

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

03 January 2016

Sunday

Army Core Purpose: Serving the people. Securing the land

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

NEWS HEADLINES 01 JANUARY 2016

2015 Year-End Preview
Phil population seen to hit 104 M

STAP
New Year wishes for New Year's resolutions from Christ

Ex-LTO chief Torres dies

New LTO chief vows end to license backlog

Firecracker injuries skyrocket to 455

'New Year's Day air pollution not as bad as past years'

Colombians burn Piu effigy

David vs Goliath at The Hague

A pole vaulter into crisis

4 towns to 30

Let's put a pin in the 21st century's history

PHILIPPINE INQUIRER

'Time to end indifference'

Cracker amazes up in latest PNP reports

Pope calls for reconciliation, support for refugees

Bicol towns nurses mothers, babies

LJM, woman of steel, had such soft hands

What's more

Gracie's victory dance premature

For New Year, Noy flaunts gains from Daang Matuwid

Saudi executes Pory for murder

MIAP involvement seen in BIFF attacks

Barbaric Smith and his cronies in the Philippines

The Sunday Times

Poe: No black propaganda

For New Year, Noy flaunts gains from Daang Matuwid

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Barbaric Smith and his cronies in the Philippines

The Philippine Economic Outlook for 2016

MANILA BULLETIN
THE PHILIPPINES' LEADING NATIONAL NEWSPAPER

End Indifference - Pope
Pontiff hits 'arrogance of the powerful' and 'false neutrality' in 2016 message

Stray bullet cases hit 36; firecrackers injure 459

For New Year, Noy flaunts gains from Daang Matuwid

Saudi executes Pory for murder

MIAP involvement seen in BIFF attacks

Barbaric Smith and his cronies in the Philippines

Tribune

Grace's victory dance premature

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Saudi executes Pory for murder

MIAP involvement seen in BIFF attacks

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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

03 JANUARY 2016

PAGE NR.	TITLE	WRITER	NEWSPAPER
1	Weather Forecast	-	Mla Times p. A8
NATIONAL NEWS			
2	Phil population seen to hit 104 M	Sheila Crisostomo	Phil Star p. 1
3	Ex-LTO chief Torres dies	Robertzon Ramirez	Phil Star p. 1
ARMY RELATED NEWS			
4	NPA's releases soldier on New Year's Eve	Camcer Ordoñez Imam	Mla Bulletin p. 15
5	Army says NPA rebels violated own holiday truce	Mar Arguelles	PDI p. A9
6	NPA violates holidays truce, attacks troops in CamSur	Jaime Laude	Phil Star p. 12
AFP RELATED NEWS			
7	Noy hosts dinner for top defense, AFP execs	Artemio Dumlao	Phil Star p. 10
8	15 AFP modernization projects completed last year	Alexis Romero	Phil Star p. 10
9	No soldier fired gun during New Year revelry - AFP	Jaime Laude	Phil Star p. 2
10	'BIFF attacks have nothing to do with BBL'	Jaime Laude	Phil Star p. 10
11	Troopers Strike Back, Kill 6 BIFF	Francisco Tuyay	The Standard A1
12	'Kalayaan' group wraps up Spratly protest	Jaymee Gamil	PDI p. A3
13-15	David vs Goliath at The Hague	Pia Brago	Phil Star p. 1
16	Navy ship deployed to escort volunteers in 'Freedom Voyage'	Jaime Laude	Phil Star p. 4
ONLINE NEWS			
17-18	EMC welcomes release of captive trooper, hopes NPA will stop extortion, terror attacks	JBP/PFN	www.pna.gov.ph
	Sulu town attacked by armed men	Lilia Alipata	www.inquirer.net
	Soldier gunned down in Maguindanao town	Nash E. Maulana	www.inquirer.net
19	Military truck na karga ang nasawing Army officer bumangga, 5 sugatan	Mars deSan	www.bomboradyo.com

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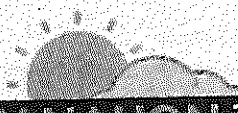
20	<i>AFP operations pinag-ibayo vs BIFF na umatake bago ang new year</i>		www.bomboradyo.com
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03 January 2016

The Manila Times

Page: 18



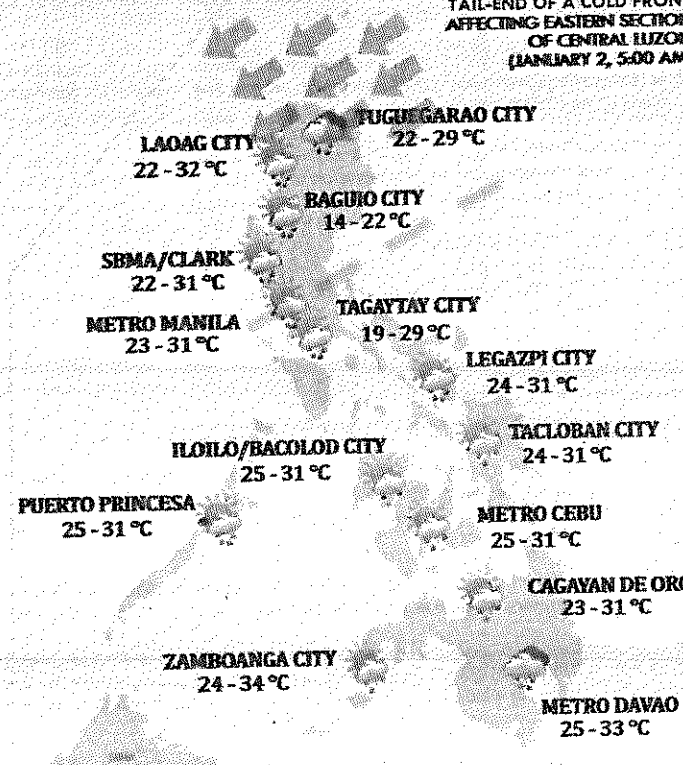
The Manila Times

PANAHON TV

TODAY'S WEATHER FORECAST **JANUARY 3, 2016 | SUNDAY**

NORTHEAST MONSOON AFFECTING NORTHERN LUZON

TAIL-END OF A COLD FRONT AFFECTING EASTERN SECTION OF CENTRAL LUZON (JANUARY 2, 5:00 AM)



LAOAG CITY 22 - 32 °C

BAGUIO CITY 14 - 22 °C

SBMA/CLARK 22 - 31 °C

METRO MANILA 23 - 31 °C

TAGAYTAY CITY 19 - 29 °C

LEGAZPI CITY 24 - 31 °C

ILOILO/BACOLOD CITY 25 - 31 °C

TACLOBAN CITY 24 - 31 °C

PUERTO PRINCESA 25 - 31 °C

METRO CEBU 25 - 31 °C

CAGAYAN DE ORO 23 - 31 °C

ZAMBOANGA CITY 24 - 34 °C

METRO DAVAO 25 - 33 °C

SUNRISE	SUNSET
6:21 AM	5:38 PM
MOONRISE	MOONSET
12:18 AM	12:27 PM
LAST QUARTER	NEW MOON
JAN 2 1:30 PM	JAN 10 9:30 AM
LOW TIDE	HIGH TIDE
10:32 AM 0.13 Meter	6:03 PM 0.58 Meter

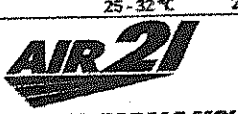
Partly cloudy to at times cloudy with rainshowers

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


Cloudy skies with rainshowers and/or thunderstorms

Light rains


	JAN 4 MONDAY	JAN 5 TUESDAY	JAN 6 WEDNESDAY	JAN 7 THURSDAY	JAN 8 FRIDAY	JAN 9 SATURDAY
METRO MANILA	23 - 31 °C	24 - 32 °C	24 - 32 °C	14 - 22 °C	14 - 22 °C	14 - 23 °C
METRO CEBU	25 - 32 °C	25 - 32 °C	25 - 32 °C	25 - 32 °C	25 - 32 °C	25 - 32 °C
METRO DAVAO	25 - 32 °C	25 - 32 °C	25 - 31 °C	24 - 34 °C	24 - 35 °C	24 - 35 °C



SABOT KO, PADALA MO!

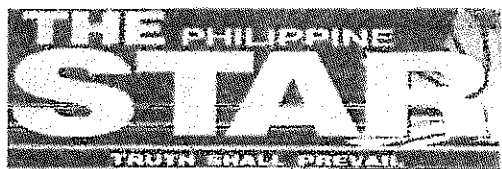


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03 January 2016



Page: 1

Phl population seen to hit 104 M

By SHEILA CRISOSTOMO

The country's population is projected to increase to 104 million this year as 1.5 million babies are expected to be born, the Commission on Population (PopCom) said yesterday.

"The Philippines' population is 102.4 million at the end of 2015. But this year, it is ex-

pected to increase to 104 million," PopCom executive director Juan Antonio Perez III told **The STAR**.

Perez noted the country's fertility rate, which pertains to the "number of children that a woman wants to have in her lifetime," had historically been going

Turn to Page 4

Phl

From Page 1

down. From 1.9 in 2010, it became 1.7 in 2015.

"We'll see if it goes below 1.7 (this year). That means people are choosing to have less children more quickly. That can be attributed to economic situation," he added.

Women usually want to have two to three children, while men aspire to have three to four.

But according to Perez, the increase in the population is driven primarily by 23 million women aged 15 to 49 who are of reproductive age.

Perez said in five to 10 years, the country will probably have the "biggest number of women of reproductive age that we will ever see,

at 25 to 30 million."

"We have many five- to 10-year-old girls who are going reproductive in the next five years. We cannot do anything about that. So what we are trying to do is reduce their need for services," he added.

PopCom has various education and information programs about reproductive health and responsible parenthood. The agency also provides both natural and artificial methods of family planning.

"We should be able to provide what women need, what they think is good for them. We also try to involve the men in reproductive

health," Perez said.

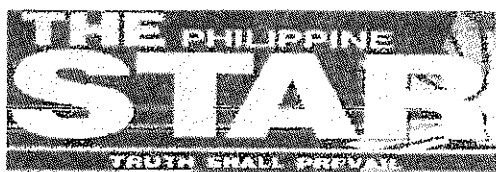
Based on PopCom data, the contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) for modern family planning increased by three percent to 46 percent in 2013 to 2014.

This is the second year of increased CPR, with an increase of 39 percent in 2012 to 43 percent in 2013.

This seven-percent increase in the last two years also represents a 1.4 million increase in the number of women practicing modern family planning. It is now pegged at nine million.

To effectively reduce the unmet needs for modern family planning, CPR must rise to at least 65 percent, which requires providing services for another five million couples or individuals.

03 January 2016



Page: 1

Ex-LTO chief Torres dies

Former Land Transportation Office (LTO) chief Virginia Torres died of cardiac arrest yesterday at a Pampanga hospital where she was brought on New Year's Eve after collapsing in her home in Tarlac.

Torres' brother Ruben said over dzMM she died at around 1 a.m.



Turn to Page 5

Virginia Torres

Ex-LTO

From Page 1

yesterday at the The Medical City in Clark Field, Pampanga.

Malacañang extended its condolences to her family and cited her for her long years in public service.

"She swerved in different positions at the LTO, beginning her career in government as cashier at the Tarlac LTO in December 1980," Presidential Communi-

cations Operations Office Secretary Herminio Coloma Jr. said.

Ruben said his sister was on her way to the toilet when she collapsed in her home in Paniqui, Tarlac.

"She had cardiac arrest, she suddenly felt dizzy and could not stand up, and then her breathing stopped," Torres said in Filipino.

Her body lies in the state at the family residence in Paniqui, Tarlac.

Torres' brother said she complained of chest and back pains. She underwent surgery in 2015 for cervical cancer. But Ruben clarified his sister did not die because of the cancer.

He said she was taking maintenance medicine for her hypertension, but did not show signs

of an impending heart attack.

"We were so happy in the past few days," he said.

Torres served in the government for more than 30 years. She was appointed LTO chief by President Aquino in July 2010 and retired from government service in October 2013. Reports said she was one of President Aquino's shooting buddies.

In 2013, she became contro-

versial after she was caught playing a slot machine in an unidentified casino. That video was posted on YouTube and had more than 20,805 views.

She resurfaced in the news anew in 2015 after she showed up at the Bureau of Customs (BOC) on Aug. 20 allegedly to negotiate the release of at least 64 shipping containers of smuggled Thai sugar worth over P100 million. She denied the allegation.

Torres' brother said Virginia was unperturbed by allegations raised against her and

that she sought strength from the support of family and friends.

LTO chief Alfonso Tan Jr. has resigned and Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) executive director Roberto Cabrera will take his place starting tomorrow. Tan was appointed after Torres retired in 2013.

An LTO official said that Torres was a very "down to earth" person. He said that Torres knew all the problems at the LTO as she rose from the ranks. – Robertzon Ramirez, Ding Cervantes, Ric Sapnu

03 January 2016

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

Page: 15

NPA's release soldier on New Year's Eve

By **CANCER ORDONEZ IMAM**

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY – A soldier abducted by the New People's Army (NPA) last September was released on New Year's Eve in the town of Las Nieves, Agusan del Norte. The soldier, Sgt. Adriano Bingil, is now in a hospital for medical attention.

"Based from the initial examination, Sgt. Bingil is experiencing both physical and mental fatigue," Major Jonna Dalaguit, military physician, said. Bingil has been admitted at the Camp Evangelista Station Hospital to recuperate from his current condition, he said.

On Sept. 19, the NPA abducted Sgt. Bingil, a member of the Bayanihan team of 26th Infantry Battalion, who was assigned in Barangay Mahagsay, San Luis town of Agusan del Sur.

Bingil and a companion were riding a motorcycle when they were flagged down by NPA rebels. Capt. Joe Patrick Martinez, spokesman of the 4th Infantry Division, said a barangay kagawad who was with Bingil had reported that the rebels had targeted the soldier because they want the military to stop its Bayanihan efforts for peace and development in the remote areas of CARAGA Region.

It is clear that the NPAs don't want our barangay to be developed so that they can easily recruit new

members, said Martinez, quoting the barangay kagawad, who requested anonymity.

Martinez admitted that the incident had affected the delivery of government services for the lumads.

Col. Alexander Macario, commander of 401st Infantry Brigade, said: "For the NPA bandits, once development has set in, the issues that they are catalyzing will no longer be relevant. That is why they need to do something for example kidnapping our soldier to block or impede these developments from reaching our people."

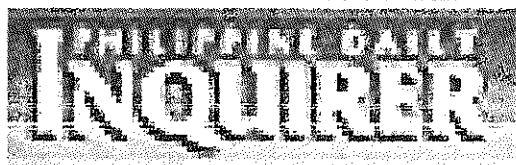
Mayor Ronaldo Corvera of San Luis, Agusan del Sur, and the head of municipal crisis committee, together with Rep. Lawrence Fortun, 1st District of Agusan del Norte,

and Mayor Rodrigo Duterte of Davao City, facilitated the release of Sgt. Bingil, who was brought to the Division Advance Command Post in Barangay Bancasi, Butuan City.

Bingil was immediately received by the acting commander of the 4th Infantry Division Brigadier General Paul Atal, Deputy Brigade Commander of 401st Infantry Brigade, Col. Cresente Maligmat, and the medical team for check-up.

BGen. Atal said: "What the NPA did is plain kidnapping and it is a crime punishable by law. Nevertheless, we appreciate the 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."

03 January 2016



Page: A9

Army says NPA rebels violated own holiday truce

By **Mar S. Arguelles**
and **Delfin Mallari Jr.**
Inquirer Southern Luzon

LEGAZPI CITY—Alleged New People's Army (NPA) rebels attacked government forces in Goa town in Camarines Sur on New Year's Day amid a self-imposed Yuletide ceasefire by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP).

Army Maj. Angelo Guzman, spokesperson of the Armed Forces of the Philippines Southern Luzon Command (Solcom), said the attack happened two days before the end of the 12-day ceasefire separately declared by the government and CPP in observance of the Yuletide season.

Guzman, quoting Army Col. Claudio Yucot, commander of the 901st Infantry Brigade based in Camarines Sur, said the rebel attack was unfortunate and condemnable but the Army decided against a pursuit operation in strict observance of the ceasefire declared by President Aquino.

Guzman, quoting another report from Army Lt. Col. Zacarias Batalla, commander of the 83rd Infantry Battalion, said soldiers and members of the government militia Citizen Armed Force Geographical Units (Cafgu) were in a village in Goa for a "holiday visit" around 4 p.m. on Jan. 1 when fired upon by at least 10 communist guerrillas.

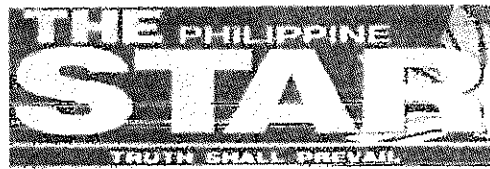
The rebel attack led to a 20-minute gunfight between the soldiers and the rebels, said Guzman.

Baralla said there were no casualties on the government side and bloodstains were seen on the escape route of the rebels.

Soldiers recovered from the scene of encounter assault rifles, grenades and magazines.

A military report said the attack appeared to have been well planned as land mines were discovered on the road leading to the village center, which was supposedly the soldiers' destination.

03 January 2016



Page: 12

NPA violates holiday truce, attacks troops in CamSur

The New People's Army (NPA) violated again the holiday ceasefire it declared when its members attacked Army soldiers in Goa, Camarines Sur on Friday.

Maj. Angelo Guzman, spokesman for the Southern Luzon Command, said the attack occurred in Barangay Fuentebella around 4 p.m.

Guzman said members of the 83rd Infantry Battalion

engaged the rebels in a 30-minute gunfight. He said the rebels suffered casualties as bloodstains were seen along their escape route.

Among those seized were M14 and AK-50 rifles and two hand grenades.

"The attack seems to be deliberate as landmines were discovered planted along the soldiers' path

By JAIME LAUDE

only two kilometers away from their patrol base," Col. Claudio Yucot, commander of the 901st Infantry Brigade, said.

Yucot ordered the troops not to launch pursuit operations for the rebels in compliance with the government-declared ceasefire.

The holiday truce declared

by the government and the Communist Party of the Philippines, which started at 1 a.m. of Dec. 23, is effective until 11:50 p.m. today.

On Dec. 23, NPA guerrillas also attacked an Army post in Surigao del Sur. The attack occurred while the soldiers were manning an outpost on the outskirts of Barangay Bitaugan around 9:30 a.m.

63 January 2016



Page: 10

Noy hosts dinner for top defense, AFP execs

By ARTEMIO DURLAO

BAGUIO CITY – President Aquino capped his second night here by hosting dinner for top defense and military officials at The Mansion House on Friday.

Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin led the guests, to-

gether with major service commanders of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

The function at the official presidential residence here lasted late into night, according to police chief Sr Supt.

Rolando Miranda.

Miranda had ordered policemen deployed around The Mansion House as peripheral security.

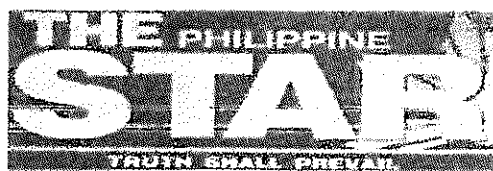
Sources said Gazmin motored back to Metro Manila

yesterday morning.

Outside the gates of The Mansion House, tourists gathered hoping to get a glimpse of Aquino, causing heavy vehicular traffic in the area.

The President is expected to be here until Tuesday.

03 January 2016



Page: 10

15 AFP modernization projects completed last year

By ALEXIS ROMERO

A total of 15 armed forces upgrade projects, including air assets and communication equipment, were completed last year, military data obtained by **The STAR** showed.

The projects have a total cost of more than P18 billion and are expected to improve the military's security and disaster response capabilities.

Six of the projects will go to the Army while four will benefit the Navy. Three projects will boost the capabilities of the Air Force while two will go to the General Headquarters and Armed Forces of the Philippines Wide Support and Separate Units.

Big ticket items completed

this year include the three units of C-295 medium lift aircraft, the eight units of 412EP combat utility helicopters and eight attack helicopters for the Air Force, 50,629 assault rifles for the Army and Marines, and two units of naval helicopters.

Security officials previously said that the three C-295 planes cost P5.29 billion while the eight 412EP helicopters were acquired for P4.65 billion.

The eight attack helicopters cost P3.44-billion while the assault rifles and the two naval helicopters were worth P1.94 billion and P847.5 billion, respectively.

Other projects completed

in 2015 were 720 units of 40 mm grenade launchers (P45 million), 330 units of personal role radios (P86 million) and eight units of 40mm automatic grenade launchers (P19.75 million) for the Navy; 473 units of 20W Man Pack Radios (P652.8 million), 1,376 units of 5W handheld radio and 210 units of high frequency 50 W radios (combined amount of P863.7 million), 62 units of 100W base radio amplifier and accessories (P80.4 million) and 114 units of M113A2 armored personnel carrier (P67.5 million) for the Army; and communication equipment (P10.87 million) and enhanced data genera-

tion system (P19.97 million) for the General Headquarters and Armed Forces of the Philippines Wide Support and Separate Units.

The Aquino administration has so far completed 65 military upgrade projects worth P30.96 billion, surpassing the 45 projects implemented under the previous regime.

Of the 65 completed projects, 24 went to the Army while 22 benefitted the Air Force. The Navy and the General Headquarters and Armed Forces of the Philippines Wide Support and Separate Units each got eight projects, while the Government Arsenal benefitted from three projects.

03 January 2016



Page: 2

No soldier fired gun during New Year revelry – AFP

By JAIME LAUDE

No one among the troops fired their guns to welcome the New Year, the military declared yesterday.

Armed Forces of the Philippines-Public Affairs Office chief Col. Noel Detoyato said the latest monitoring reports showed not a single soldier was apprehended for violating guidelines barring service-

men from firing guns while celebrating New Year.

"So far, there's no reported violation of the specific instructions, that strictly prohibits the troops from engaging in the illegal discharge of their issued firearms," Detoyato said.

Even the troops engaged in internal security operations,

particularly those deployed in Mindanao, have not fired their guns, he said.

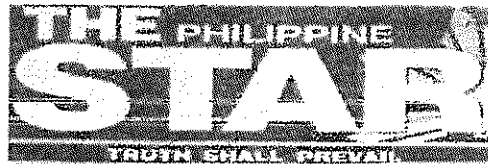
While the Philippine National Police (PNP), a yearly basis, has been putting masking tape on the barrels of firearms issued to its personnel, the AFP issued a nationwide stern directive for the troops

not to engage in indiscriminate firing while celebrating Christmas and New Year.

Violators can face dismissal from the service.

Stray bullet incidents have been one of the causes of unnecessary deaths of New Year's revelers in the past, with some soldiers and policemen accused of indiscriminately firing their guns.

13 January 2016



Page: 10

'BIFF' attacks have nothing to do with BBL'

COTABATO CITY – The

continuing attacks by the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) in Central Mindanao has nothing to do with the delayed approval of the draft Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) by Congress, the group's spokesman said yesterday.

The draft, as proposed, enables the replacement of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) with a Bangsamoro political entity. It is based on the March 27, 2014 Comprehensive Agreement on Bangsamoro between the gov-

ernment and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

"We don't recognize or support the on-going peace efforts of the government and the MILF. This is our very own struggle for an independent Islamic state," said BIFF spokesman Abu Misry Mama.

The BIFF is categorized as a terrorist group and is comprised of rogue Moro rebels led by radical preachers known for their extreme interpretation of the Qur'an and ruthless enforcement of a Taliban-style

justice system in areas where they operate.

For Col. Restituto Padilla, Armed Forces of the Philippines spokesman, the BIFF is simply a breakaway group "that has turned to banditry."

Field reports showed that at least six BIFF members were killed by government forces in a series of New Year's Eve encounters in Datu Piang, Shariff Aguak and Shariff Saydona Mustapha, all in Maguindanao province.

The BIFF first harassed a military detachment in Barangay Kaungan, Datu Piang, using an M203 grenade launcher, resulting in a sporadic fire-fight. It also attacked the Army detachments in Barangay Timbangan, Shariff Aguak and in Barangay Linangtangan, Shariff Saydona Mustapha.

On Christmas Eve, the BIFF attacked a military detachment in Datu Abdullah Sangki, Maguindanao, but was repulsed by soldiers. The bandits killed a farmer during their escape.

Local folks want the government and the MILF peace panels to help put an end to the attacks by the BIFF, which warned of more attacks in response to government's crackdown on local Jihadist factions.

Mama said they would continue to harass peasants and the military to show their continuing opposition to the presence of state forces in Moro-dominated areas in the region.

"The BIFF is not a spent force as what the military keeps saying. We're here and we shall make the government feel our presence in every opportunity that we can," Mama added.

03 January 2016

The Standard

DEFINING THE NEWS

Page: A1

TROOPERS STRIKE BACK, KILL 6 BIFF

By Francisco Tuyay

GROUND troops on New Year's Eve turned the tide of battle on the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, killing six of its members and wounding several others of the terror group that launched simultaneous attacks on different military installations in Central Mindanao.

The attacks started during the New Year revelry with the BIFF rebels launching grenade and mortar attacks on three separate military installations in the towns of Datu Piang, Shariff Maguak and Shariff Syadona Mustapha all in Maguindanao province.

Next page

TROOPERS...

From A1

The attacks forced thousand families to scamper for shelter in government evacuation centers to avoid being caught in the crossfire following the death of six farmers on Christmas eve on similar atrocities.

Capt Jo-Ann Petinglay, public affairs office head of the Army's 6th Infantry Division, said civilians in communities affected by the BIFF attacks reported that retreating rebels carried with them about five to six dead bodies and several wounded comrades.

This brings to 129 the number of BIFF rebels who were killed after the military

repulsed their attacks on military posts this year, the highest of which was recorded in April 16 where 52 bandits were killed, among them Commander Hassan Indal and one alias "Tambako" who is reportedly a top lieutenant of Ustadz Ameril Umbra Kato, and three child soldiers.

The renewed BIFF attacks happened after the terror group decided to lay low following the death of their leader Basit Usman who was killed by army pursuing troops in Maguindanao last September.

The BIFF's last-ditch effort to exact revenge against the military started when the rebels attacked a military detachment in Datu Piang where they fired an M203 grenade which exploded some 50 meters

away from the Kaungan Detachment of the Army's Mechanized Infantry Company at about 6 p.m.

At around 9:30 p.m., about 30 BIFF rebels attacked the Timbangan Detachment of the 34th IB in Barangay Timbangan, Shariff Aguak, Maguindanao but they were met by a barrage of gunfire by army troopers.

After an hour-long cessation of gunfire, the rebels resumed their attacks this time at the Linantangan Detachment of the 40th Infantry Battalion situated at Barangay Linantangan, Shariff Syadona Mustapha, Maguindanao but there were no reported casualties on the government side.

"The already prepared military forces immediately engaged the harassing lawless

elements for an estimated 15-minute fire-fight, prompting the BIFF to withdraw and scamper towards different directions," said Petinglay.

On Christmas eve, the BIFF fired mortar shells at a military detachment in Datu Sangki, Maguindanao, but were repulsed by soldiers.

As the BIFF rebels withdrew, the terror group chanced on civilian farmers and shot them mercilessly.

Army Chief Lt. Gen. Eduardo Ano has earlier ordered an additional deployment of troops in Central Mindanao in anticipation of heightened BIFF attacks to protect civilian communities and strengthened the military's defense against future assaults.

03 January 2016



Page: A3

'Kalayaan' group wraps up Spratly protest

By Jaymee T. Gamil

MISSION accomplished?

Around 50 members of the "Kalayaan Atin Ito" (Kalayaan This Is Ours) movement are returning home today from Pagasa (Thitu) Island in the Spratly archipelago after a campaign on the island for a week in a defiant stand against China's claim to almost the entire South China Sea.

The group composed mostly of young volunteers ranging from 15 to 27 years old—headed by former Marine Capt. Nick Faeldon and accompanied by a hired boat crew—camped on Pagasa from Dec. 26 to Jan. 1, angering China, which insists it has "undisputed sovereignty" over the strategic waterway through which \$5 trillion in global trade passes every year.

One of the group's coordinators, Joy Ban-Eg, said the group left Pagasa on late Friday morning. They are expected to arrive in mainland Palawan today.

China said it was "strongly dissatisfied" by the protest, claiming the Philippines was "illegally occupying" disputed islands in the Spratly archipelago.

But Kalayaan Atin Ito was adamant. "Our peaceful and legal patriotic voyage will never be dependent on what China will do. Our objective is to bring to the attention of the world the invasion and militarization done by China inside our [exclusive economic zone] and [extended continental shelf] at the Kalayaan Island Group municipality," Ban-Eg said in a text message.

Pagasa is one of five islands in

the Kalayaan Group occupied by the Philippines. The group is within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines, which had been monitoring the group despite its disapproval of the protest, confirmed there were no untoward

incident with China during the protest or the group's voyage.

Ban-Eg said the only time the group was "blocked" in any way was by the Philippines' own Coast Guard. "It was funny, because we're not the enemy here," Ban-Eg said in a phone interview with the INQUIRER.

03 January 2016



Page: 1

YEARENDER

David vs Goliath at The Hague

Two years after turning to international arbitration against China's expansionist moves in the West Philippine Sea, Manila finally got to see its case proceeding when the United Nations Arbitral Tribunal started hearing last July China's objections to UN jurisdiction.

By PIA LEE-BRAGO

The Philippines is the first country to question China's nine-dash line claim over the South China Sea and the West Philippine Sea.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert del Rosario told the UN Arbitral Tribunal that through a "salami-slicing"

and "cabbage" strategy, China is brazenly eating into Philippine territory to consolidate its hold over disputed waters in violation of international laws.

"Outside observers have referred to this as China's 'salami-slicing' strategy that is,

Turn to Page 4



Solicitor General Florin Hilbay, Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert del Rosario and Philippine Ambassador to the Netherlands Vic Ledda are seen during the first round of the oral arguments on the arbitration case filed by the Philippines against China at The Hague in July 2015.

David From Page 1

taking little steps over time, none of which individually is enough to provoke a crisis," Del Rosario said.

"When these small steps are taken together, however, they reflect China's efforts to slowly consolidate de facto control throughout the South China Sea," Del Rosario told the tribunal.

In a legal setback for China, the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) based in The Hague ruled on Oct. 29 that it has jurisdiction to hear the case filed by the Philippines.

In filing the case against Beijing, Manila also wants to reaffirm its right to exploit waters within its 200-nautical-mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ) as allowed under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

The PCA said Manila's case was "properly constituted" under the UNCLOS and that China's "non-appearance" or refusal to participate in the arbitration proceedings did not preclude the court's jurisdiction over the case.

With the jurisdictional issue resolved, hearings on the merits of the case proceeded.

China has stubbornly refused to take part in the proceedings, insisting it has unquestionable sovereignty over the South China Sea based on its nine-dash line claim.

Aside from the Philippines and China, Vietnam, Taiwan, Malaysia and Brunei also have claims in the South China Sea.

Artificial islands

Apparently in a bid to strengthen its position on the

issue, Beijing has been building artificial islands – complete with military facilities – over coral reefs and shoals in areas within the EEZ of the Philippines.

China's island-building activities were brought up during oral arguments in The Hague. Del Rosario and Solicitor General Florin Hilbay led the Philippine panel in the UN court.

The Philippines concluded its legal arguments against China before the arbitral tribunal with a declaration that it is entrusting its fate to a court that it believes will uphold the rule of law and not the "quaint aspiration of a time now past."

In a speech before the tribunal, Del Rosario said whatever is decided by the tribunal would have an impact on the fate of the Philippines, the region and the UNCLOS.

Del Rosario urged the UN arbitral tribunal not to give China the "golden key" that would allow Beijing to convert its nine-dash line in the South China Sea into a "Berlin Wall of the Sea" and a "giant fence" owned by Beijing.

"We confidently entrust our fate, the fate of the region and, indeed, the fate of the Convention to you," del Rosario said, as he expressed confidence the court's "capable hands" would steer the issue to "a truly just solution."

APEC hosting

The country's international image also got some burnishing from its successful hosting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in

November

Success came even if the nearly P10-billion budget for the event may not have been completely used, according to Marciano Paynor Jr., chairman of the APEC 2015 National Organizing Committee.

The Department of Budget and Management said only P7.913 billion was spent over the year for the summit and other APEC meetings held throughout the year.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Indonesian President Joko Widodo skipped the APEC Economic Leaders Meeting (AELM) in Manila on Nov. 18-19 due to domestic concerns.

In a meeting between Del Rosario and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi on Nov. 10 at the DFA, Manila agreed not to include the South China Sea issue on the agenda, stressing that APEC was an economic gathering.

Wang said he would like to make sure the attendance of President Xi Jinping in the summit would be smooth, safe and successful.

While assuring the Chinese officials of trouble-free attendance, Philippine officials admitted the maritime dispute might be discussed among officials on bilateral basis.

"Under the shadow cast by the terrorist attacks in Paris, Beirut and against Russian aircraft over the Sinai, and elsewhere, we strongly condemn all acts, methods and practices of terrorism in all their forms and manifestations," the leaders said in a nine-page 2015 APEC Economic Leaders' Declaration.

The leaders cited "the urgent

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need for increased international cooperation and solidarity in the fight against terrorism" as they concluded the annual meeting.

"We will not allow terrorism to threaten the fundamental values that underpin our free and open economies," the leaders said. "Economic growth, prosperity and opportunity are among the most powerful tools to address the root causes of terrorism and radicalization."

The APEC leaders' last major statement on terrorism was in Shanghai in 2001 after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States.

The Philippines, a founding member of APEC, previously hosted the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting nearly two decades ago – in 1996 in Subic Bay.

EDCA

The DFA last year also had to deal with controversy sparked by the US insistence on the implementation of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) with the Philippines.

In November, US Ambassador Philip Goldberg said EDCA – held up for more than a year since it was signed with the Philippines – would be for the mutual interest of the US and the Philippines.

Washington is hopeful the Supreme Court would hand down a favorable decision on the defense agreement, he said.

The Philippines, he said, is set to receive a "high amount" of foreign military funding in 2016 after receiving \$79 million in bilateral assistance from the US last year.

US President Barack Obama earlier promised that a big part of the \$140 million in foreign military funding in

the region in 2016 would go to the Philippines.

"We have upped our foreign military funding for the Philippines. It will be somewhere in the range of \$79 million this year. It was originally targeted at \$50 million. It's increasing and what has been proposed is something called maritime security initiative in the region," Goldberg said.

"Our ability to help the Philippines (is also tied to EDCA)," the ambassador said when asked if the US support to the Philippines would be affected should SC rule against it.

The homicide conviction of US Marine Joseph Scott Pemberton for the killing of Filipino transgender Jeffrey "Tennifer" Laude in October last year also put to test the diplomatic relations between the Philippines and the US.

An Olongapo court ruled on Dec. 1 that Pemberton was guilty of homicide and not murder for Laude's death.

Pemberton was sentenced to six to 12 years imprisonment. Regional Trial Court Judge Rolina Ginez-Jabalde also ordered Pemberton to pay P50,000 as civil indemnity and P4.32 million to Laude's family as damages for loss of earning capacity.

The court noted that under the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) between the US and the Philippines, the confinement or detention of US personnel shall be carried out in facilities mutually agreed upon by authorities from both countries.

EU's commitment

Despite delays in the passage of the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL), the European Union (EU) vowed to continue supporting Mindanao peace and development efforts, initially with 5.5 million euros or P275 million.

"The European Union is impressed by the fact that the government's and the MILF's commitment to the peace process despite the delay of the adoption of the Bangsamoro Basic Law has not changed," European Union Ambassador Franz Jessen said.

"And inspired with this firm resolve to peace, the EU's eagerness and readiness to support the calls for a negotiated political settlement in Mindanao remains," he said.

The EU said its programs in Mindanao can be implemented with or without the BBL, noting that the commitment goes beyond the passage of the BBL.

Also last year, the DFA worked double time to address threats of the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) on Filipino workers.

In April, the DFA confirmed a Filipino had died in the United Arab Emirates due to MERS-CoV while five other Filipinos had been placed under quarantine.

The DFA also confirmed in March that three Filipino female healthcare personnel in Saudi Arabia had contracted MERS-CoV.

Also last year in Cebu, a crime incident took on diplomatic color as it involved a Chinese consular official and other diplomats.

The Chinese consular officer and her husband involved in the fatal shooting of two Chinese diplomats and the wounding of the consul general in Cebu City were flown to China on the night of Oct. 23 even before local police could complete their investigation.

Police turned over the custody of Li Qingliang and his wife, Guo Jing, who worked in the consulate's visa section, to Chinese authorities.

The couple is accused of killing diplomats Sun Shan and Hui Li and wounding Consul-General Song Ronghua, who survived a bullet wound in the neck, at the Lighthouse Restaurant in Cebu.

The couple invoked diplomatic immunity after the shooting.

The DFA clarified that immunity enjoyed by Philippine and Chinese diplomats in accordance with the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations was expanded with the signing of the 2009 Consular Agreement between Manila and Beijing.

5285, 5295

03 January 2016



Page: 4

Navy ship deployed to escort volunteers in 'Freedom Voyage'

By JAIME LAUDE

A Navy ship was deployed to escort the student volunteer group "Kalayaan Atin Ito" from Pag-asa Island to Palawan.

Led by former Marine captain Nicanor Faeldon, the 46 student volunteers were initially offered by the military a Navy boat to take them to Puerto Princesa City.

The group, however, de-

clined and left the island town before noon Friday on a small single-engine motor launch that took them to Pag-asa Island last Dec. 26.

"We offered them our Navy ship to bring them back to Puerto Princesa City but they declined as they all opted to sail on their rented small boat," Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) spokesman Col.

Restituto Padilla said.

Padilla said the Philippine Navy ship that was sent to pick up the group was ordered to just escort the boat to ensure their safety.

The group earlier pitched camp on Pag-asa Island in the Spratlys in a symbolic stand against China's claim to most of the region.

They went against government warnings not to proceed to the islands because of the rough seas and inclement weather, aside from the security situation in the region.

Members of the group had previously accused the government of not doing enough to stand up to China.

China demanded their im-

mediate pull out from Pag-asa Island, including the civilian islanders and the soldiers stationed in the area, pointing out that the place is an integral part of its maritime domain.

Taiwan, one of the six claimants in the region, also declared its opposition to the "Freedom Voyage" made by the group to Pag-asa.

Taiwan said the activity is

illegal that impairs peace and stability in the region as it infringed on its sovereignty. It also vowed it will take all necessary measures to protect its legitimate and lawful rights in the South China Sea.

However, the AFP maintained the presence of the student volunteers in Pag-asa is legitimate since the island is part of Philippine territory.

ONLINE NEWS

03 JANUARY 2016

www.pna.gov.ph

EMC welcomes release of captive trooper, hopes NPA will stop extortion, terror attacks

MANILA, Jan. 2 (PNA) -- While stating that it strongly appreciates the release of Sgt. Adriano Bingil whom New People's Army (NPA) fighters released on New Year's Eve, the Eastern Mindanao Command (EMC) is hoping the rebel group will continue with such gestures and stop their extortion activities and senseless attacks on development projects.

This was stressed by EMC public affairs office chief Capt. Alberto Caber in a message to the PNA Saturday.

It can be recalled that the NPAs kidnapped Bingil, a member of the Bayanihan team of 26th Infantry Battalion deployed in Barangay Mahagsay, San Luis town, Agusan Del Sur last Sept. 19.

He was about to send some money to his family when snatched by the rebels.

"The EMC is open to talk peace and will accept NPA members who would like to return to mainstream society," Caber added.

Bingil's release was made possible through the efforts of Iglesia Filipina Independiente Bishop Felixberto Calang; San Luis Mayor Ronaldo Corvera; and Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte.

He was freed in Barangay Durian, Las Nieves, Agusan Del Norte afternoon of Dec. 31. (PNA)
JBP/PFN

www.inquirer.net

Sulu town attacked by armed men

By: Julie Alipala

@JulietSAlipala

Inquirer Mindanao

06:26 PM January 2nd, 2016

ZAMBOANGA CITY – A group of armed men has stormed the Sulu town of Pata Island past 5 p.m. Saturday but no casualties had been reported so far.

Sulu Vice Gov. Abdusakur Tan said more policemen had already been sent to the area and firefight had been reported.

Brig. Gen. Alan Arrojado, commander of the Army's 501st Infantry Brigade based in Sulu, confirmed the incident.

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He said a company of policemen had been sent to the island but the military has not sent any soldier as of yet.

"If the police request for assistance, we will send troops there," Arrojado said.

Tan said it appears the attack was political in nature and was the handiwork of the rivals of Pata Mayor Anton Burahan.

Burahan is currently in Manila, he added.

Tan said the attack occurred as text messages circulated in Sulu about Burahan's alleged plot "to attack civilians whom he considered as not supportive of his reelection bid."

"That is reportedly a political ploy of his adversaries, one of whom is his nephew," he said.

www.inquirer.net

Soldier gunned down in Maguindanao town

By: Nash B. Maulana

@inquirerdotnet

Inquirer Mindanao

05:33 PM January 2nd, 2016

COTABATO CITY – Unidentified men shot dead an Army soldier near a military detachment in Datu Salibo town in Maguindanao Saturday morning, authorities said.

Datu Salibo Mayor Norodin Salasal identified the victim as Private First Class Samsudin Mokammad of the 57th Infantry Battalion and a resident of Datu Piang, Maguindanao.

Initial police reports said one of two motorcycle-riding men shot Mokammad at close range with an automatic rifle, whose caliber has not been ascertained yet.

Investigators said Mokammad had just emerged from a local store in Barangay (village) Crossing Pagatin – which is about 300 meters away from a military detachment – when attacked around 8 a.m.

Mokammad instantly died from at least 10 gunshot wounds in different parts of his body, the police said.

Esmie Simpal-Olong, a relative of the victim, said they believed his work as a soldier was the main reason for the attack on Mokammad.

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Military truck na karga ang nasawing Army officer bumangga, 5

sugatan

By Bombo Mars deSanPosted in Latest News *January 02 January 2016 1:20 PM*

ZAMBOANGA CITY - Aksidenteng nabangga sa isang motorsiklo sa Zamboanga City ang military truck na nagdadala pauwi sa labi nang nasawing Army officer sa nangyaring sagupaan laban sa Abu Sayyaf sa lalawigan ng Sulu na nagresulta sa pagkasugat nang anim katao kabilang ang dalawang taong gulang na bata.

Ayon sa impormasyon, nangyari ang aksidente dakong alas-11:00 ng umaga kung saan lulan sa military truck na minamaneho ni Pfc. J.M. Macindang ang labi ni 2Lt. Ronald Detalla para iuwi sa kanyang pamilya sa Camiguin province.

Lumalabas sa imbestigayson na pagdating sa may curve portion ng kalsada partikular sa may Sitio Mala, Barangay Lubigan ay hindi umano napansin kaagad ng sundalo ang paparating na motorsiklo na minamaneho naman ng nasugatang driver na si Felix Cuartocruz Gregorio, 38, kaya nabangga niya ito.

Lima pa sa kanyang mga back rider ang tumilapon din at nasugatan na kinilalang sina Fascuala Gregorio, 33; Nenita Ricarda, 38; Angelica Cuartocruz, 13; Langlang Ortigas, 14, at ang dalawang taong gulang na si Stephanie Gregorio.

Isinugod sa pagamutan ang mga nasugatang biktima at dalawa sa tatlo sa kanila kabilang ang driver ang nakalabas na ng ospital.

Nilinaw naman ng Western Mindanao Command (WestMinCom) na nadaan naman sa areglo ang naturang aksidente at nakaalis din ang nasabing truck dala ang bangkay ng Army ooficer.

Matatandaan na si Detalla ay nasawi sa labanan sa humigit kumulang 300 mga Abu Sayyaf members nitong nakalipas na Huwebes ng hapon sa bulubunduking bahagi ng Sitio Sangay, Barangay Buhanginan, Patikul, Sulu.

Si Detalla ay ang nagsisilbing platoon leader ng 2nd Scout Rager Battalion na nakabase sa Sulu.

Kasama rin sa mga nasugatan sa nangyaring matinding sagupaan ay ang isa pang opisyal na si Capt. Edmar V. Sammonteat, at ang anim na sina Pfc. Ernie B. De Guzman, S/Sgt. Wilson M. Fontanil, Pfc. Joemar R. Andrez, Pfc. Dennis E. Desembrana, Pfc. Albert N. Dinio, Sgt. Arthur B. Andama.

Ayon sa pulisya, idadaan sa barangay settlement ang nasabing pangyayari kung saan parehong nagkaintindihan ang dalawang panig na hindi na magsasampa ng kaso at tutulong na lamang sa mga gastusin sa paggamot sa mga biktima.

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AFP operations pinag-ibayo vs BIFF na umatake bago ang new year

By Bombo KoronadalPosted in Latest NewsSunday, 02 January 2016 08:00

(Update) KORONADAL CITY - Patuloy ang operasyon ng militar laban sa Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) sa kabila nang pagpasok ng bagong taon.

Kaugnay nito, nakapagtala ng tatlo pang-aatake ng BIFF sa mga detachment ng militar noong bisperas ng bagong taon.

Sa naturang pag-salakay ng mga rebelde, anim na BIFF ang namatay at marami rin sa kanila ang sugatan, samantala wala namang sundalo ang nasaktan sa insidente.

Inihayag ni Army 6th ID spokesperson Capt. Joan Petinglay, nangyari ang unang pangha-harass ng BIFF sa detachment ng militar sa Datu Piang kung saan gumamit ang mga ito ng M203 grenade launcher na bumagsak ito 50 metro mula sa Kaungan detachment ng Mechanized Infantry Company at maswerte namang walang nasugatang sundalo.

Sumunod dito ang pangha-harass ng nasa 30 BIFF members sa detachment ng 34th IB sa Timbangan, Shariff Aguak, Maguindanao.

Ilang oras naman matapos nito, inatake rin ng armadong grupo ang kampo ng 40th IB, 6th ID sa Brgy Linantangan, Shariff Saydona Mustapha, Maguindanao.

Agad namang nakaganti ng putok ang militar sa ginawang pangha-harass ng BIFF dahilan upang umatras ang mga ito.

Ayon naman sa report ng mga residente, nakita umano nila na sa pag-withdraw ng BIFF dala nila ang nasa anim na mga bangkay ng kanilang kasamahan at marami rin sa kanila ang sugatan.

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