

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



ARMY

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OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS NEWS CLIPPINGS

02 January 2016

Saturday

Army Core Purpose: Serving the people. Securing the land

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	BIFF launches simultaneous attacks on New Year's Eve in Maguindanao	Frances Mangosing	www.inquirer.net

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January 2016

The Manila Times

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PANAHON TV

TODAY'S WEATHER FORECAST

JANUARY 2, 2016 | SATURDAY

NORTHEAST MONSOON
AFFECTING LUZON
(JANUARY 1, 5:00 PM)

TAIL-END OF A COLD FRONT
AFFECTING THE EASTERN
SECTION OF CENTRAL LUZON
(JANUARY 1, 5:00 PM)

SUNRISE

SUNSET



6:21 AM

5:38 PM

MOONRISE

MOONSET



12:18 AM

12:27 PM

LAST QUARTER
JAN 2
1:30 PM

NEW MOON
JAN 10
9:30 AM

LOW TIDE

HIGH TIDE



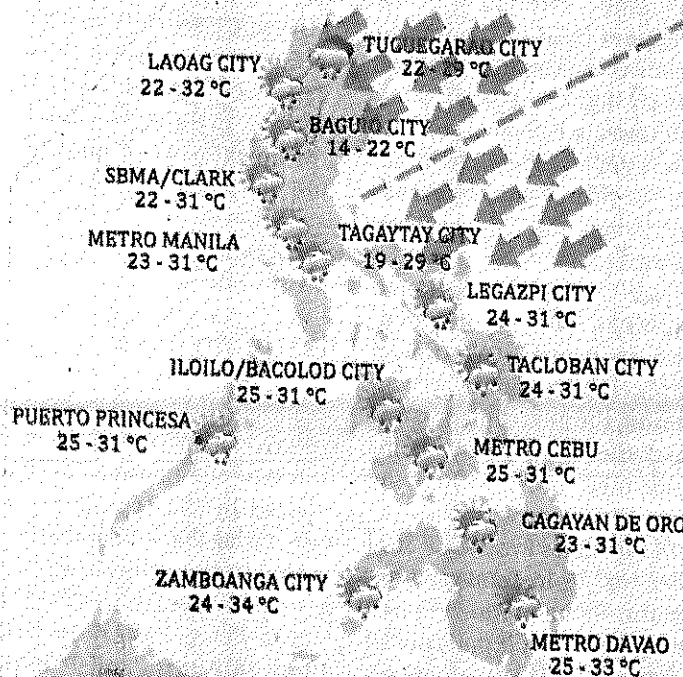
10:07 AM
0.07 Meter

2:11 AM
0.68 Meter

Partly cloudy to at times
cloudy with rainshowers

Partly cloudy to at times
cloudy with rainshowers
and/or thunderstorms

Light rains



	JAN 1 SUNDAY	JAN 1 MONDAY	JAN 1 TUESDAY		JAN 3 SUNDAY	JAN 4 MONDAY	JAN 4 TUESDAY
METRO MANILA	23-31°C	24-32°C	24-32°C	BAGUIO	14-22°C	14-22°C	14-23°C
METRO CEBU	25-32°C	25-32°C	25-32°C	PUERTO PRINCESA	25-32°C	25-32°C	25-32°C
METRO DAVAO	25-32°C	25-32°C	25-33°C	BORACAY	24-34°C	24-35°C	24-35°C

AIR 21
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Pope: Media should give more space to good news

VATICAN CITY—The media should give more space to positive, inspirational stories to counterbalance the preponderance of evil, violence and hate in the world, Pope Francis said on Thursday in his year-end message.

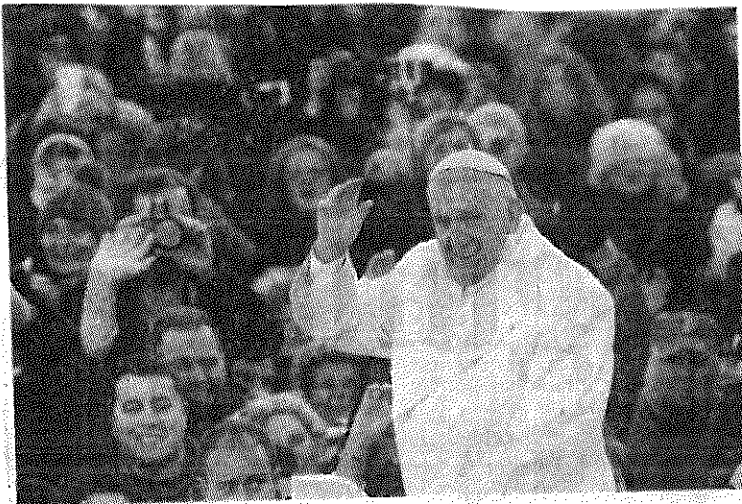
Francis led about 10,000 worshippers in a traditional year-end solemn "Te Deum"

vespers service of thanksgiving in St. Peter's Basilica.

In his brief homily, Francis said the outgoing year had been marked by many tragedies.

"(There has been) violence, death, unspeakable suffering by so many innocent people, refugees forced to leave their countries, men, women and

POPE/A15



GOOD TIDINGS Pope Francis makes the sign of the cross as he celebrates a New Year Mass in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican on Friday.

AP

From page A1

children without homes, food or means of support," he said.

But he said there had also been "so many great gestures of goodness" to help those in need, "even if they are not on television news programs (because) good things don't make news."

He said the media should not allow such gestures of solidarity to be "obscured by the arrogance of evil."

The Argentine Pope, marking the third New Year's season since his election in 2013, condemned the "insatiable thirst for power and gratuitous violence" the world had seen in 2015, without giving examples.

But in his Christmas message last week, he urged the world to unite to end atrocities by Islamist militants who he said were causing immense suffering in many countries.

Security has been very tight at the Vatican since the Nov. 13 Paris attacks in which 130 people were killed.

Police are checking the bags of people as they approach the Vatican area and then have to go through additional, airport-style screening if they want to enter St. Peter's Square or St. Peter's Basilica.

Corruption scandal

Francis also condemned a political corruption scandal that hit Rome, the city of which he is also bishop. The scandal, known as "Mafia Capital," has spawned a massive trial with 46 defendants that began last month.

Mobsters, bureaucrats and politicians are accused of siphoning millions of euros from public contracts for everything from refugee shelters to trash collection.

The 79-year-old Pope, who appears to have held up well during his numerous public appearances over the Christmas and New Year's season, is due to celebrate a Mass on Friday in the basilica to mark the Catholic Church's World Day of Peace.

Reuters

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Man dies after hugging 'Goodbye Philippines'

By SHEILA CRISOSTOMO

"Goodbye Philippines" proved fatal to a man who, in a drunken stupor, hugged the giant firecracker after lighting it.

He was declared dead on arrival at the Ospital ng Maynila at 2 a.m. yesterday.

The hospital did not disclose the identity of the victim, but reports identified the only firecracker fatality as 45-year-old Ronald Vericio of Buenos

Aires St., Sta. Mesa.

His partner Kristina Serrano said he put his arm around the Goodbye Philippines moments after lighting it and the firecracker exploded in his face.

Goodbye Philippines also tore off the leg of another man who stepped on the banned firecracker in Manila. The 34-year-old man was rushed to the Jose Reyes Memorial Medical Center.

JRMMC officer-of-the-day Felipa Acebedo said the patient's left leg had to be amputated. The lower part of the leg down to the foot was mangled and nearly severed.

"In blast injuries, body parts are usually mangled and it's hard to put them back together," she said in Filipino.

He was one of the more than 300 people treated for firecracker injuries and stray bullets from Dec. 21 up to New Year's Eve, the Department of Health (DOH) said yesterday.

Health Secretary Janette Garin said the number of injured brought to different hospitals – four for injuries from stray bullets – was more than half lower than last year. "There are 384 cases as of (yesterday) morning. We are very happy that it is 53 percent lower than the previous year. And if we compare it with the past five years' data, it is 57 percent lower," Garin said in a press briefing.

Garin said a "confluence of factors" – including the downpour on New Year's Eve, the vigorous anti-firecracker campaign of the DOH and the police crackdown on illegal firecracker stores – contributed to the sharp drop in reports of injuries.

Eighteen-year-old Vincent Pangan from Tondo, Manila was also treated at the JRMMC after he was hit by a stray bullet on the left leg.

Pangan said he was walking in Pritil Market in Tondo at around 10 p.m. with some friends when he felt something hit his right leg.

"It was like someone punched me in the leg and when I look at my leg, it was bleeding. I thought I was hit by firecrackers but when my uncle checked the wound, he realized it was caused by a bullet," he added.

As of 6 a.m. yesterday, a report from the DOH Epidemiology Bureau showed the illegal firecracker *piccolo* caused 219 of the 380 firecracker-related injuries. The others were due to five-star (four percent), *kwitis* (nine percent), *lucos* (four percent) and other unknown firecrackers (five percent).

Most of the injured were from the National Capital Region (NCR) with 243 cases, followed by Bicol region with 31 cases and Calabarzon with 27 cases. In NCR, most cases were from Manila, 73; Quezon City, 46; Marikina, 28.

Garin said most of the victims were children below 14 years old. "We have to deter the entry of *piccolo* in our country because without *piccolo*, there will be fewer to almost nil firecracker related injuries," she said.

She added that *piccolos* were smuggled into the country and repackaged to make it appear that they were made in Bulacan.

"This makes it hard to pinpoint (the source) because they have undergone repackaging upon entry to the country. *Piccolo* is imported as you would see that they are made by machines and the technology is not available in the country," she said.

Records also showed 246 or 65 percent of the cases involved hand injuries. There were 50 cases of eye injuries, 35 head injuries and 23 forearm and leg injuries.

Nine of the cases required amputation. Doctors in Nueva Vizcaya had to amputate three fingers of an eight-year-old boy wounded by *kwitis* blast. *Kwitis* is a legal firecracker.

The four stray bullet injuries include a 48-year-old woman from Valenzuela City who was hit on her right side while sleeping inside their house.

There was no report of poisoning from fireworks ingestion, the DOH said.

Illegal firecrackers accounted for 273 of the 380 cases while 87 cases were due to legal firecrackers.

The data is based on reports coming from 50 sentinel hospitals of the DOH nationwide.

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Possible increase

The DOH said the cases, while less than the previous year's, might swell in the coming days with cases of children getting injured by unexploded or discarded firecrackers that they had picked up.

"We request the parents to watch over their children. Don't let them pick up firecrackers. Although the firecrackers have been soaked in the rain, they will get dry and can still explode," Garin warned.

She also advised the public to turn over discarded or unexploded firecrackers to the police for proper disposal.

She also advised the public to get vaccinated against tetanus if they sustain even minor wounds or burns to prevent infection.

"We sometimes have the tendency to ignore minor burns and wounds but when it comes to firecrackers, we cannot do that. Even a small wound could get infected," Garin maintained.

She also said the rains may have helped clear the smog caused by fireworks.

"We have some data on respiratory cases but we cannot categorize if it is an attack caused by fumes or an allergy caused by the food that we have been eating this holiday," he added.

Data shows 83 cases of respiratory illnesses at the Lung Center of the Philippines, East Avenue Medical Center and Jose Reyes Memorial Medical Center on New Year's Eve.

The cases included asthma attack, pneumonia and difficulty in breathing.

Praises from Noy

With reports of fewer firecracker injuries, President Aquino commended the Philippine National Police (PNP) for what he called a job well done in preventing the rampant sale of illegal firecrackers.

The President relayed the commendation to PNP chief Director General Ricardo Marquez in a text message.

The President called Marquez's attention to Garin's report that cases of firecracker injuries went down sharply.

"Ric the ff is from Janette Garin. Congratulations and Pls pass the job well done to all. Happy New Year," Aquino's text message read. Marquez passed the message to all police regional, provincial and station commanders nationwide.

Marquez's text message to his men stated "fm the Chief, PNP for widest dissemination. Gentlemen this one was from no less than the President himself."

Garin also informed the President of the role played by the PNP in limiting firecracker injuries. "The confiscations done by PNP helped a lot. Happy New Year Sir," Garin said in a text message to President Aquino.

In San Juan, Mayor Guia Gomez also thanked the local police and firemen for what she called peaceful and orderly celebration of the New Year in the city.

Meanwhile in Bocaue, Bulacan, unsold illegal firecrackers and pyrotechnics products were distributed for free to revelers.

Oversized firecrackers were reportedly being given away for free hours before midnight as strict police monitoring prevented unscrupulous businessmen from selling their products openly.

But Quezon City Police District (QCPD) director Chief Supt. Edgardo Tinio said that the police only confiscated illegal firecrackers during their operation and let the sellers go as their "heart softened" by the thought that sellers of illegal firecrackers have also invested money in selling their illegal products.

He said that while it's the police's mandate to arrest all the people violating Republic Act 7183 or the law on pyrotechnic devices, "you can surmise that there is a human side" in the operation.

Under RA 7183, persons caught manufacturing, selling, distributing and purchasing illegal firecrackers may be imprisoned from six months to a year, and may be fined P20,000 to P30,000.

– With Cecille Suerte Felipe, Non Alquitran, Ramon Efren Lazaro, Ric Sapnu, Janvic Mateo, Michelle Zoleta, Eva Visperas, Artemio Dumlao, Celso Amo, Ric Sapnu, Ghio Ong, Perseus Echeminada, Cesar Ramirez, Robertzon Ramirez

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Soldier released in NPA's New Year gesture of peace

By MIKE U. CRISMUNDO

BUTUAN CITY – After 103 days of captivity in the mountains of Caraga region, Army Sgt. Adriano de la Pena Bingil was released by the New People's Army (NPA) somewhere in Durian, Las Nieves town, Agusan del Norte before New Year's Eve.

In what the military described as a gesture of peace for the coming year, Bingil was released to Agusan Del Norte Rep. Lawrence Lemuel H. Fortun, Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte, Municipal Crisis Committee head Ronaldo Corvera, mayor of San Luis, Agusan del Sur, and members of the religious sector.

An NPA custodial force turned over the Army soldier to the group and his family Friday afternoon.

Bingil was later received by Fourth Infantry (Diamond) Division (4th ID) acting commander Brig. Gen. Paul T.

Atal and Col. Cresente W. Maligmat, deputy commander of the Army's 401st Infantry (Unite N' Fight) Brigade, at the Advance Command Post (ACP) of the 4th ID here.

The released soldier was immediately brought to Camp Evangelista Station Hospital in Cagayan de Oro City for medical checkup and treatment of possible ailments.

"Thank God that I am again reunited with my family. I missed them so much," said a teary-eyed Bingil who had his first meeting with his wife since his capture.

According to Fortun, the NPA, armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), freed Bingil in the hope that the government will go back to the negotiating table to end the communist group's 47 years of armed struggle in the Philippines.

"Peace is a key factor for development and progress and fighting is not the solution in achieving

this elusive peace," the solon added.

But according to Lt. Col. Rey Pasco, commanding officer of the Army's Fourth Civil Military Operations Battalion based at Camp Bacasi here, the NPA was "pressured by the peace-loving people of Caraga region to release the kidnapped soldier."

"What the NPA did was plain kidnapping and it is a crime punishable by law. Nevertheless, we appreciate their gesture of returning our soldier, hoping that they are projecting a renewed faith in peace and aspiring to resume the peace talks with the government through the NDF," Atal also said.

Bingil, a member of the "Bayanihan Team" of the 26th Infantry Battalion, was riding on a motorcycle on his way to an outreach social, peace and development program when flagged down by some 30 armed men on a municipal road in Barangay Mahagsay, San Luis town, Agusan del Sur last September 15.

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BusinessMirror

A business publication for the Philippine business community

Page.

AC

NPA turns over captive Army soldier to Duterte

LAS NIEVES, Agusan del Norte —The New People's Army (NPA) on Thursday turned over a captive Army soldier to Davao City Mayor Rodrigo R. Duterte in a town in Agusan del Norte province.

Cpl. Adriano de la Peña Bingil Jr. of the Army's 26th Infantry Battalion was kidnapped by the communist guerrillas in the outskirts of San Luis, Agusan del Sur, on September 19, 2015.

Bingil was on his way to the town of San Luis to send money to his family in Cagayan de Oro City, when seized and held captive for over four months by the NPA rebels.

During the turnover rites in Las Nieves, the last town of Agusan del Norte, Duterte said that one of the reasons of the birth of an insurgency in the country is the rampant corruption in the government.

"I can assure you that, if elected president, the weeding out of corruption and corrupt public servants is on top of the agenda of my administration," Duterte said.

The Army soldier, clad in white shirt with a red POW (Prisoner of War) marking, looks good, but has obviously lost weight.

Bishop Felixberto Calang, of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI), who heads the Third Party Facilitator, has negotiated for the release of Bingil after the family sought the bishop's assistance.

He said that had the government granted the request for a 10-day suspension of military and



DUTERTE

police operations, Bingil could have been released earlier in December.

Calang said that the Third Party Facilitator and the NPA agreed to release Bingil during the duration of the cessation of hostilities imposed by the military and the NPA starting December 23, 2015, until January 3, 2016.

"There is no fitting gift as the family of Bingil and the rest of the Christendom celebrates the New Year's Eve midnight Thursday," Calang said.

On November 20, 2015, the Third Party Facilitator also worked in coordination with the local government crisis committee for the release of Pfc. Adonis Jess Lupiba who is also from Cagayan de Oro City.

Calang said that Lupiba, of the army's 58IB, was snatched during a firefight with the NPA in the mountains of Gingoog City sometime in July 2015.

Lupiba was turned over to the Third Party Facilitator after being held for four months by the NPA rebels, Calang said. *PNA*

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NPA rebels free soldier held captive for 3 months

TAGUM CITY—Communist rebels released on New Year's Eve a soldier who was seized by the rebels more than three months ago, military officials on Friday confirmed.

Sgt. Adriano Bingil was received by local officials, led by Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte, in Las Nieves town, Agusan del Norte province, on Thursday, said Capt. Joe Patrick Martinez, spokesperson of the Army's 4th Infantry Division (ID).

Bingil, who hails from Cagayan de Oro City, was snatched at gunpoint by New People's Army (NPA) guerrillas as he was passing by a rebel roadblock in Policarpio village in San Luis, Agusan del Sur, on Sept. 19.

The unarmed Bingil, squad leader of the Mahagsay patrol base of the Army's 26th Infantry Battalion, was on a motorcycle driven by village councilman Rene Galino, when rebels abducted him.

San Luis Mayor Ronald Corvera, who heads the municipal crisis committee, and Agusan del Norte Rep. Lawrence Fortun accompanied Duterte in receiving Bingil, Martinez said.

Also witnessing the release were members of the Philippine Ecumenical Peace Platform led by Bishop Bert Calang of Iglesia Filipina Independiente church.

Brig. Gen. Paul Atal, 4th ID commander, said Bingil's kidnapping was a "punishable crime."

"Nevertheless, we appreciate the rebels' gesture of returning our soldier," said Atal.

He said he hoped that the soldiers' release meant "renewed faith in peace" by the rebels.

After the release, Duterte flew Bingil on a helicopter to the division advanced command post in Bancasi, Butuan City. *Frinston L. Lim, Inquirer Mindanao*

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Soldier freed after 104 days

After more than three months, the New People's Army (NPA) has freed on New Year's Eve an Army sergeant it held captive in Agusan del Sur.

Sgt. Adriano Bingil was reunited with his wife Jenalyn and two daughters, who anxiously awaited his arrival in Barangay Durian, Las Nieves town, Agusan del Norte.

Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte brokered the release after Bingil's relatives sought his help. He personally escorted the soldier to the military headquarters in Bancasi, Butuan City.

Bingil was part of a team of soldiers deployed for an outreach mission to the lumads in San Luis, Agusan del Sur. He was hitching a ride on a motorcycle when snatched by the rebels.

Lt. Col. Rolando Dumawa, commander of the 26th Infantry Battalion, allowed Bingil to spend time with his family for the celebrations. Normally, soldiers go through several days of debriefing before they are allowed to join their loved ones.

– Edith Regalado, Jaime Laude

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The Manila Times

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Reds release kidnapped soldier

A PHILIPPINE Army soldier abducted by the New People's Army (NPA) in September was released on New Year's Eve in Agusan del Norte, military officials announced on Friday.

Army Sgt. Adriano Bingil, member of the Civil-military team of Army's 26th Infantry Battalion, was freed by his captors in Las Nieves town on efforts of local government officials and the people of Caraga region, according to Capt. Patrick Martinez, spokesman of the Army's 4th Infantry Division.

Bingil, who was assigned in Barangay Mahagsay, San Luis town, Agusan del Sur was with a village official when rebels flagged them down.

"Sgt Bingil was their target because they want the AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) to stop their "Bayanihan" efforts for peace and development in the remote areas of Caraga region," said Martinez.

Martinez disclosed that the release of Bingil was facilitated by local government officials

led by Mayor Ronaldo Corvera of San Luis, who also headed the municipal crisis committee; Rep. Lawrence Fortun of 1st district of Agusan del Norte; and Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte.

Bingil was turned over to Brig. Gen. Paul Atal, acting commander of the 4th ID and Col. Cresente Maligmat.

"What the NPA did is plain kidnapping and it is a crime punishable by law. Nevertheless, we appreciate the gesture of them returning our soldier, hoping that they are projecting a renewed faith in peace and aspiring to resume the peace talks with the government through the NDF (National Democratic Front)," said Atal.

Maj. Jonna Dalaguit, a military doctor who examined Bingil said the released officer was experiencing both physical and mental fatigue and will be temporarily admitted to Camp Evangelista Station Hospital in Cagayan de Oro City.

FERNAN MARASIGAN

January 2016

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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BIFF strikes anew, attacks Mamasapano, Shariff Aguak

By **ALI G. MACABALANG**

AMPATUAN, Maguindanao – A day after the local military leadership announced here “continuous and cohesive” operations against the remaining elements of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), the bandit group reportedly launched attacks anew in two more towns in this province on New Year’s Eve.

Field reports were still sketchy as of press time, but it was apparent that the BIFF rampaged through Mamasapano and Shariff Aguak towns at around 11 p.m. Thursday, resulting in running gun battles with government forces.

The reports said the bandit group absorbed heavy casualties with eight reportedly killed from the skirmishes.

Responding security forces also suffered casualties, according to a radio report. But the military, particularly the Sixth Infantry Division (6 ID) that operates in Central Mindanao, including Maguindanao, said it was still consolidating field reports on the incidents.

Social welfare and human rights agencies said the renewed BIFF attacks triggered the evacuation of hundreds more families from Mamasapano and

Shariff Aguak.

The latest BIFF attacks came a day after 6 ID commander Maj. Gen. Edmundo Pangilinan made separate announcements here and in M’lang, North Cotabato that military offensive would continue in “more cohesive fashion against the brigand secessionist group.”

Pangilinan made the announcement after BIFF combatants killed nine civilians on Dec. 24 and 25 in villages of Esperanza, Sultan Kudarat, Pigcawayan, North Cotabato, and this town.

The remains and families of the six of the fatalities, all Christian farmers from barangay Kauran here, were visited by Pangilinan and Maguindanao Governor Esmael “Toto” Mangudadatu on Wednesday after holding a closed-door meeting where both reportedly agreed on the continuing intensified and cohesive offensives against BIFF combatants.

Mangudadatu also met with the widows and children of the slain farmers – Mario Estenote, Mark Anthony Templa, Ramoncito Estorque, Ariel Bucais, Bernard Ebagat, and Rudy Roquero – and distributed to them cash assistance of ₱10,000 each and sacks of rice.

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January 2016

The
Standard
DEFINING THE NEWS

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TROOPS BEAT BACK BIFF ASSAULTS ON 3 FRONTS

By Francisco Tuyay

THE Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters attacked at least three military positions in Mindanao on New Year's Eve with the fighting lasting well into the first day of the year, the military reported on Friday.

Capt. Jo-Ann Petinglay, spokesperson of the Army's Sixth Infantry Division, said at least 20 BIFF fighters fired 40mm mortars at a detachment of the 2nd Mechanized Battalion in Maguindanao at 6 p.m. Thursday.

"They surrounded the area and opened fire with 40mm mortars," Petinglay said, adding that no government troops were injured or killed in the attack.

About three hours later, another BIFF group attacked a detachment of the 34th Infantry Battalion in Shariff Aguak, also in Maguindanao, with fighting lasting until after midnight.

Lt. Col. Edgar delos Reyes, commanding officer of the 34th IB, said their troops were able to push back the bandits with heavy gunfire.

Just few kilometers away in Lintangangan, Shariff Saydona, another firefight ensued after around 50 armed BIFF members harassed the detachment of the 40th IB.

The military said no troops were hurt in the attacks.

Aside from the three BIFF attacks on military outposts, feuding units of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front clashed in Sultan Sa Barongis town and the fighting lasted until dawn Jan. 1.

"We are thankful that peacekeepers from the MILF immediately intervened this morning, resulting in the ceasefire," said Col. Joel Mamon, commanding officer of the 40th Infantry Battalion.

On Dec. 30, Pope Francis condemned the BIFF's killing of innocent civilians in Mindanao on Christmas Eve but the rebel group vowed to step up its attacks until New Year's Eve.

Fourteen people died in the Christmas Eve attacks, nine of them villagers who were gunned down by BIFF insurgents. At least four rebels were killed by government forces.

Lt. Col. Ricky Bunayog, 33rd Infantry Battalion Commander, said about 300 men carried out the attacks and are now the subject of a massive manhunt.

Almost simultaneously, a separate band of BIFF fighters attacked Barangay Simsiman, Pigcawayan, North Cotabato on Christmas Eve.

Led by Commander Alamada Abonawas, the BIFF fired a rifle grenade toward the house of Robert Lerado, village councilman of Barangay Simsiman, killing him on the spot, raising the death toll to 13, nine civilians and four BIFF.

After attacking villages in the borders of Maguindanao and Sultan Kudarat, the BIFF also stormed the village of Malagakit, also in Pigcawayan, North Cotabato, firing at a Catholic chapel where a midnight mass was ongoing. Churchgoers scampered to safety but nobody was hurt.

Also on Dec. 24, at 9 p.m. another group of BIFF stormed a detachment of 2nd Mechanized Infantry Battalion in Barangay Dapiawan, Datu Saudi Ampatuan in Maguindanao. No casualties were reported.

Bunayog said government forces had difficulty retrieving the remains of slain farmers due to improvised bombs planted by the BIFF before they fled.

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The Manila Times

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26 BIFF REBELS SLAIN IN ATTACKS

KIDAPAWAN CITY: The Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) suffered 26 casualties after staging a series of harassment attacks targetting three military detachments in different towns of Maguindanao on New Year's Eve, military officials said on Friday.

The Army's 6th Infantry Division spokesperson Captain Jo Ann Petinglay said the attacks were in the towns of Datu Piang, Shariff Saidona Mustapha and Shariff Aguak.

Petinglay said the BIFF first attacked a detachment in Datu Piang, Maguindanao with an M203 grenade launcher. The grenade landed about 50 meters away from the Kaungan Detachment of a Mechanized Infantry Company.

At 9:30 p.m. on Thursday, about 30 BIFF militants assaulted Timbangan Detachment in Brgy Timbangan, Shariff Aguak, Maguindanao.

One hour later, the Linantangan Detachment in Brgy Linantangan, Shariff Saydona Mustapha, Maguindanao was also attacked by armed men.

A 15-minute firefight ensued

causing six fatalities on the BIFF with 20 others injured but no casualties from the military side were r

Petinglay said the number of casualties on the BIFF side was based on reports from the communities.

The recent BIFF attacks succeeded the Christmas Eve attacks in Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao and North Cotabato, which resulted to the death of around dozen of civilians and displaced thousands of residents.

Heightened alert

The military and police had heightened their alert since the attacks and intensified operations against the group.

Maj. Gen. Edmundo Pangilinan, commander of 6th Infantry Division, said the BIFF's attempt to sow fear among the residents eventually boomeranged.

"Let the incident be a lesson to the BIFF that there can only be one superior force and that is the military," he said.

MOH SAADUDDIN

Philippine army says 133 Abu Sayyaf killed in 2015

Officials say verified intelligence shows another 164 militants wounded in operations that left 18 security force members dead

The Philippines' military has reported that operations against the al-Qaeda-linked Abu Sayyaf were verified to have killed 133 members of the militant group in southern Sulu province in 2015.

Maj. Filemon Tan, Western Mindanao Command spokesperson, cited Friday the report from the Joint Task Group for the troubled island province as saying that another 164 were recorded to have been injured in security operations.

In a text message, he said that the number of casualties had been verified by military intelligence units based in Sulu – a known Abu Sayyaf stronghold.

At least 13 members of the group – known for holding hostages and demanding ransoms – were also arrested over the year, alongside the recovery of more than 50 firearms.

Meanwhile, the operations also left 18 members of the security forces dead and more than 80 others injured, according to Joint Task Group Sulu's commander, Brig. Gen. Alan Arrojado.

Inquirer.net also reported him as saying that there had been a significant drop in the number of Abu Sayyaf members over the year due to "relentless focused military operations."

Military operations against the group were intensified in late November upon the orders of President Benigno Aquino III.

The directive came after Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak called upon authorities to take action after a Malaysian national kidnapped from a seaside town in the country was beheaded in Sulu.

The Abu Sayyaf is still holding several captives, including two Canadians, a Norwegian and a Filipina kidnapped from a resort in September for whose release it has demanded a ransom of more than \$60 million.

Since 1991, the group — armed with mostly improvised explosive devices, mortars and automatic rifles — has carried out bombings, kidnappings, assassinations and extortions in a self-determined fight for an independent Islamic province in the Philippines.

It is notorious for beheading victims after ransoms have failed to be paid for their release.

BIFF launches New Year attacks on Army detachments

The Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) maintains an offensive as it targets the Philippine Army

STANDING GUARD. Filipino soldiers man a provincial capital building turned into a military camp in Shariff Aguak, Maguindanao, March 31, 2015. File photo by Ritchie B. Tongo/EPA

STANDING GUARD. Filipino soldiers man a provincial capital building turned into a military camp in Shariff Aguak, Maguindanao, March 31, 2015. File photo by Ritchie B. Tongo/EPA

COTABATO CITY, Philippines – The Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) upheld its promise to maintain an offensive until the new year.

Around 6 pm of Thursday, December 31, about 20 BIFF fighters opened fire on the detachment of the Philippine Army's 2nd Mechanized Battalion.

"They surrounded the area and opened fire, 40mm mortars, but could not last the fight," said 6th Army Infantry Division Captain Jo-Ann Petinglay.

At around 9:20 pm, a detachment of the 34th Infantry Battalion in Barangay Timbangan, Shariff Aguak, Maguindanao traded fire with the BIFF.

Lieutenant Colonel Edgar Delos Reyes, the 34th Infantry Battalion's commanding officer, said they managed to drive away the BIFF due to the sheer volume of fire from their base.

A few kilometers away, another firefight ensued. Around 50 armed BIFF members harassed the detachment of the 40th Infantry Battalion in Linantangan, Shariff Saydona town.

No one was hurt from the military side, though an unknown number of casualties was monitored on the part of the BIFF.

Yet another firefight was held in the area of the 40th Infantry Battalion in Sultan Sa Barongis town when two local commanders from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) 105th base command engaged in armed conflict due to a clan feud.

The firefight lasted until the early morning, and resumed after 6 am following a break in the gunfire.

"We are thankful that peacekeepers from the MILF immediately intervened this morning, resulting in the ceasefire," said Colonel Joel Mamon, commanding officer of the 40th Infantry Battalion.

The newly installed Brigade Commander of the 601st Brigade, Colonel Lito Sobejana, visited his men stationed in the Maguindanao frontlines on Friday morning, January 1 to check the condition of his troops.

"We are happy all none of them got hurt, We thank the people who prayed for us," Sobejana said over the phone.

In Matalam, North Cotabato, troops of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) – headed by Kamid Mangadta alias Kumander Dragon – were attacked by fully armed men of Barangay

Kagawad Kepig Imbong of the MILF's 108th base command in Barangay Kidama, Matalam, North Cotabato.

Hundreds of families were forced to flee to evacuation sites.

No casualties have been reported so far, but local peace monitors were sent to the area to settle the conflict.

www.pna.gov.ph

BIFF tries, fails to over-run Army bases in Maguindanao on New Year's Eve

CAMP SIONGCO, Maguindanao - Government forces on New Year's Eve repulsed three attempts by outlawed Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) to over-run military detachments in Maguindanao, the Army here said today.

Capt. Joann Petinglay, speaking for the 6th Infantry Division, said the first attempt to capture Army detachments of the 2nd Mechanized Battalion in Datu Piang, Maguindanao at 6 p.m. Thursday by firing a series of rifle grenades.

Alert soldiers quickly returned fire against about 10 BIFF fighters sighted near the Army detachment, forcing the attackers to retreat toward the marshland.

Three hours later, about 30 BIFF members attacked another detachment, this time the 34th Infantry Battalion outpost in Barangay Timbangan, Shariff Aguak, Maguindanao.

Alert infantrymen engaged the attackers in a 20-minute firefight which led to the failure of BIFF's attempt to get closer. They fled under cover of darkness to the hinterlands.

Petinglay said in a report that at past 10 p.m., another band of 40 BIFF fighters attacked the detachment of 40th Infantry Battalion in Shariff Saydona, Maguindanao.

Like in other Army base subjected to harassment by the BIFF, soldiers immediately returned fire forcing the attacks to retreat.

"No casualty on the government side," she said in a radio interview. "There were reports from the communities that the BIFF had injured companions but the report is still subject to Army validation," she added.

Following the December 24 attacks by the BIFF in Kauran, Ampatuan, Maguindanao and nearby areas, soldiers under the 6th ID have been placed on heightened alert.

Abu Misri Mama, BIFF spokesperson, admitted his group carried out the attacks.

Petinglay said all Army units remained on alert.

BIFF sustains large casualties in unprovoked New Year's Eve attacks

An estimated five to six Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) were killed while an undetermined number of others were wounded in unprovoked attacks on three military installations in Maguindanao on Thursday, New Year's Eve, Dec. 31.

This was disclosed by 6th Infantry Division public affairs office chief Capt. Jo-ann Petinglay in a message to the Philippines News Agency on Friday.

"Members of the armed lawless group who call themselves Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters harassed three military detachments of 6th ID before the change of the year but were surprised to face the determined defensive posturing of their targets," she said.

The BIFF first harassed one Philippine Army detachment in Datu Piang, Maguindanao using an M-203 grenade launcher, with its rounds landing about 50 meters from the Kaungan Detachment of a Mechanized Infantry Company on Thursday afternoon.

At 9:30 p.m., an estimated 30 BIFF harassed the Timbangan Detachment of 34th Infantry Battalion based in Barangay Timbangan, Shariff Aguak, Maguindanao.

About an hour later, the Linantangan Detachment of the 40th Infantry Battalion located in Barangay Linantangan, Shariff Saydona Mustapha, was also attacked.

"The already prepared military forces immediately engaged the harassing lawless elements for an estimated fifteen-minute firefight, prompting the BIFF to withdraw and scamper towards different directions. Members of the communities reported that withdrawing BIFF carried with them about five to six dead bodies and a massive number of wounded," Petinglay added.

"Let the incident be a lesson to the BIFF that there can only be one superior force and that is the Philippine government Armed Forces," 6th Infantry Division commander, Major Gen. Edmundo R. Pangilinan said.

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ABC president slain as tension escalates in Marawi City

COTABATO CITY – The president of the Association of Barangay Chairpersons (ABC) in Marawi City was killed while two of his companions were wounded in a drive-by shooting on New Year's Eve that has escalated tension in the city which is already reeling from a spate of atrocities in recent days.

Chief Insp. Parson Asadil, Marawi City police chief, said armed men riding a motorcycle fired at Aminoden Awar, alias Otek, president of the local ABC, and his two companions in Barangay East Basak around 7:40 p.m. Thursday.

Awar died after being rushed to the Amai Pakpak Central Medical Hospital where his two wounded companions were also brought.

Col. Manolo Samarita, deputy commander of Marawi city-based Army's 103rd Infantry Brigade, said authorities are now investigating the incident, which was the latest in a wave of shooting incidents that have purportedly turned Marawi City into a violent capital of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

Awar is reportedly related to Marawi City Mayor Sultan Fahad "Pre" Salic, according to relatives who also suggested

that his fatal shooting was perpetrated by government intelligence agents.

Awar had earlier been tagged as one of the suspects in the killing of three soldiers and wounding of several others in an ambush at the Mindanao State University-Marawi campus in August, 2012.

Other sources said Awar was a member of the Khilafa Islamic Movement (KIM) which is also known in the Lanao region as "Guraba."

KIM members were among the main suspects in the recent shooting of an ABS-CBN news team and the killing of two soldiers in this city.

Four armed men riding on motorcycles fired at the vehicle of Iligan City-based ABS-CBN reporters Ronnie Enderes, cameraman Emilito Balansag and driver Garry Montecillo along the commercial zone of Banggolo, Marawi City last December 26.

The media crew escaped unhurt but their vehicle's window shield was shattered by a bullet. Last Monday, the police filed attempted murder charges against two suspects named as Yusop Sangcad and Nasser Masorong, both of barangay Lilod Madaya in Marawi City. (Ali G. Macabalang)

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Village official killed, 2 injured in Marawi

BY MOH SAADUDDIN CORRESPONDENT

KIDAPAWAN CITY: A barangay official was killed while a police officer and a security guard were wounded when unidentified armed men opened fire at them in a remote village in Marawi City on Thursday evening, military and police officials said.

Col. Manolo Samarita, deputy commander of Marawi city-based 103rd Infantry Brigade of the Philippine Army, identified the slain victim as Barangay Chairman Aminoden Awar alias Otik of Brgy. East Basak.

Identities of the injured – a police officer and a security guard of Mindanao State University (MSU) Main Campus – were being

validated as they were brought to separate local hospitals in the cities of Marawi and Iligan.

Link with jihadists

Chief Inspector Parson Asadil, Marawi city chief of police said the victims were outside the house of Otik when the suspects fired shots

at them using M16 rifles at around 7:40 p.m., in Brgy. East Basak.

The officials said Otik was previously tagged in the killing of Marawi city chief of police Supt. Al Abner Wahab Santos on October 17. Santos was assassinated while on the way to back to the police station from conducting an investigation on some confidential cases. Unidentified gunmen stopped police official's car and shot at him pointblank.

Asadil said Otik is also suspect in previous attacks, including the ambush of an army truck along MSU campus that killed three soldiers and a child and wounded several others in August 2012.

The August 2012 ambush in MSU campus was said to be the handiwork of young radicals Khilafah Islamiyah Movement

(KIM), locally known as Ghuraba or strangers that resulted to the death of three soldiers and a child with several others injured.

Sources said Otik has "personal link" with the local jihadists group KIM, which had pledged allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

The shooting of Otik followed the killing of two army officers on December 29 by still unidentified gunmen in Marawi City.

The soldiers were outside the local radio station waiting for an informant who was supposed to shed more light on the recent ambush on an ABS-CBN news team last December 26 when gunmen onboard a motorcycle fired at them.

Authorities also eyed young radicals behind the attacks

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Bill provides full medical assistance for soldiers, cops wounded in battle

A LAWMAKER is pushing for a measure providing soldiers and policemen wounded in combat full medical assistance.

Nationalist People's Coalition Rep. Scott Davies S. Lanete of Masbate said that the hazard and combat pay being received by wounded policemen and soldiers is

pittance consider the danger they face in the line of duty.

Lanete filed House Bill 5933, or the "Medical Combat Pay Act," that provides better assistance for soldiers and policemen wounded in battle.

Under the measure, the medical assistance shall cover all expenses necessary for the immediate care and recovery

of the wounded uniformed men, including their post-care and recovery.

All wounded policemen and soldiers shall be entitled to the medical combat pay the moment they are admitted in a hospital or medical clinic, the bill added.

Likewise, the measure also said policemen and

soldiers are entitled to continuing medical assistance until such time a qualified physician declares them fully recovered both physically and psychologically.

In filing the bill, Lanete, vice chairman of the House Committee on Public Order and Safety, said soldiers and policemen who get

wounded in action or while in duty should get full medical assistance from the government.

Lanete said policemen stationed in dangerous areas only receive a hazard pay of P240 a month and a combat pay of P340 a month, while soldiers who are assigned to dangerous areas receive a combat of

only P240 per month.

"Although laws are already in place to provide financial assistance to wounded uniformed men while on duty, these laws are not adequate to help and alleviate their physical, mental, psychological and financial sufferings," he added. *Jovee Marie N. dela Cruz*

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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Military probing wounding of kids by Marine gunfire

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Three children were injured allegedly when Marines opened fire at houses after being attacked in Sulu before dawn on Friday.

The military said it has started an investigation into the report, which was made by Dr. Raden Ikbala, of the integrated provincial health office in Sulu, in a post on his Facebook page.

Also during New Year revelry in the province, three more persons, two also children, were injured by bullets, according to Ikbala.

Ikbala said in his Facebook post that the Marines opened fire at houses in the town of Maimbung, Sulu, after a grenade attack on their detachment in the village of Matatal.

Ikbala identified the wounded children as Haikar Nurmasir, 8, who suffered a gunshot wound in the abdomen; Alma-jin Nurmasir, 10, who was hit in the right buttock; and 12-year-old Alyasier Ibno, who was hit in the right thigh. All



ONE of the children wounded allegedly when the Marines opened fire at houses in Maimbung, Sulu province. The children had been brought to the provincial hospital of Sulu.

DR. IKBALA'S FACEBOOK PAGE

three victims had been rushed to the Sulu provincial hospital, he said.

The Marines, he said, opened fire following the grenade attack but failed to hit any of the armed men who were believed to have lobbed the grenade.

"People scampered for safety," Ikbala said in his Facebook post. "When the Marines

stopped firing, the residents went home," he said.

But after about 30 minutes, Ikbala said the firing resumed and residents reported that it came from the Marines.

This led to the wounding of the three children, said the doctor.

The New Year revelry, according to Ikbala, also wounded three people hit by wayward bullets.

He did not identify the victims but said they were aged 12, 14 and 32. They had been brought to the provincial hospital past midnight of Thursday.

He said the 12-year-old victim, a girl, was hit by a stray bullet as she prepared food for the New Year celebration inside her house in the village of Mauboh in Patikul town.

The 14-year-old victim, a male teenager, was hit in the leg.

The 32-year-old victim, said Ikbala, was hit by a stray bullet as he played with his mobile phone near the mosque in Busbus, Jolo.

Expressing anger in his Facebook post, Ikbala said those responsible should go to the hospital and "ask for forgiveness from the victims."

"They should know that it's as if they directly shot the victims," said Ikbala. "Based on Newton's Law (gravity), the speed by which bullets travel upward and downward has no difference," he said.

Maj. Filemon Tan Jr., spokesperson of Western Mindanao Command, said the military has started an investigation into the incident.

"We sent an inquiry team to check on the events that transpired. We will make a report of our findings," he said.

Tan said the victims are being taken care of by the Marines, who were the ones who brought the children to the hospital. *Julie Alipala, Inquirer Mindanao*

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PNP, AFP not taking chances on Boracay security setup

By TARA YAP

ILOILO – The Philippine National Police (PNP) has beefed up its presence at the world-famous Boracay Island in Malay, Aklan amidst a terror threat.

Police Supt. Gilbert Gorero, chief information officer of the Police Regional Office (PRO-6), said that the PNP is taking precautionary measures after the US Embassy in Manila included Boracay on the list of possible targets by the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF).

The December 23, 2015 advisory urged US citizens to travel with “extreme caution.”

Chief Supt. Bernardo Diaz, PRO-6 regional director, has ordered the implementation of the PNP Integrated Patrol Deployment Plan.

Even before the terror alert, Diaz earlier explained that police presence in Boracay Island has always been a priority as it is the country’s prime tourist destination.

Security in Boracay has been increased since May, 2015 when the island resort hosted two key meetings that were part of the 2015 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit.

Gorero said that aside from the police, there are units from the Philippine Army, Philippine Navy and Philippine Coast Guard deployed in Boracay.

“Everything is in order. Boracay is still safe,” Gorero assured.

Meanwhile, no major crime was recorded in Boracay during the Christmas holidays.

Local and tourism authorities the other day bared that the island paradise destination has breached its 1.5 million tourist arrivals target for 2015 as of December 27.

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Ferrer wants BBL passed in February

BY CATHERINE S. VALENTE
REPORTER

THE government peace panel has not lost hope that Congress will pass the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) before the start of the election campaign.

Government peace panel chief Miriam Coronel-Ferrer appealed to lawmakers to prioritize the passage of the measure, noting that the approval of the bill will pave the way for the implementation of the other components of the peace agreement signed with the Moro

Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

"Although prolonged and tediously delayed, we have managed to see the respective committees in the Senate and the House of Representatives (HoR) close their committee hearings, produce their amended bills, and move on to

the period of interpellation, with the HoR closing this period by the time Congress ended its last session day for 2015 on December 16," Ferrer said.

"We continue to believe that both Houses can and will pass the law before they close session in February 2016," she added.

Congress is expected to resume its sessions on January 19.

Ferrer noted that although the Bangsamoro bill has been languishing for more than a year in Congress, neither the government nor the MILF has reneged on their commitments to each other.

"I acknowledge the wisdom

and maturity of the MILF leaders for staying on the peace track despite the disappointments and challenges. Other less determined peace partners would have been less discerning, and more impulsively be shouting out war chants in view of the delays in our road map. We pray the leadership will be able to keep in line its mass members," Ferrer said.

"We continue to collaborate in strengthening our joint mechanisms, and building mutual trust and confidence among and between our respective organizations," she added.

Should there be a failure to

implement all aspects of the peace process under the Aquino administration, Ferrer said the aim would be to "strengthen" the agreement forged by the two parties well into the next administration.

Nevertheless, the chief of government peace panel said putting off the passage of the Bangsamoro bill would be akin to starting from scratch since the measure, now called the proposed Basic Law for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region, would have to be refiled and discussed again at the committee level before being taken up in the plenary.

"We find strength in the unflinching efforts of civil society organizations, leading personalities and groups in the Christian churches, the academe, the women and peace advocates, and the diplomatic community, our supportive legislators especially the leaders of both Houses, the Cabinet and various government agencies, and certainly the President, to promote understanding of the cause, and taking action to bring forth the BBL," Ferrer said.

"Altogether, we shall continue to carry on in order to get to our destination sooner than later," she added.

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133 Abu Sayyaf killed, 164 wounded in Sulu in 2015, says AFP

By: Frances Mangosing

A total of 133 Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) members were killed and 164 were wounded in government security operations in Sulu in 2015, military data showed.

But the report of Joint Task Group Sulu said that of the 133 slain Abu Sayyaf, only 12 bodies were recovered.

An Army official, who declined to be quoted for his lack of authority to speak to the media, explained that this was because the ASG found it "taboo" to leave a comrade behind.

"As much as possible, i-recover nila on the heat of the battle; kukunin nila yan pati ang sugatan," he said.

The information is verified from two or three intelligence units of the military before it is added to the death toll. A fatality won't be added to the death toll if it comes from a single source.

Security forces were also able to arrest 13 members of the Abu Sayyaf Group and recover 53 firearms in the last 12 months.

Brig. Gen. Alan Arrojado, commander of Joint Task Group Sulu, attributed these gains to the instruction of higher ups of "relentless focused military operations to neutralize the armed group and keep them on the run."

But these military operations in Sulu also cost the lives of 18 government forces and injured 82 more as of Dec. 31.

The strength of Abu Sayyaf in Sulu based on military data is at 264. These are only the identified ones and it does not include the supporters, families and followers that sometimes join firefights whenever these erupt.

Sulu is known as a stronghold of the Abu Sayyaf, where they are keeping their hostages in exchange of ransom. As of Dec. 31, 16 kidnap victims were either released, escaped, rescued or retrieved.

In November, the terror group beheaded its Malaysian hostage, prompting President Benigno Aquino III to order intensified operations against the bandits.

The military in Sulu is hunting for four more hostages: one foreign, who is a Dutch national named Ewold Horn, and three locals.

Authorities would not confirm if the four hostages in Samal Island in Davao del Norte (two Canadians, a Norwegian and a Filipina) and the Italian national abducted in Dipolog last October were taken to Sulu.

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In a video last November, the Abu Sayyaf took responsibility over the Samal kidnapping and demanded P1 billion in exchange of their captives.

www.inquirer.net

BIFF launches simultaneous attacks on New Year's Eve in Maguindanao

By: Frances Mangosing

The Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) launched simultaneous attacks on military detachments in Maguindanao on New Year's Eve, Thursday.

This happened a few days after they carried out attacks on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day in Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao and North Cotabato.

Army's 6th Infantry Division spokesperson Captain Joan Petinglay, told INQUIRER.net on Friday that no one from the government side was hurt and the rebels were not able to get closer to the detachments because of their proactive measures.

The BIFF fired an M203 grenade launcher at a mechanized company of the Army in Datu Piang around 6 p.m. The grenade landed 50 meters away from the detachment.

At 9:10 p.m., around 20 to 30 BIFF members attacked the detachment of the Army's 34th Infantry Battalion in Brgy. (village) Timbangan in Shariff Aguak.

A 15-minute firefight ensued. However, the rebels were not able to get closer, Petinglay said.

"The rebels incurred casualties but these are only based from community reports," she said.

Later at 10:30 p.m., around 40 members attacked the Army's 40th Infantry Battalion in Shariff Saydona Mustapha.

"They were also not able to get close because we have monitored their movements. In about less than 15 minutes they already fled," she said.

Attacks by the BIFF on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day in Maguindanao, Sultan Kudarat and North Cotabato killed 13. The incident displaced more than a thousand families.

Security forces were on alert before Christmas due to the planned attacks of the BIFF, a breakaway group of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front that is also claiming allegiance with the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria.

However, Petinglay encouraged the displaced families to return to their homes.

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"There are enough forces deployed to secure the highway and community where there are reported threats," she said.

Some families have returned to their homes, she added, but said it is up to the local officials to release clearance on whether the families could go back she said.

Early last year, the military claims that it killed over a hundred of these rebels in a month-long all-out offensive after the Mamasapano incident which killed 44 police commandos. Around a hundred more armed fighters are in Maguindanao, Sultan Kudarat and North Cotabato. *RAM*

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

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