have set protest actions even as President Aquino ordered an increase in salaries of public officials and employees. – With Jess Diaz, Marvin Sy, Prinz Magtulis, Mayen Jaymalin



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**BusinessMirror**

Page. #1

AFTER AQUINO SIGNED E.O. GRANTING GOV'T WORKERS PAY INCREASE

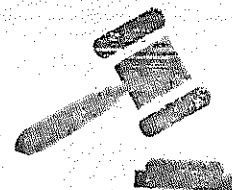
# House, Senate need to pass pay-hike bill

By JOVEE MARIE N. DELA CRUZ

**A**FTER President Aquino signed on Friday an executive order (EO) granting government workers pay increase, the 16th Congress should pass the proposed Salary Standardization Law (SSL) 4 in May to make the salary adjustment permanent, a leader of the House of Representatives said.

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Budget for the first tranche of the salary increase for government workers under the 2016 General Appropriations Act.

"We need to resolve the differences between the Senate and House versions of the SSL 4 in the bicameral conference committee to make it [salary adjustment] permanent. Otherwise, the next Congress has to approve a new bill," House Majority Leader and Liberal Party Rep. Neptali M. Gonzales II of Mandaluyong said on Friday.

The EO provides for the implementation of the first of four tranches provided for in the proposed SSL 4. The presidential authority to implement the first tranche is provided in Republic Act (RA) 10717, or the 2016 General Appropriations Act (GAA), which allocates a budget of P57.9 billion. RA 6758, or the Compensation and Position Classification Act of 1989, and Presidential Decree 1597 grant the chief executive the power to adjust public-sector compensation.

The bicameral conference between the two chambers of Congress was deadlocked after the Senate panel, led by Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV, insisted on a provision that would index the pension of military retirees to the salary increases provided in SSL 4.

The House panel objected because of lack of funding. The Senate proposal would cost taxpayers an additional P18 billion for the first year of implementation.

Gonzales said the 16th Congress can still approve the SSL 4 when session resumes on May 23 to June 10 or after the presidential and local elections.

Meanwhile, House Independent Bloc leader and Lakas Rep. Martin G. Romualdez of Leyte vowed to prioritize the passage of the

proposed SSL 4 in the 17th Congress should it fail to pass in the 16th Congress.

"We laud this act of the President although it was long overdue. But since this [EO] will only cover this year's salary hike, we should continue to remain steadfast to pass a law that would ensure a permanent pay increase for government workers in the next three years," Romualdez added.

"The big challenge is to guarantee that the increase will happen again in 2017, 2018 and 2019 to complete the four-year objective of this proposal," he said.

The House of Representatives approved on third and final reading last December 9 House Bill 6268 principally authored by Speaker Feliciano Belmonte Jr., which modifies the compensation and position classification system of civilian government personnel and the base-pay schedule of military and uniformed personnel in government to be implemented in four tranches, starting January 1. The Senate approved its own version, Senate Bill 2671, on third and final reading on January 18.

Earlier, Budget Secretary Florencio B. Abad said the SSL will take effect through a combination of a salary increases, a 14th-month pay and an enhanced performance-based bonus to be implemented over a four-year period, from January 2016 to January 2019.

Abad explained the SSL 4 is based on Joint Resolution 4 enacted by Congress in 2009, mandating the review of the compensation and position classification system after three years from the last year of the adjustment to

determine the competitiveness of government pay in relation to the private sector and the compensation strategy to bring government pay closer to market rate.

Abad said the last tranche of the previous salary increase was completed in July 2012. He added that despite the substantial duties and responsibilities of public servants, their salaries stood at 55 percent, or around half, of current market rates. President Aquino on Friday signed an EO granting the first of the four phases of the SSL 4 that Congress failed to pass.

"The EO provides for the implementation of the first of the four tranches provided for in the proposed SSL 4 that has not been enacted by Congress," Presidential Spokesman Herminio B. Coloma Jr. said in a statement.

Coloma added that the authority to implement the first tranche is provided in RA 10717.

The 2016 GAA provides P57.9-billion budget for the first tranche of the SSL 4, which will also include the granting of 14th-month pay for all public servants.

As this developed, Senate President Franklin M. Drilon vowed to work for the passage of remedial legislation to fund subsequent salary increases for 1.3 million government employees, if he is reelected senator in the next Congress.

"I will personally see to it that our public workers will get their full pay hike by pushing for the SSL 4 in the 17th Congress," Drilon said on Friday. "It will be the first bill that I will file, if the people will once more trust me

to be part of the Senate."

Drilon made the vow a day after President Aquino signed EO 201 modifying the salary schedule for all state workers. Malacañang said EO 201 also authorized the grant of additional benefits for both "civilian, military and uniformed personnel" in the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

In a statement, the Senate president clarified that the task of formulating and legislating a four-year salary hike for government employees rests with the incoming 17th Congress, even as he hailed President Aquino's decision to sign the Palace order increasing the salary and benefits of government employees.

"I am glad that President has signed [EO 201] which will start the long-awaited pay hike for our dedicated and hard-working government employees," Drilon said.

He, however, pointed out that "given that the president's EO will only cover the salary hike for this year alone, the challenge to implement the full four-year salary hike as envisioned remains with lawmakers," noting a new version of the SSL still needs to be enacted into law by Congress.

Drilon authored the SSL 4 in the 16th Congress, but the bill was stalled in the bicameral conference committee of both houses of Congress, prompting the issuance of EO 201 that puts into effect the monthly salary increases of state workers for the year 2016, as proposed under the SSL 4 that the current Congress failed to pass. *With PNA*

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**MANILA BULLETIN**  
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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# Pay hike for 1.53M state workers OK'd

## Aquino signs EO to implement first tranche of salary increase

By RADEZ, SARATEY-NAMIT

**P**resident Aquino yesterday signed Executive Order (EO) No. 201 granting the implementation of the first tranche of the pay increase for some 1.53 million government employees as provided for

in the proposed Salary Standardization Law (SSL) 4.

Presidential Communications Secretary Herminio Coloma Jr. said President Aquino signed the EO upon his arrival from California, USA, Friday morning.

"President Aquino has signed an

Executive Order (EO) 'Modifying the Salary Schedule for Civilian Government Personnel and Authorizing the Grant of Additional Benefits for Both Civilian and Military and Uniformed Personnel,'" Coloma disclosed.

According to the Palace official, the EO provides for the implementa- ►4

tion of the first of the four tranches provided for in the proposed SSL 2015 law or SSL 4 that Congress failed to enact.

"Authority to implement the first tranche is given in Republic Act (RA) No. 10717 or the 2016 General Appropriations Act (GAA), which provides a budget of P57.9 billion," Coloma said.

The P57.9-billion appropriation will

fully cover the first tranche.

Under the EO, the existing Compensation and Position Classification System (CPCS) was revised.

Coloma said this was "to ensure that the compensation structure of government personnel is comparable with the prevailing rates in the private sector, thereby attracting and retaining compe-

tent and committed civil servants."

The revisions include raising the minimum salary for Salary Grade I from the current rate of P9,000 to P11,068; and bringing the compensation of government personnel closer to their private counterparts to at least 70 percent of the median of the market for all salary grades.

The EO likewise eliminated overlaps in between salary grade allocations of government personnel to recognize differences in duties and responsibili-

ties of the position.

It also maximized the net take home pay of government personnel through the inclusion of additional benefits; and strengthened the performance-based incentive system in recognition of government personnel who play a greater role and carry a heavier responsibility in attaining performance targets and delivering results.

The EO also includes adjustment in the compensation for the military and

uniformed personnel (MUP), including an increased hazard pay from the current rate of P240 per month to the following rates: a) starting January 1, 2016, P390 per month; b) by January 1, 2017, P540 per month; c) by January 1, 2018, P690 per month; and d) by January 1, 2019, P840 per month.

Coloma, however, said the government-owned and controlled corporations (GOCCs) are not included in the salary pay hike under the EO.

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**MANILA BULLETIN**  
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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# 2 cops killed in NPA ambush

By **EDITH B. COLMO**

**B**ACOLOD CITY – Two policemen were killed while five others were wounded in an ambush staged by suspected New People's Army (NPA) rebels at the boundary of Barangays Caningay and Poblacion East in Candoni, Negros Occidental Thursday night.

Police investigators identified those slain as PO3 Harry Peralta and PO1 Henrey Pacheco, both of the Candoni

Police Station, who were shot point-blank in the head and finished off by a volley of shots by their assailants.

Wounded were PO2 Jay Arroyo, PO1 Modesto Vina, Rey Duales, Julius Miravalles and another civilian who was still unidentified as of press time.

SPO4 Boyd Mate and PO1 Charlemagne Cahallero were also with the group but escaped unharmed.

According to Candoni Vice Mayor Diomedes Magada, the police officers responded to a 9:30 p.m. call for as-

sistance in Barangay Caningay where there was a reported commotion after a stabbing incident.

On their way back to the station, the six policemen were fired upon by unidentified armed men near the bridge. Their patrol car fell off the creek.

Magada said the nearest army detachment was four kilometers away from the ambush site.

Troopers have already set up checkpoints and were clearing the streets, he added. (With a report from PNA)



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## The Manila Times

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# Reds kill 2 policemen in Negros Occ

TWO policemen were killed when suspected communist rebels shot at their prowl car in an attack that also injured two other officers and a civilian in Negros Occidental on Thursday night.

The fatalities were identified as Police Officer 3 Joe Harry Peralta and PO1 Henry Pacheco, who were also shot in the head at close range.

The duo along with the wounded officers - PO2 Jay Arroyo and PO1 Modesto Vifia - had been responding to a report of a bolo attack in Barangay Caningay around 10:20 p.m.

The unit from Candoni Municipal Police Station were ambushed by suspected New People's Army rebels near Panaculan Creek bridge, about 2 kilometers away from the municipal hall.

Also injured in the attack was civilian Rey Duales.

The Army's 3rd Infantry Division condemned what it described as a treacherous act.

In a statement, the Army decried the attack as "a blatant violation of the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL), which the CPP-NPA-NDF is a signatory."

Citing witness accounts, local Army spokesman Lt. Col. Ray Tiongson said Peralta and Pacheco were shot point blank in the head as the duo were sprawled on the ground.

**FERNAN MARASIGAN**

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**POLICE FILES**

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### **CAFGU camp sinalakay ng BIFF sa Cotabato**

**SINALAKAY** ng 50 mga miyembro ng Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) ang detachment ng Citizen Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU) sa probinsya ng Cotabato kamakalawa ng gabi.

Ayon kay Cotabato Police Provincial Director S/Supt. Alexander Tagum, sinalakay ng BIFF ang detachment ng CAFGU sa ilalim ng 38th Infantry Battalion Philippine Army sa Barangay Pagangan, Aleosan, North Cotabato.

Tumagal ng 10 minuto ang palitan ng bala sa magkabilang panig bago umatras ang mga rebelde nang dumating ang karagdagang puwersa ng militar na tumulong sa mga Cafgu.

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# Communist rebels urged: Stop waging war

By JOSE RODEL CLAPANO

Government peace panel chairman Alexander Padilla yesterday urged communist rebels to stop waging war and instead seek ways to bring peace to the country.

Padilla criticized National Democratic Front (NDF) panel chairman Luis Jalandoni for telling half-truths to cover up atrocities of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP).

Padilla denied Jalandoni's claims that President Aquino snubbed a signed peace agreement with communist rebels in 2014.

"There was no peace deal," he said.

Padilla said innocent civilians in communities are the ones directly suffering from the attacks of the New People's Army.

"Instead of continuing to wage armed conflict against our democracy, the CPP/NPA/NDF must seek ways to deliver peace, especially to the communities on the ground that have been sorely affected by their armed struggle," he said.

Padilla challenged the NDF to go beyond its usual practice of making unreasonable

demands then putting the blame on the government for the failure to resume peace talks.

"It is high time for the CPP/NPA/NDF to change its tactic of making impossible demands and blaming the government for the failure to resume peace talks," he said.

"They have used this tired old rhetoric to cover up for their continuing violence on the ground and their strategy to use the peace process to get as many concessions as they can from government without giving anything in return."

Padilla said Jalandoni is not telling the whole story.

"What Mr. Jalandoni is referring to was not an agreement," he said.

"In December 2014, there were reports of peace talks resuming between the government of the Philippines and the NDF. We clarified then that what was happening was, a group of private individuals we consider 'friends of the process' was shuttling between the two parties

to explore possible parameters for restarting the talks at the earliest possible time. It was this private group that initialed a proposed agreement subject to approval by the two panels."

Padilla said the government was studying that proposal and was prepared to discuss it with the NDF panel in January 2015 until the Mamasapano incident happened.

"In February 2015, the private group again went to Utrecht and returned with another proposal from the NDF to resume the talks, this time with a stronger demand for the release of hundreds of its leaders and followers in detention, the withdrawal or dismissal of cases against their detained alleged consultants and other pre-conditions," he said.

Padilla said the peace talks were stalled because of that.

"With the NDF asserting even more than its usual demands, like many other initiatives undertaken in the past to explore the resump-

tion of the talks, that one also did not pan out," he said.

Padilla said the government tried all possibilities for the resumption of the peace talks.

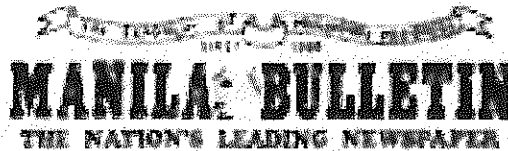
"The NDF's usual strategy is to use the negotiations to get as many concessions as it can from government without giving anything in return. In spite of this, (the government) continued to pursue all possibilities for the resumption of talks," he said.

Padilla said the government tried twice to get the talks moving in 2015.

"We tried two more times in 2015, based on proposals offered by our Norwegian facilitator to the parties, but to no avail," he said.

"On the first one, the NDF said they needed more time to consult the ground while the RNG (Norwegian government) and the government waited. On the second one, the NDF expressed its reservation on the RNG's facilitation process for generating goodwill measures that would benefit the people."

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## Gov't negotiator hits NDF's 'half-truths'

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

The government chief negotiator for the talks with the Communist Party of the Philippines/New People's Army/National Democratic Front (CPP/NPA/NDF) chided yesterday the head of the NDF panel for allegedly telling half-truths to cover up for the NPA's atrocities.

In a statement, GPH Peace Panel Chief Alexander Padilla belied assertions that President Aquino rebuffed a peace deal between the government and the

communist rebels.

"He's not telling the whole story. There was no peace deal," said Padilla, responding to NFP peace panel chair Luis Jalandoni's claims that a signed peace pact was snubbed by the government in 2014.

"What Mr. Jalandoni is referring to was not an agreement. In December 2014, there were reports of peace talks resuming between the Government of the Philippines (GPH) and the NDF. We clarified then that what was happening was, a group of private individuals we consider 'friends of the process' was shuttling between the two parties to explore possible parameters for restarting the talks at the earliest

possible time. It was this private group that initialed a proposed agreement subject to approval by the two Panels," Padilla said.

The government chief negotiator confirmed that the "government was studying that proposal and was prepared to discuss it with the NDF Panel in January 2015" until the Masapano incident happened.

Padilla explained that the NDF's usual strategy is to use the negotiations to get as many concessions as it can from government without giving anything in return. He said in spite of this, the GPH continued to pursue all possibilities for the resumption of talks.

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**The Standard**

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# WHAT PEACE DEAL?

## Govt peace panel chief slams NDF for 'half-truths'

**By Sandy Araneta  
and Florante S. Solmerin**

*THE government's chief negotiator with the communist rebels on Friday chided the chairman of the National Democratic Front panel for telling "half-truths" and denied that President Benigno Aquino III had rebuffed a peace deal between the two sides.*

"He's not telling the whole story," said government peace panel chair Alexander Padilla, in response to NDF peace panel chairman Luis Jalandoni's claims that a signed peace pact was snubbed by the government in 2014.

"There was no peace deal," Padilla said. "What Mr. Jalandoni is referring to was not an agreement."

Padilla said in December 2014, there were reports of peace talks resuming between the government and the NDF.

"We clarified then that what was happening was, a group of private individuals we consider 'friends of the process' was shut-

ting between the two parties to explore possible parameters for restarting the talks at the earliest possible time. It was this private group that initialed a proposed agreement subject to approval by the two panels," he said.

The government chief negotiator confirmed that the "government was studying that proposal and was prepared to discuss it with the NDF panel in January 2015" until the Mamasapano massacre.

Padilla said in February 2015, the private group again went to Utrecht and returned with another proposal from the NDF to resume the talks, this time with a stronger

demand for the release of hundreds of its leaders and followers in detention, the withdrawal or dismissal of cases against their detained alleged consultants, and other pre-conditions.

With the NDF asserting even more than its usual demands, the initiative did not pan out, he said.

"The NDF's usual strategy is to use the negotiations to get as many concessions as it can from government without giving anything in return. In spite of this, [the government] continued to pursue all possibilities for the resumption of talks, Padilla added.

"We tried two more times in 2015, based on proposals offered by our Norwegian facilitator to the parties, but to no avail. On the first one, the NDF said they needed more time to consult the ground while the RNG [Royal Norwegian Government] and the government waited. On the second one, the NDF expressed its reservation on the RNG's facilitation process for generating goodwill measures that would benefit the people," he said.

Padilla recalled that in an interview in July 2015, Jalandoni reiterated the NDF's demand. "The group's return to the negotiating table still depended on the release of political prisoners and peace consultants... and returned to the protracted and immovable regular track," he said.

Padilla challenged the NDF to go beyond its usual practice of making unreasonable demands then putting the blame on the government for the failure to resume talks.

"It is high time for the CPP/NPA/NDF [Communist Party of the Philippines, New People's Army and the NDF] to change its tactic of making impossible

demands and blaming the government for the failure to resume peace talks. They have used this tired old rhetoric to cover up for their continuing violence on the ground and their strategy to use the peace process to get as many concessions as they can from government without giving anything in return," the chief negotiator said.

"Instead of continuing to wage armed conflict against our democracy, the CPP/NPA/NDF must seek ways to deliver peace, especially to the communities on the ground that have been sorely affected by their armed struggle," Padilla said.



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**MANILA BULLETIN**  
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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## CBCP weeps for victims of NPA atrocities

By **RAYMUND F. ANTONIO**  
and **MAR T. SUPNAD**

Saddened by the rebel ambush that killed six rookie policemen in Cagayan, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) is one with the bereaved families in prayer for their loved ones who died for a noble cause.

In a message of sympathy issued Thursday, CBCP President and Lingayen-Dagupan Archbishop Socrates Villegas, along with other bishops, sent his heartfelt condolences to the victims and their families for immense losses of lives.

"We, your bishops, are deeply saddened and we extend to the bereaved families of our departed brothers – all of who were Police Officers 1, hence new recruits into the police force – as well as to the anxious members of the families of the wounded our assurances of prayer and solidarity in this dark hour," they said.

"May eternal light shine on our departed brothers, and may their families find consolation in the promise of the Resurrection," CBCP added.

The Association of Chiefs-of-Police of the Philippines Incorporated (ACPP) also assailed the communists New People's Army's (NPA's) treacherous attack in Baggao, Cagayan, last Tuesday that resulted in the death of the cops belonging to the Cagayan Regional Public Safety Battalion (RPSB).

Director Generoso Cerbo, Jr., national chairman of the ACPPI and concurrent PNP Director for Intelligence (DI), condemned to the fullest extent the attack of some 100 heavily armed NPA rebels in Barangay Sta. Margarita.

The ACPPI also assailed the NPA's continuous use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) and landmines in their terroristic activities, which is banned under the United Nations 1980 Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) Protocol II on landmines and booby-traps.

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# Abu hostages' fate uncertain

ZAMBOANGA CITY – Five months since their kidnapping, the fate of three foreigners and a Filipino woman taken from Samal Island by the Abu Sayyaf remains uncertain.

Military commanders yesterday declined to share infor-

mation on the case but gave assurance the operations are continuing against the Abu Sayyaf, believed to be holding the victims along with other hostages kidnapped since 2014.

Armed Forces chief Gen. Hernando Iriberry said they

By ROEL PAREÑO

have no new proof of life for Canadians John Ridsdel, 68, and Robert Hall, 50, and his Filipino girlfriend Marites Flor as well as Norwegian Kjartan Sekkingstad, manager of the Ocean View Samal Resort.

They were kidnapped on Sept. 21, 2015 from Samal Island off Davao del Norte by Abu Sayyaf gunmen and believed to have been taken to Sulu.

Philippine National Police chief Director General Ricardo Marquez said Wednesday that

they have not received any message from the hostages.

Iriberry and Marquez said the government is standing firm on its no-ransom policy.

"There must be no negotiation, especially about ransom," Iriberry said.

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## Book on MILF ex-combatants' stories launched

By **ALI G. MACABALANG**

**COTABATO CITY** – A book essaying the plight of the initial batch of decommissioned Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) combatants was launched last Monday with Government Peace Panel Chairperson Professor Miriam Coronel-Ferrer underscoring that it was a manifestation “to the world and the country that we are serious and we want peace to become real and permanent.”

The book, “The Journey of the MILF’s First Ex-Combatants, was conceptualized and written by historian Nerea Bilbatua and was launched at the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC) office.

“The book portrays the journey of (MILF ex-combatants), (their) experiences of discrimination and injustice, dispossession and their desires for better lives for themselves, for their

families, for their communities, for their homeland, and for their whole country,” said Bilbatua.

“These kinds of stories embody the history of what happened to us as a people, what happened to [Bangsamoro] in particular. Now that kind of commitment shows us why it is important for us to continue peace,” said Coronel-Ferrer, who attended the book launch.

In June 2015, a total of 145 MILF combatants underwent decommissioning process mandated in the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB), which the Moro front signed in 2014 the Philippines Government as basis of the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) draft.

The initial process entailed the turnover of 75 crew-served weapons and high-powered armaments to the custody of the Independent Decommissioning Body (IDB), the MILF said.

The first decommissioning process was held in symbolic ceremony at the old provincial capitol complex in Simuay, Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao and attended both by President Aquino III and MILF Chair Murad Ebrahim.

The event was the first in four phases of the decommissioning process proposed to move parallel with the milestones in the political process of establishing the Bangsamoro autonomous political entity.

But with the non-passage of the BBL under the Aquino administration, Ferrer admitted that the:

“In the face of all the challenges, trials, and tribulations, we are not giving up. We will continue. The first 145 MILF decommissioned combatants get the challenge to be the first to show to the world and the country that were serious and we want peace to become real and permanent,” she said.

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## PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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# Marwan killed for money by his aide, group claims

By Nikko Dizon

MALAYSIAN terrorist Zulkifli bin Hir, alias Marwan, was killed by his aide and not by the Philippine National Police Special Action Force (SAF) as claimed by President Aquino, a Mindanao-based party-list group said yesterday.

Marwan's aide was identified as Datukan Sanggagao, according to Jesus "Peping" Agdumag of the Anti-War Anti-Terror (Awat) Mindanao party-list.

Another INQUIRER source who has investigated the Jan. 25, 2015, Mamasapano clash said this was the same information his team had gathered, and it was also the name of Sanggagao that surfaced during the investigation.

But the INQUIRER source said Sanggagao was alive and in hiding.

The story about Marwan's aide killing the terrorist in exchange for money circulated in Central Mindanao soon after the bloody encounter in Mamasapano, Maguindanao province, that left 44 SAF commandos, 17 Moro rebels and three civilians dead.

### MILF findings

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) also said in its report on the Mamasapano clash that Marwan was killed by his aide, but stopped short of naming Sanggagao.

The SAF claimed that its 84th Special Action Company (SAC) killed Marwan in an exchange of fire, but the MILF report pointed to findings that were inconsistent with the SAF version.

The MILF reported that Marwan appeared to have been shot from close range and that his hut and its surroundings showed no signs of a gun battle.

"This is the ultimate truth," Agdumag told the INQUIRER by phone on Wednesday, referring to his group's report.

Awat is a little known political group but its members are Mindanao residents and it has a vast network in the region.

The group sent its investigation report, shown to the INQUIRER, to the offices of Senate Minority Leader Juan Ponce Enrile and Sen. Grace Poe before the Senate reopened its Mamasapano investigation on Jan. 27.

"I don't know why the senators did not use our report, but we couldn't sleep not saying the truth," Agdumag said.

### Yearlong investigation

He said Awat's report was based on a yearlong investigation of the Mamasapano bloodbath.

Through various other assets, according to Awat's findings, Sanggagao was recruited for the operation to take down Marwan being planned by Director General Alan Purisima, then the PNP chief, and Director Charles Calima, then head of the PNP Directorate for Intelligence.

The assets, including Sanggagao, were assured of a P50-million reward for their help in getting Marwan.

Sanggagao was given money to build a hut some 500 meters away from Marwan's hut in Pembalkan village in Mamasapano

and to buy gadgets for monitoring the terrorist's movements.

In the early hours of Jan. 25, 2015, Sanggagao shot Marwan dead, cut off his right index finger and handed it to the SAF (There was a photo that showed a SAF commando cutting off Marwan's left index finger.)

But Sanggagao was surprised to hear gunfire from the SAF and feared that he would be liquidated.

A frantic Sanggagao called up another asset to find out

what was going on.

The other asset recalled Sanggagao's last words: "Why are they shooting me?"

Then the line went dead.

The other asset, assisted by some companions, took the bodies of Marwan and Sanggagao and buried them.

### 'Alternative version'

Speaking at the INQUIRER Multimedia Forum on Sept. 8 last year, President Aquino said he had asked for verification of an "alternative version" of events

that took place in Mamasapano. He did not explain what the alternative version was.

A week later, the President said there was no longer an alternative version and showed photos of a dead Marwan with a SAF commando cutting off the terrorist's left index finger.

Mr. Aquino declared that it was the SAF that indeed killed Marwan.

But Awat said that if the government wanted it, Marwan's body could be exhumed.

The implication is that if both of Marwan's left and right index fingers are missing, then the Sanggagao story is the right version.

According to the SAF version, the fighting at Marwan's hut alerted the terrorist's companions, and the 84th SAC had to shoot its way out of the village.

The company lost nine members in the fighting.

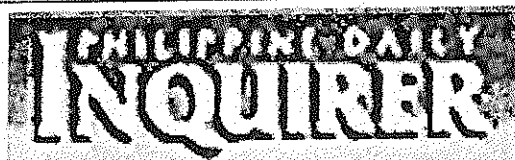
A 36-strong blocking force, the 55th SAC, lost 35 members in a daylong gun battle with MILF fighters, Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters rebels and armed villagers.

There was a ceasefire between government forces and the MILF, which had signed a peace agreement with the government, but Director Getulio Napeñas, SAF commander at the time, did not give the MILF a heads-up on the operation to capture Marwan.

Napeñas was sacked after the mission backfired. Together with Purisima, he is facing charges in the Office of the Ombudsman over the debacle.

He is running for a seat in the Senate in the May 9 national elections.

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## *MILF troops told to maintain truce with gov't*

By Nikko Dizon

THE HEAD of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) on Thursday urged his followers to maintain a ceasefire with the government despite the failure to pass a bill implementing a peace agreement.

MILF chair Murad Ebrahim made the appeal in a statement carried on the group's Facebook page.

"In spite of the nonpassage of the [proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law], the MILF will continue to uphold the peace process and ensure that all the gains will be preserved," Murad said in the statement.

It was the first time that Murad issued a statement following the failure of Congress this month to pass the BBL, which would have completed the peace accord signed by the government and the MILF in 2014.

"All officers, commanders, and members of the MILF political wing and the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF) are enjoined to strictly follow and abide by the instructions guidelines of the MILF Central Committee. They are tasked to

uphold the primacy of the peace process while maintaining their vigilance and perseverance as they continue the consolidation and capability building programs of the organization," Murad said.

The MILF decommissioned more than a hundred fighters and their firearms last year as part of the peace agreement.

The decommissioning process, however, is hinged on the progress of the peace deal.

Without the BBL, the decommissioning process is also suspended.

MILF chief peace negotiator Mohagher Iqbal admitted that the failure to pass the BBL brought about a "dangerous situation," as it caused disappointment and frustration among the Bangsamoro who had hoped for an autonomous Muslim region in Mindanao.

But the MILF Murad said, "will endeavor to sustain the relevant infrastructure of the peace process and our military forces will, at times, maintain its defensive posture."

Murad said the MILF would "remain a revolutionary organization until it officially joins the government in accordance with the agreed road map in the imple-

mentation" of the peace agreement.

Murad expressed the MILF's "deep disappointment and grave dismay over the nonpassage of the BBL."

Murad emphasized that the MILF had "faithfully (complied) with all its obligations and responsibilities" under the deal.

"It has entrusted the passage of the BBL to the [government] since the process was entirely internal to [it], and all its concerned structures had the obligations to deliver the law that could have truly implemented the terms of agreements in letter and spirit," Murad said.

The establishment of a Bangsamoro autonomous region would have ended the four-decade-long armed struggle of the MILF in Mindanao.

The conflict has left more than 150,000 people dead and millions displaced.

An investigation into a clash between policemen and MILF fighters in Mamasapano, Maguindanao province, that left 44 police commandos, 17 MILF rebels and three civilians dead on Jan. 25, 2015, delayed the congressional deliberations on the BBL. *With a report from AFP*



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Pahina. 6

## Matinding air strike, ibinuga ng PAF sa Maguindanao

Sa patuloy na kampanya laban sa paghasik ng gulo ng mga kasapi ng Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), naglunsad ng matinding air strike ang Philippine Air Force (PAF) sa lalawigan ng Maguindanao. Sinimulang bombahin ng dalawang MG-520 attack helicopters ang mga miyembro ng BIFF kasabay ng sagupaan na nagaganap sa pagitan ng militar at 300 mga rebelde sa Sitio Tampuad, barangay Sambolawan at barangay Tee, Datu Salibo, Maguindanao. Napag-alaman na gruponina Kumander Abunawas, Kumander Abu Nas-

ria, Kumander Roman at Kumander Abu Saiden ng BIFF ang nakasagupa ng mga tropa ng pamahalaan.

Nagpasyang magsagawa ng airstrike ang PAF para tulungan ang napaalabang ground forces.

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

Habang isinusulat ito, hindi pa matiyak ang mga nasawi at nasugatan sa magkabilang panig dahil nagpapatuloy pa ang kalat-kalat na sagupaan ng militar at BIFF. (Betchai Julian)

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# China: It's US militarizing South China Sea

BEIJING – China yesterday accused the US of militarizing the South China Sea, just days after it was revealed Beijing had deployed surface-to-air missiles on an island in the hotly disputed area.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei

told reporters that patrols by US military aircraft and Navy vessels, along with joint exercises involving regional partners were the true reason why concerns were growing over peace and stability.

"The above actions have escalated tensions in the

South China Sea, and that's the real militarization of the South China Sea," Hong said.

US and Taiwanese officials this week confirmed commercial satellite images showing the missiles placed on Woody Island in the disputed Paracel chain.

China has not denied the

appearance of the missiles, but says it is entitled to defend its territory and points to the construction of lighthouses, weather stations and other infrastructure undertaken to provide more "public goods and services to the international community."

The deployment follows

China's building of new islands by piling sand atop reefs and then adding airstrips and military installations. The buildup is seen as part of Beijing's efforts to claim virtually the entire disputed sea and its resources.

The Philippines, which claims waters and features

east of Woody island, yesterday said it was "gravely concerned" by reports of the missile deployments.

"Such actions negate China's earlier commitment not to militarize the South China Sea," the Department of Foreign Affairs said in a statement.

– AP

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The Manila Times

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# Australia warns China on sea 'militarization'

**S**YDNEY: Australia on Friday urged China to refrain from the "militarization of islands" to avoid walking into a conflict, a day after the United States slammed Beijing for deploying missiles in the disputed South China Sea (West Philippine Sea).

China on Thursday said it had weapons on one of the islands in the strategically important region, which US Secretary of State John Kerry said was evidence of an "increase of militarization" and a "serious concern."

Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull said it was critical for the region's prosperity that China and the US use international law to resolve their disputes.

"We urge all claimants in the South China Sea to refrain from any building of islands, any militarization of islands, any land reclamation," Turnbull told a joint news conference with his New Zealand counterpart John Key in Sydney.

According to him, both Australia and New Zealand wanted to see a lowering of tensions as he urged Chinese President Xi

Jinping to resolve all disputes in the sea--through which one-third of the world's oil passes--through legal means.

"President Xi of China has said that one of China's biggest challenges is falling into what he calls the Thucydides Trap, which essentially is where a rising power creates anxiety among other powers such that conflict occurs," Turnbull said.

"If China wants to avoid falling into the Thucydides Trap, as President Xi describes it, then resolving disputes in the South China Sea should be done through international law, through all of those mechanisms that are available to us."

Key said the two nations' economic relationships with China,

an important trading partner, would allow them to make their case against escalating tensions publicly and privately.

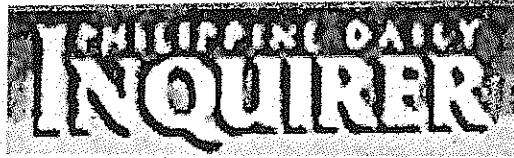
Beijing claims nearly all of the South China Sea.

It has insisted that its island-building aims to provide services such as search and rescue facilities, but also maintains it has the right to deploy necessary "self-defense" measures there.

Other nations surrounding the sea--Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam--lay claim to parts of it.

The US and Australia have carried out several so-called "Freedom of Navigation" overflights and sail-bys in the region, which China has described as "provocations." AFP

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# New PAF fighter jets escort presidential plane

By Nikko Dizon  
and Julie M. Aurelio

HAIL to the Chief.

Two newly acquired FA-50 supersonic trainer fighter jets showed themselves off to President Aquino yesterday by escorting the presidential plane flying him back to Manila after he had attended summit talks in the United States.

From the window of his plane, the Commander in Chief

watched the fighter jets fly beside the Philippine Airlines Airbus 373 as the presidential aircraft flew over Polillo Island in the northeastern region.

It was a sight no one thought they would see again and cheers broke inside the presidential plane. It has been more than 10 years since the Philippine Air Force decommissioned its last fighter jets.

"Everyone was swelling with pride," a source told the INQUIR-

ER, describing the reaction of Mr. Aquino when he saw the jets.

Mr. Aquino congratulated Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin for being able to implement the Armed Forces modernization program.

Mr. Aquino arrived on Friday from the United States where he attended a meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the United States on the security situation in the region in the face of China's ag-

gressive actions in the South China Sea.

Presidential Communications Secretary Herminio Coloma Jr., who was with the President, said the FA-50 jets escorted PR 001 carrying Mr. Aquino "from the airspace above Polillo Island as (it) made its approach" before it landed at the airport.

"The fighter jets took off from Clark Field Air Base. They made contact with the presidential

flight at 6:37 a.m. (and it) eventually landed at 7:05 a.m.," said Coloma.

The two jets were delivered by Korea Aerospace Industries last November, the first of 12 fighter jets the PAF acquired as part of the military's modernization program.

The delivery of the rest of the full squadron, worth P18.9 billion, will be completed in 2017.

The two brand-new supersonic fighter jets were piloted by air-

men from the Air Defense Wing.

Air Force spokesperson Col. Enrico Canaya said the traditional role of escorting heads of state traveling through the country's airspace was previously done by the F-5 Tiger fighter jets.

The F-5 jets were decommissioned in 2005.

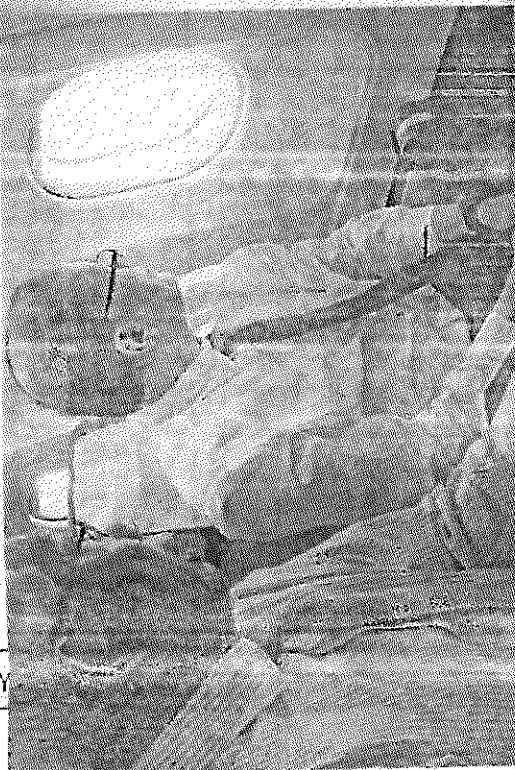
Canaya said the last time the Air Force escorted a Philippine head of state was in 2005 when its F-5 fighters were still operational.

OFFICE OF THE AR

nal pride

02) 845-9555 Local: 5285, 5295

©Philippine Air Force



**WELCOME ADDITION** President Aquino views two newly acquired jets for the Philippine Air Force escorting his flight as the presidential plane enters the country's airspace on his return from the United States on Friday.

MALACANANG PHOTO BUREAU

**VIEW FROM COCKPIT** At right, Philippine Airlines Flight PR 001 carrying President Aquino enters the country's airspace. PHILIPPINE AIR FORCE PHOTO/LT COL. MAYNARD MARUANO

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## New fighter jets escort Noy plane

By ALEXIS ROMERO

The two newly acquired lead-in fighter jets of the Philippine Air Force yesterday escorted President Aquino's plane as it

entered the country's airspace up to landing at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport – a role that the military has not done for years.

It was the first time since 2005 that the Air Force performed its traditional role of escorting the president while in Philippine airspace. The same courtesy was also extended to visiting heads of states.

The escort role was performed by the Air Force's

F-5 fighter aircraft before they were decommissioned in 2005.

Aquino yesterday returned to the country from a three-day visit to the United States, his last foreign trip as president.

Presidential Communications Operations Office Secretary Her-

minio Coloma Jr. said the FA-50 jets escorted PR 001, the flight carrying Aquino, from the air space above Polillo Island as it made its approach before landing at the airport.

The jets maneuvered by Air Defense Wing pilots took off from Clark Field Airbase and made contact with the presidential flight at 6:37 a.m. The plane carrying Aquino and his delegation landed at

7:05 a.m.

The military has purchased 12 jets from South Korea's Korea Aerospace Industries for P18.9 billion, making it the largest item in the armed forces' modernization shopping list.

The two jets were delivered in November and formally turned over to the Philippine Air Force last month. The ten other jets will be delivered in 2017.

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Newly acquired FA-50PH fighter jets escort Philippine Airlines flight PR001 with President Aquino on board (inset) upon entering Philippine airspace from his trip to the US.

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THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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# Aquino returns with fighter jets escorting his plane

By ELENA L. ABEN  
and MADEL R. SABATER-NAMIT

**A**fter more than 10 years since the Philippine Air Force (PAF) decommissioned the last of its F-5 fighter aircraft, the PAF formally resumed yesterday its traditional role of escorting the President and other visiting heads of state while in the country's airspace.

President Aquino's Philippine Airlines (PAL) Flight PR 001 from California, USA, entered Philippine airspace escorted by two brand new FA-50 fighter jets of the PAF's Air Defense Wing and then landed at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) at 7:05 a.m.

Colonel Enrico Canaya, PAF spokesman, said the two FA-50PH escorted PAL Flight PR001 carrying the President and his delegation from an of-

ficial working trip in California for the ASEAN-US Summit as it entered the country's airspace east of Polilio Island, Quezon province.

"The fighter jets took off from Clark Field air base. They made contact with the presidential flight at 6:37 a.m., which eventually landed at 7:05 a.m.," said Presidential Communications Secretary Herminio Coloma Jr.

Coloma said having the PAF's new

fighter jets escorting the presidential flight was not a show of force but deemed proper for Aquino as the Commander in Chief.

"This escort honors is a common practice since the President is also the Commander-in-Chief. It is also practiced in other states as a way of honoring the head of state when his plane enters our country's airspace," Coloma said in Filipino, dispelling thoughts that

it had anything to do with the territorial dispute in the West Philippine Sea.

Col. Canaya stated further that the role of escorting the President and other visiting heads of state while in Philippine airspace used to be a common practice by PAF's Air Defense Wing fighter pilots until its last F-5 fighter aircraft were decommissioned in 2005. (With a report from Ariel Fernandez)

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## Marcelino moved to Camp Crame

By MIKE FRIALDE

Marine Lt. Col. Ferdinand Marcelino and his co-accused, Chinese national Yan Yi Shou, were transferred yesterday afternoon from the Quezon City Jail Annex in Camp Bagong Diwa to the Philippine National Police Custodial Center in Camp Crame.

Marcelino and Yan left Camp Bagong Diwa at past noon yesterday to go to the Quezon City Regional Trial Court, which later ordered Marcelino and Yan's transfer. Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) spokesman Senior Inspector Xavier Solda said.

"The court issued its order of commitment after the hearing. They did not return to Camp Bagong Diwa. They were taken to Camp Crame," Solda said.

Marcelino, a former Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency official, and Yan were arrested during a raid on an apartment that housed a clandestine shabu laboratory in Sta. Cruz, Manila on Jan. 21. They were initially detained at Camp Crame in Quezon City following their arrest.

Authorities recovered 64 kilos of shabu worth P256 million during the sting. Authorities said Marcelino was found sitting on a couch in the apartment when the police arrived.

Marcelino and Yan were later transferred to the jail annex, where Marcelino shared a cell with a Maguindanao massacre suspect.

Solda said since Marcelino and Yan are now detained at Camp Crame, it would be police officers who would be escorting them to court hearings.

The Philippine National Police Anti-Illegal Drugs Group (PNP-AIDG) had earlier opposed a proposal of the Department of Justice (DOJ) to transfer Marcelino to another detention facility while undergoing preliminary investigation on drug charges.

PNP-AIDG chief Senior Superintendent Manolo Ozaeta opposed the recommendation of Senior Deputy State Prosecutor Theodore Villanueva to the BJMP to transfer Marcelino to the custody of the National Bureau of Investigation or the Philippine Navy.

The DOJ earlier aired its concern for Marcelino's safety at the jail annex, where drug suspects arrested by the Marine officer were also being held.

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### Aquino signs EO for 1st tranche of SSL4

By: Roices Naguit, News5

MANILA, Philippines -- President Benigno Aquino III has signed an executive order to implement the first tranche of the Salary Standardization Law of 2015, or SSL4, which has yet to be passed by Congress.

"The President approved and signed the EO upon his arrival this morning (Friday) from his participation in the Special ASEAN-US Summit and a working visit in Los Angeles, California," Secretary Herminio Coloma Jr., head of the Presidential Communications Operations Office, said in a statement.

The EO clears the way for the use of P57.9 billion included in this year's national budget for the implementation of the first phase of the SSL4, which is spread over four years and will cost P226 billion to fully implement.

The bill, which remains pending in Congress because of differences between the House and Senate versions, seeks to increase the basic pay of government employees by an average of 27 percent, with the 14th month pay further raising compensation by eight percent.

However, the government workers' union COURAGE is opposed to the SSL4, saying it gives a pittance to rank and file employees while providing a windfall for officials. It also said SSL4 would eliminate a number of benefits public sector workers currently enjoy.

In Los Angeles, Aquino said he might sign the EO on his return once he received satisfactory answers to questions over government performance bonuses.

The EO is retroactive to January 1 this year.

[www.dwdd.com.ph](http://www.dwdd.com.ph)

### BALIK PMA 2016 II PMA Masikhay Class holds Homecoming Basketball Tournament

By: Lui



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

The Philippine Military Academy Masikhay Class 1999 organizes and conducts basketball tournament dubbed as "PMA Class 5X5 Basketball Challenge" that coincides with this year's Homecoming of all graduates of the premier institution on 19 & 21 February 2016.

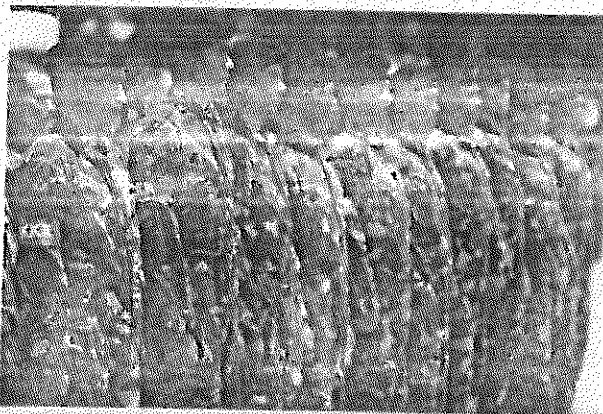
Masikhay Class President, CAV EDGARDO V TALAROC JR, said that this tournament will once again gather all alumni and provide an opportunity for them to interact as well as rebuild or sustain camaraderie with fellow graduates.

"This is the third time that our Class is doing this tournament, and we are encouraging those who belong to other class to organize a team and compete," CAV TALAROC added.

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## MODERNIZATION || AFP to receive P564-M worth of communication equipments

By Lui



Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, DWDD—The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) is receiving an aid of \$12 million or P564 million worth of tactical radios and intercom system as part of its communication modernization program.

According to the president of the Tactical Communications, Harris Communication Systems, Brendan O'Connell, the radios will provide the Philippine Army advancement on their command and control and will innovate their real-time situational awareness capabilities.

The Harris Corporation, an American communications firm said on their statement posted on their website that they have received the order that they will provide the radios according to the acquired budget.

Among the stated radios ordered by AFP are the tactical vehicular radios, intercom systems and handheld radios.

Other equipments that will be supplied by the Harris are the Light Armored Division of the Philippine Army with the Falcon RF-7800V Combat Net Radio integrated into the RF-7800I Intercom Systems.

O'Connell also said that they will secure the interoperability with more than 15,000 Harris Falcon radios presently fielded within the AFP.

This will be the latest improvement for the said communication international standardization program of the AFP with the help of the Harris Falcon. (LMC/DMC)

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