

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



TEAM ARMY

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OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS
NEWS CLIPPINGS

12 January 2016

Tuesday

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

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

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TODAY'S WEATHER FORECAST JANUARY 12, 2016 | TUESDAY

EASTERLIES AFFECTING THE EASTERN SECTION OF THE COUNTRY (JANUARY 11, 5:00 PM)

LAOAG CITY 20 - 30 °C
TUGUEGARAO CITY 20 - 31 °C
BAGUIO CITY 14 - 23 °C
SBMA/CLARK 22 - 32 °C
TAGAYTAY CITY 19 - 29 °C
METRO MANILA 22 - 32 °C
LEGAZPI CITY 25 - 31 °C
ILOILO/BACOLOD CITY 25 - 32 °C
TACLOBAN CITY 25 - 32 °C
PUERTO PRINCESA 24 - 31 °C
METRO CEBU 25 - 31 °C
ZAMBOANGA CITY 24 - 34 °C
CAGAYAN DE ORO 23 - 31 °C
METRO DAVAO 25 - 34 °C

SUNRISE
6:24 AM

SUNSET
5:44 PM

MOONRISE
7:57 AM

MOONSET
7:56 PM

NEW MOON
JAN 10 9:30 AM

FIRST QUARTER
JAN 17 7:26 AM

LOW TIDE
7:00 AM
-0.27 Meter

HIGH TIDE
11:21 PM
1.12 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 rain

	JAN 13 WEDNESDAY	JAN 14 THURSDAY	JAN 15 FRIDAY	JAN 13 WEDNESDAY	JAN 14 THURSDAY	JAN 15 FRIDAY
METRO MANILA	23 - 32 °C	22 - 31 °C	22 - 32 °C	13 - 22 °C	13 - 21 °C	13 - 21 °C
METRO CEBU	25 - 31 °C	24 - 32 °C	24 - 31 °C	24 - 31 °C	25 - 32 °C	25 - 32 °C
METRO DAVAO	25 - 34 °C	26 - 33 °C	26 - 33 °C	24 - 34 °C	25 - 34 °C	25 - 34 °C
BAGUIO						
PUERTO PRINCESA						
BORACAY						

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5 ex-generals axed at BOC

Solon tells former AFP men: Good riddance

By Jerry E. Esplanada
and Gil C. Cabacungan

IT'S THE END of the road for five retired generals and two other former military officers as district collectors of the Bureau of Customs (BOC).

The BOC has named seven agency old-timers who will replace retired military officers, who had been running key ports since 2013 as detailed personnel of the Department of Finance's Office of Revenue Agency Modernization (Oram).

The retired generals who were replaced were Mario Mendoza, Elmir de la Cruz, Esteban Castro, Arnulfo Marcos and Bonifacio de Castro.

A lawmaker said the sacking of the retired generals was long overdue, but two BOC officials claimed that the replacement of the former officers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) was "election-related" aimed at raising campaign funds for some administration candidates.

Customs Commissioner Alberto Lina yesterday identi-

5 EX-GENERALS / A12

From page A1

fied the new collectors and those they replaced in the following ports:

- Port of Manila—Nicky Earl Hortillas, replacing Mendoza
- Manila International Container Port—Antonio Pascual, replacing De la Cruz
- Clark International Airport—Cecilio Gallo, replacing Castro
- Port of Batangas—Reynaldo Galeno, replacing retired Army Col. Ernesto Benitez
- Port of Cebu—Rico Rey Francis Holganza, replacing Marcos
- Port of Zamboanga—Benhur Arabani, replacing Army Maj. Jerry Loresco
- Port of San Fernando, La Union—Romeo Allan Rosales, replacing De Castro

In a statement, Lina said Rolando Ricafrente, district collector of the Limay port in Bataan province would also be replaced.

However, the former Coast Guard officer's replacement was "still being considered"

Good riddance

Valenzuela Rep. Magtanggol T. Gunigundo, chair of the House ways and means committee, said the firing of the retired generals was a long time coming.

"They are illegal and inutile. There is no reason for them to stay any longer. Good riddance," Gunigundo said in a phone interview.

Gunigundo said the appoint-

ment of the retired generals was a "bad experiment" made during the transition between then Customs Commissioner Ruffy Biazon and his replacement, John Phillip Sevilla, because revenues deteriorated further under their watch.

'Freezer'

Lina said that "in 2013, the Department of Finance (DOF) reassigned BOC district collectors to the Customs Policy Research Office (CPRO) and put in their place retired generals, among other former military officers, forming part of the Oram, which was tasked to implement a system and process enhancement to improve revenue collection based on their integrity, management skills and capabilities."

Customs personnel refer to the CPRO as the DOF "freezer."

He recalled that during the recent budget deliberations, the DOF and its attached agency—the BOC—"extensively defended the Oram during the hearings to retain it."

Budget cut

However, the budgetary requirements of the Oram-detailed officers were "specifically denied" by Congress, Lina said.

He did not identify the legislators who opposed the budget allocation for Oram personnel.

Gunigundo said the retired generals were axed through "removal by appropriations."

Without security of tenure and salaries, Gunigundo said it was a matter of time for the for-

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mer military officers to be removed.

The House ways and means committee chair said Congress had to take this action because the DOF and BOC had refused to remove the former AFP officers despite glaring violations of Civil Service Commission regulations.

"We want them to respect the Civil Service Commission where nonorganic personnel should not have supervision over organic personnel. We consider them (ex-generals) contractuels with no eligibility," Gunigundo said.

Had the retired generals stayed in office longer, they would have been sued along with Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima and Lina, according to the lawmaker.

Gunigundo disagreed with Lina's move to appoint junior grade officials for senior positions, especially with only a few months remaining in the administration.

He said the BOC was better off putting back the senior officials who he claimed were "unfairly" placed on floating status even though they were more competent.

But Lina has high hopes for the new port collectors.

"We trust that the new port collectors know the Tariff and Customs Code of the Philippines by heart, as well as the appropriate Customs valuations and assessments and duties and taxes," he said.

At the same time, the BOC chief stressed the need to intensify further the bureau's campaign against smuggling.

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Target not met

Last year, the BOC collected P369.9 billion in revenue, nearly P70 billion lower than the agency's target of P436.5 billion.

The bureau's top performers for 2015, or those that raised collections above their targets included the Port of Iloilo (P2.3 billion), Legazpi (P290 million) and Zamboanga (P175 million).

The poorest performing ports were Limay, Aparri (Cagayan) and San Fernando, with revenues that fell short of their annual goals by P23 billion, P455 million and P35 million, respectively.

'Election-related'

Some BOC insiders, including two officials, interviewed for this story, claimed the sudden replacement of the former generals was "election-related."

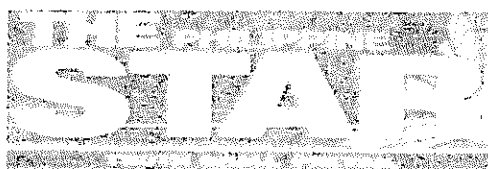
"There's talk the set of port collectors will be tasked to raise campaign funds" for some administration candidates in the May elections, among other functions, according to a source.

"Expect legitimate traders and even smugglers to complain of higher 'tara' for their imported shipments," said another BOC official who asked not to be named for lack of authority to speak to the media.

Tara is the port users' term for grease money collected by corrupt BOC personnel in exchange for the prompt release of misdeclared and undervalued goods.

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JPE wants Noy invited to Mamasapano probe

By CHRISTINA MENDEZ

When the Senate reopens its investigation into the killing of 44 police commandos in Maguindanao on Jan. 25, President Aquino may be invited to face the chamber to answer some questions – that is if Senate Minority Leader Juan Ponce Enrile gets his wish.

Enrile said he wanted Aquino to attend the hearing – to be led by the committee on public order and dangerous drugs – so the Chief Executive could explain his actions or inaction that may have led to the tragedy.

"If P-Noy wants to answer the questions I intend to ask, I will welcome him," Enrile said. "And if he wants to attend the hearing in the Senate, he is welcome to do so."

The commandos – members of the elite Special Action Force – were leaving a barrio in Mamasapano in Maguindanao after killing a notorious Malaysian terrorist when they encountered guerrillas belonging to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters. The commandos waited for reinforcements that never came.

The Senate committee on public order agreed to reopen the probe upon the request of Enrile, who cited new information regarding the incident.

In a speech, Enrile said there is a need to look into "sensitive periods" before and after the Jan. 25 incident.

"What happened to the government? Was it functioning? Was it in paralysis? Why was there a complete silence during these periods, this critical period? What happened to the entire instrument of government to maintain order in this country, to protect the people?" Enrile asked.

"Was there a government in those moments? We would like to get the answers to these because if there was no government, then there was something wrong, terribly wrong with our system of government," he added.

Apart from President Aquino, some senators are also inclined to urge Liberal Party standard-bearer and former interior secretary Manuel Roxas II to attend the inquiry.

"Let us remember that Sec. Roxas was then head of the DILG (Department of the Interior and Local Government). He can be invited even if he has resigned from post. As a private person, the Senate can also compel him to attend the hearings," a source told The STAR.

Up to senators

At Malacañang, Presidential Communications Operations Office Secretary Herminio Coloma Jr. said it would be up to senators to decide on whether to participate in the

hearing, amid Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano's call for some of his colleagues to inhibit from the probe to ensure impartiality.

On Friday, Aquino said the senators' decision to reopen the Mamasapano investigation was politically motivated. Cayetano is running for vice president.

Roxas said he would rather not comment on calls for Poe – a rival in the presidential race – to inhibit, but expressed his willingness to attend the probe if summoned.

"You know, it's not for me to comment on somebody else's conduct, especially if she is my rival," Roxas told reporters in Cavite last Sunday.

"If they invite me, okay. I'm not hiding anything. And after

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several hearings and they still want to know something, why not?" he added.

Roxas claimed he was left out of the loop when the SAF operation was planned and executed.

Falling on deaf ears

Cayetano's call may have fallen on deaf ears. Poe has made clear she would attend the hearing as the chairperson of the Senate committee on public order.

Poe said she has demonstrated her impartiality in the past and that she would continue to do so in the Jan. 25 hearing.

Vice presidential candidate Sen. Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said that there is no reason to ask any of the senators to inhibit from the hearing, as it is their job to ask questions during the proceedings.

He said it should be up to the public to judge the motives of the senators based

on their actions or behavior during the hearing.

"If the concern is that this would be used for political purposes, I think we should just leave it up to the Filipino people (to judge) because they can see whether a person is merely grandstanding or is truly committed to bringing justice to the families of the SAF 44," Marcos said.

"The entire country wants to find out what really happened to the people who killed the policemen," Marcos said in Filipino.

He said he is fully supportive of the call to reopen the Mamasapano probe because he wants to know the status of the cases against the perpetrators.

Sen. Ralph Recto, who is running for reelection, also rejected the call of Cayetano.

"I will be attending the hearing to find out if there are any new evidences.

That's the purpose why we are reopening the investigation," Recto said.

"It's part of our work. We must be accountable and responsible for the work of our elected positions. We owe it to the people. If we are given media exposure for our work, then so be it," Sen. Vicente Sotto III said.

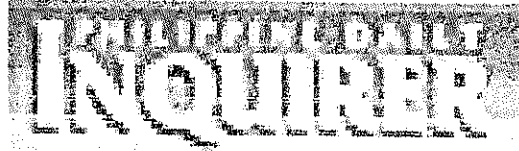
For Kabataan party-list Rep. Terry Ridon, the Senate's move to reopen the Mamasapano probe would greatly help determine the extent of involvement of President Aquino and some of his Cabinet officials.

"This is the chance for the Senate to clearly pinpoint command responsibility and hold government executives, including President Aquino himself, accountable for the blood-bath," Ridon said.

– With Aurea Calica, Marvin Sy, Alexis Romero, Paolo Romero

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Nur presence at MNLF meet in Sulu confirmed

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Fugitive Nur Misuari, founding chair of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), was among over 2,000 MNLF members and supporters who came from all over Mindanao to attend a "general membership meeting" in Sulu province on Saturday, according to a top faction leader of the group.

Habib Hashim Mudjahab, chair of the Islamic Command Council of the MNLF, said the discussions were focused on preparations for the tripartite meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), to be held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on Jan. 25-27.

Misuari faces multiple murder charges in connection with the 2013 siege of Zamboanga City by his followers, which left more than 200 people dead and hundreds of thousands of families homeless. A warrant for

his arrest was issued by the court in December 2013.

But there was no move by law enforcement agencies to arrest the MNLF leader during the meeting in the rebel stronghold in Barangay Kagay in Indanan town.

"It is not our job to serve the warrant of arrest," said Brig. Gen. Alan Arrojado, commander of the Army's 501st Infantry Brigade, who confirmed Misuari's presence in Kagay. "It's the mandate of our police. If they (police) need our help as backup support, we will do so," he said.

Mudjahab said it would not be easy for government security forces to arrest Misuari in the presence of thousands of MNLF members and supporters. "The meeting was in full coordination with the local authorities, and maybe they made an evaluation about the repercussions (of a Misuari arrest)," he said. **Julie S. Ali-pala, Inquirer Mindanao**

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MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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Palace: Warrant to arrest Nur still valid

By GENALYN D. KABILING

Government forces are determined to pursue efforts to locate and arrest Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) founder Nur Misuari for his alleged involvement in the Zamboanga siege in 2013, Malacañang said yesterday.

Misuari, former governor of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), was reportedly spotted in a gathering of MNLF supporters in Sulu last Friday.

Presidential Communications Operations Secretary Herminio Coloma Jr. said although they could not yet confirm the report about Misuari's public appearance, authorities would still carry out the arrest warrant against him. ▶

"We have yet to confirm the report you are citing. He still has an outstanding warrant of arrest, therefore law enforcement authorities have a legal basis for arresting him," Coloma said in a text message to the Manila Bulletin.

Reports said Misuari held a meeting with armed MNLF members as well as Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) gunmen in Indanan, Sulu. The meeting supposedly tackled his attendance to the upcoming Islamic Inter-Parliamen-

tary Union in Geneva, Switzerland.

Authorities, however, failed to apprehend the elusive Misuari who has long been wanted for the deadly attacks by his armed followers in Zamboanga in 2013.

Misuari and his commanders were charged with rebellion and violation of the country's law on crimes against international humanitarian law, genocide and other crimes against humanity before a regional trial court in Zamboanga.

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POLICE FILES

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NPA NANINGIL NA NG 'PERMIT TO CAMPAIGN' SA MGA POLITIKO

AMINADO ang ilang pulitiko na nakatanggap na ang mga ito ng sulat mula sa New People's Army (NPA) para paalalahanan na magbayad ng "permit to campaign" (PTC) sa mga lugar na kontrolado ng mga rebelde.

Kinumpirma ng tatlong kandidato na tumatakbo sa lokal na posisyon sa Quezon province na nakatanggap na ang mga ito ng demand para sa PTC fee.

Ayon sa reelectionist mayor ng Bondoc peninsula, noong nakaraang buwan pa siya nakatanggap ng sulat mula sa NPA.

"I received my invitation letter last month," ayon sa reelectionist mayor.

Dinala umano ng isang barangay official ang sulat pero wala namang nakalagay kung magkano ang babayaran nito sa mga rebelde.

Maging ang mayoralty candidate ng Lamon Bay area ng fourth district ng Quezon ay nakatanggap din umano ng demands sa pamamagitan ng kanyang mobile phone.

Nanawagan naman si

Brig. Gen. Erick Parayno, commander ng 201st Infantry Brigade ng Philippine Army sa Quezon na huwag ibigay ang demand ng mga NPA.

"The candidates should not be frightened. The rebels are now a weak force. If they give in, the extortion will not stop," paliwanag ni Parayno.

Sa mga nakaraang halaran, napaulat na maliban sa cash ay humihingi rin ang mga rebelde ng bigas, food stuff, gamot, communication equipment maging cellphone load sa mga kandidato.

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The Standard

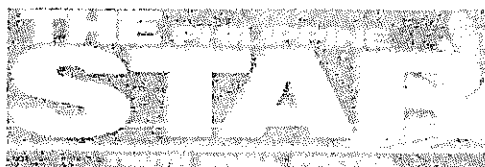
DEFINING THE NEWS

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Farmers' aid. Agriculture Secretary Proceso Alcala leads the service presentation ceremony of the farmers' assistance program at the Bangsamoro Leadership and Management Institute in Simuay, Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao on January 6, 2016. The government, through the Department of Agriculture, turned over P26.2 million worth of agricultural equipment and materials to the farmers of six previously acknowledged Moro Islamic Liberation Front camps in Maguindanao and Lanao provinces. Joining him are (from left) former Agriculture Secretary and Philippine government peace panel member Senen Bacani, MILF camps coordinator Mohamad Saleh, Castro Amran and Col. Felicisimo Budiongan of Camp Badre.

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Noy swears in Iriberri, 52 other newly promoted generals

Armed Forces of the Philippines chief Gen. Hernando Iriberri and 52 other newly promoted generals and flag officers of the military took their oaths of office before President Aquino yesterday.

Among the high-ranking officials who joined Iriberri were Major Generals Ricardo Visaya, Western Mindanao Command chief; Eduardo Año, Philippine Army chief; and Romeo Tanalgo, Philippine Marines commandant, who were promoted to lieutenant general, and Rear Admiral Caesar Taccad, Philippine Navy chief, who was promoted to vice admiral.

Promoted to major general and rear admiral were Brig. Gen. Edmundo Pangilinan, Commodore Aurelio Rabusa

Jr., Brigadier Generals Galileo Gerard Kintanar Jr., Arnold Quiapo, Conrado Parra Jr., Gerardo Barrientos Jr., Rolando Picar, Angelito de Leon, Alexander Balutan, Andre Costales, Rodolfo Santiago and Elmer Pabale.

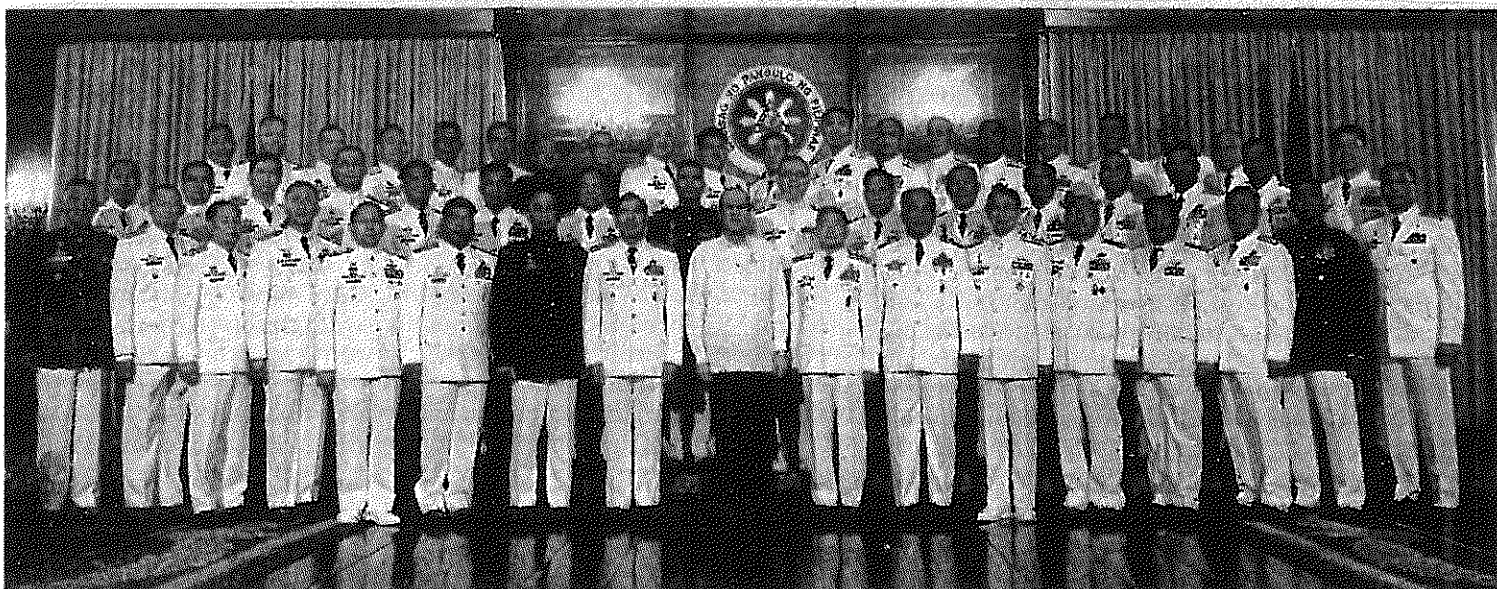
Promoted to brigadier general and commodore were Captain Elson Aguilar, Colonels Cornelio Pelaez, Florentino Rasco, Danilo Chad Isleta, Emmanuel Salamat, Capt. Ernesto Enriquez, Colonels Francisco Carada, Nicolas Parilla, Joel Celino, Laurcris Tumanda, Frederick Evans Ramos, Librado Moog, Capt. Virme Torralba, Colonels Alan Arrojado, Leoncio Cirunay Jr., Emigdio Guevara Jr., Arleen Gorreón, Rafael Sera Jose, Demy Tejares, Rhoderick Parayno, Raul Farnacio, Capt.

Jande Francisco, Colonels Maximo Ballesteros and Romeo de la Cruz, Captains Gaudencio Collado Jr. and

Robert Empedrad, Col. Avin Parreno, Capt. Rene Medina, Colonels Diosdado Respecio, Archimedes Viaje, Harold Cabrereros, Noel Clement, Alvin Francis Javier and Ronnie Evangelista.

Those who failed to attend the ceremony were Lt. Gen. Edgar Fallorina and Brig. Gen. Guillermo Molina Jr.

- Aurea Calica



President Aquino poses for a photograph with newly sworn in generals and flag officers of the Armed Forces at Malacañang yesterday.

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Malaya

The National Newspaper

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Aquino honors two envoys; administers oath to AFP men

BY JOCELYN MONTEMAYOR

PRESIDENT Aquino yesterday honored two ambassadors who recently completed their terms of office, bestowing on them the Order of Sikatuna for promoting Philippine interest and welfare of Filipinos abroad, among others.

The President conferred the Order of Sikatuna with the rank of Grand Cross (Gold Distinction) on Manuel Lopez (Japan) and Carlos Salinas (Spain) in Malacañang.

After the event, the President administered the oath of office on 53 recently promoted military officers, led by AFP chief Gen. Hernando Iriberry.

Lopez was recognized for his exemplary efforts which contributed significantly to the elevation of Philippine-Japan relations to that of a strategic partnership, and for his commitment to working closely with Japan in advocating maritime security in accordance with international laws.

He was also bestowed the award for coordinating high-level visits between the Philippines and Japan, including the state visit of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to the Philippines in 2013 and the state visit of President Aquino to Japan last year.

Salinas, who will be replaced by chief of presidential protocol Celia Anna Feria, was conferred the same award following his service as ambassador to Spain since 2010.

He is being recognized for his "active engagements" in forging defense cooperation between the Philippines and Spain and for his initiatives to organize a research group which led to the discovery of historical documents that strengthened the country's claim over Bajo de Masinloc.

He was honored also for defending Philippine maritime interests in the International Maritime Organization and the European Maritime Safety Authority, and for his contribution to peace-building ef-

forts in the southern Philippines by arranging visits to Spain of officials from the executive and legislative branches of the Philippine government to learn from Spain's experiences with its autonomous regions, in relation to the ongoing peace process in Mindanao.

The Order of Sikatuna, established in 1953, is conferred by the President of the Philippines on individuals who have rendered exceptional and meritorious services to the Philippines.

It is also given to diplomats, officials and nationals of foreign states who have provided services in fostering, developing, and strengthening relations between the Philippines and their respective countries.

AFP OFFICERS

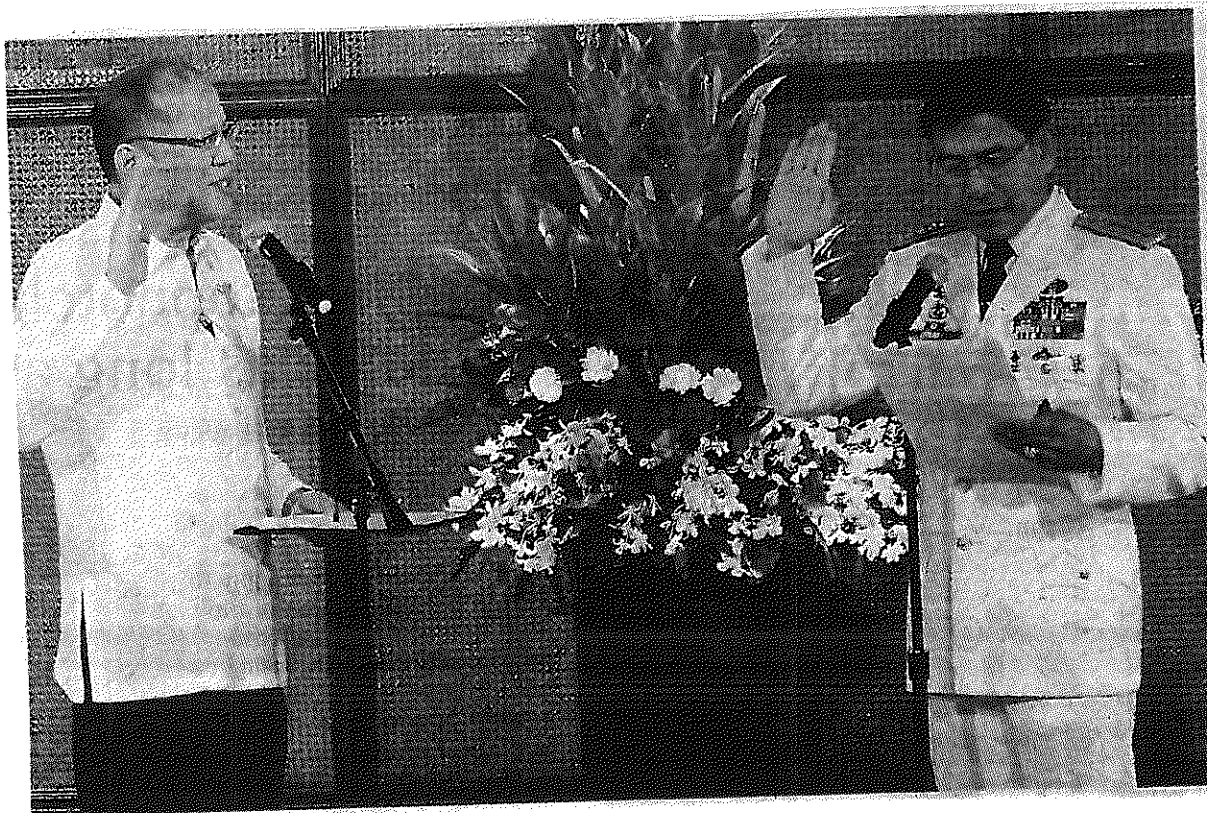
Aside from Iriberry, also taking their oaths were Lieutenant Generals Ricardo Visaya, Eduardo Año, and Romeo Tanalgo; Vice Admiral Caesar Taccad; Major Generals Edmundo Pangilinan, Galileo Gerard Kintanar Jr., Arnold Quiapo, Conrado Parra Jr., Gerardo Barrientos Jr., Rolando Picar, Angelito de Leon, Alexander Balutan, Andre Costales, Rodolfo Santiago, and Elmer Pabale; Rear Adm. Aurelio Rabusa Jr.;

Brigadier Generals Cornelio Pelaez, Florentino Rasco, Danilo Chad Isleta, Emmanuel Salamat, Francisco Carada, Nicolas Parilla, Joel Celino, Laurcris Tumanda, Frederick Evans Ramos, Librado Moog, Alan Arrojado, Leoncio Cirunay Jr., Emigdio Guevara Jr., Arleen Gorreón, Rafael Sera Jose, Demy Tejares, Rhoderick Parayno, Raul Farnacio, Maximo Ballesteros, Romeo dela Cruz, Avin Parreno, Diosdado Respecio, Archimedes Viaje, Harold Cabreros, Noel Clement, Alvin Francis Javier, and Ronnie Evangelista; and Commodores Elson Aguilar, Ernesto Enriquez, Virme Torralba, Jande Francisco, Gaudencio Collado Jr., Robert Empedrad, and Rene Medina.

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MANILA BULLETIN
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'SUPERMAN' SWORN IN
- President Aquino administers the oath of office to Armed Forces Chief of Staff General Hernando Iriberrri during the oath-taking ceremony yesterday at the Rizal Hall in Malacañang where 52 newly appointed Generals and Flag Officers of the AFP also took their oaths. (Richard V. Viñas)

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January 2016

Malaya

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P150B retail bond proposed for PH military modernization

CONGRESS yesterday asked the Philippine government to study a proposal to issue a P150 billion retail bond to fund a long-term military modernization plan to secure its strategic reserves in the South China Sea.

Arnel Ty, deputy minority leader at the lower house of Congress, said Congress will ask the Treasury to consider a bond issue to enable Filipinos to save and at the same time help secure the Philippines' maritime borders against China's rapid expansion in the South China Sea.

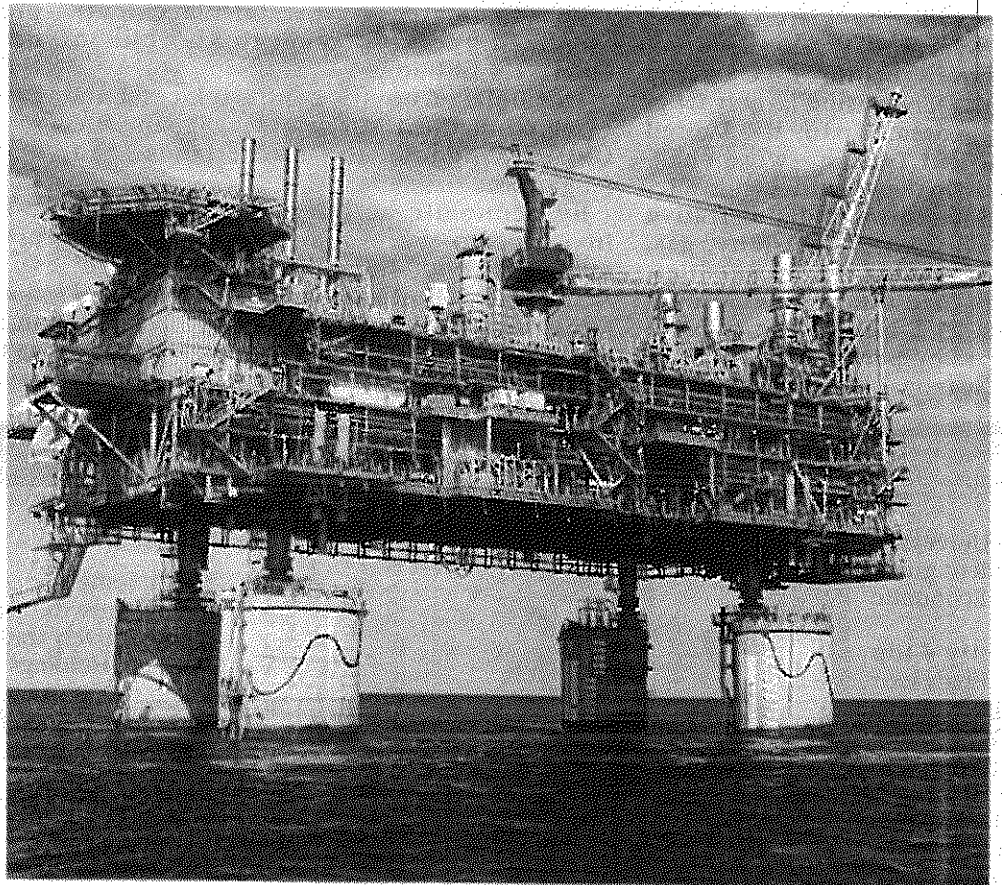
"The bulk of the additional funds raised from the bond offering may be set aside to acquire new warships, like frigates and corvettes, for deployment to the West Philippine Sea (South China Sea)," Ty told reporters.

"We have to invest in new warships to secure the potential huge oil and gas deposits in the West Philippine Sea, which are the key to our energy independence."

National Treasurer Roberto Tan told Reuters he had not been advised about the submission, saying "I still have to familiarize myself with the proposal".

Last month, President Benign Aquino vowed to leave behind a stronger and more capable military to face maritime challenges in the contested Sprat Islands when he leaves office on June 30, announcing an 83.9 billion peso five-year spending plan extending to 2017.

China claims almost all the South China Sea, believed to have huge deposits of oil and gas, through which about \$5 trillion in ship-borne trade passes every year. Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam also have claims in the strategic waters.



Deputy minority leader Arnel Ty said "we have to invest in new warships to secure the potential huge oil and gas deposits in the West Philippine Sea, which are the key to our energy independence."

In 2012, a Chinese patrol ship harassed a survey ship hired by an Anglo-Filipino consortium exploring for oil and gas in the Philippines' Reed Bank, an area Beijing claimed to be part of its territory.

Last year, Manila suspended oil and gas activities in the Reed Bank area.

Ty said Congress has passed a revised military modernization law, allocating 75 billion pesos for a five-year period until 2017. Since coming to office in 2010, Aquino has spent about 50 billion pesos on military

equipment.

This year, Congress appropriated 25 billion pesos to acquire two frigates, three anti-submarine helicopters, six close air support planes and munitions for the South Korean-made FA-50 light fighter planes.

The military has an ambitious 15-year modernization plan to spend about P998 billion to acquire submarines, advanced missile systems, and surveillance aircraft to put the country on par with its Southeast Asian neighbors. -Reuters

12 January 2016

BusinessMirror

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Legislator proposes P150-billion bond offer for AFP modernization

AMID the country's raging territorial tiff with China, a lawmaker on Monday proposed that the next administration should ascertain the feasibility of offering up to P150 billion worth of retail bonds to support the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Modernization Program.

House Deputy Minority Leader and Party-list Rep. Arnel Ty of LPG-MA, in a news statement, said the bond float would enable patriotic Filipinos to save money and help defend the country's 200-mile exclusive economic zone in West Philippine Sea (South China Sea) against Chinese incursions.

"The bulk of the additional funds raised from the bond offering may be set aside to acquire new warships—additional frigates and corvettes—for deployment to the West Philippine Sea," Ty said.

A large portion of the West Philippine Sea is being forcefully claimed by China, which has been building artificial islands on top of partially submerged reefs.

Ty, citing a Congressional Planning and Budget Office report, said the administration has so far spent P50.73 billion for the mili-

tary's ongoing capability upgrade program (CUP).

The Department of National Defense's P116.1-billion budget for 2016 also includes another P25-billion allotment for the CUP, the lawmaker added.

However, Ty said the next administration has to spend more to quickly build up the AFP, especially the Philippine Navy.

"With or without the dispute with China, we really have to reinforce the Philippine Navy in particular. We should, at least, make our naval assets comparable to those of Indonesia. Because like Indonesia, we have a large group of islands and vast territorial waters to protect," he said.

"We have to invest in new warships to secure the West Philippine Sea's huge oil and gas deposits, which are the key to our energy independence," Ty, a senior member of the House Energy Committee, added.

The Philippines has indefinitely suspended all oil- and gas-exploration activities in and around the hydrocarbon-rich Recto Bank off Northwest Palawan due to the lingering quarrel with China.

Jovee Marie N. dela Cruz

12 January 2016



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AFP pulls out security escorts of politicians, gov't execs

By JAIME LAUDE

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has recalled all troops deployed as security personnel of politicians, government officials and civilian personalities.

Col. Noel Detoyato, AFP Public Affairs Office (PAO) chief, said a recall order was issued last December in line with the military's overall preparation to ensure orderly and peaceful na-

tional and local elections in May.

"I just don't know the exact number of the recalled troops but they're now all back to their respective mother units.

The directive was issued last December," Detoyato said.

At Camp Aguinaldo, more or less 100 soldiers previously detailed as close-in security of

lawmakers and other government officials have reported back to the AFP's Special Detailed Unit (SDU).

Across the country, field troops doing security duties

for provincial governors, city and municipal mayors as well as prominent civilian personalities who are under threat have also been accounted for at their respective units.

12 January 2016

The Manila Times

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Soldiers told: Be wary of pol ads in social media

MILITARY officers and soldiers, be forewarned.

Be cautious in liking, sharing and commenting on social media about certain politicians even as the military hierarchy vowed to crack the whip on whoever would be found engaging in partisan politics in relation to the May 2016 elections.

Col. Noel Detoyato, chief of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Public Affairs Office, on Monday reminded his fellow soldiers that while they are not deprived of their rights to vote for certain candidates, openly supporting politicians particularly on social media is prohibited because that is tantamount to partisan politics.

"The soldiers are also reminded on the proper use of the social media that there are very harsh repercussions for their clicking and sharing. Just a mere one click or one share will spell it out if you are already expressing yourself publicly," he explained.

For instance, Detoyato said, if there is data or summary of information about a certain candidates, they are not allowed to like or share it.

"That will border or constitute partisanship, *bawal* [that is prohibited]," he added.

The public may report these activities to the AFP so that the "violators" would be investigated.

When asked about those using pseudonym, Detoyato said that would be the challenge to AFP investigators.

He added that Gen. Hernando Iriberrri, AFP chief of staff gave very strict and very specific orders to military commanders and their men when he made the rounds of military camps around the country: "The AFP has to remain non-partisan during elections."

Detoyato said involvement of some military officers and soldiers in partisan politics particularly in the 2004 and 2010 polls "is already considered lesson learned."

He expressed optimism that the unfortunate incident episode in the history of the AFP would not be repeated.

FERNAN MARASIGAN

12 January 2016



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Liking, sharing political posts a no-no, soldiers warned

BE CAREFUL, soldier. Your cyber postings on political affairs may cost you your job.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines has sternly cautioned the troops to be careful about their posts or shares on social media like Facebook that may be seen as favoring or disparaging certain candidates in the May elections.

Liking or sharing a link or post about politicians may be construed as a violation of the mili-

tary's order to the troops to remain nonpartisan in the coming polls.

The AFP, however, said this did not mean its 125,000 personnel don't have a right to choose their candidates.

"The mere act of liking or sharing items on social media that may border on partisanship in favor of a candidate is not allowed," said AFP public affairs office chief Col. Noel Detoyato in a press briefing on Monday. *Julie M. Aurelio*

12 January 2016

The Manila Times

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JUDGMENT DAY FOR EDCA

BY JOMAR CANLAS
SENIOR REPORTER

JUSTICES of the Supreme Court (SC) will vote on the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) on Tuesday and observers are expecting close voting because the tribunal is split over the controversial issue.

Chief Justice Maria Lourdes Sereno, the ponente, earlier circulated a draft decision saying the military agreement between the Philippines and US is "not unconstitutional."

A source said part of Sereno's draft read, "In order to keep the peace in its archipelago in this region of the world, and to sustain itself at the same time against the destructive forces of nature, the Philippines will need friends. Who these are, and what form of friendships will take are for the President to decide. The only restriction is what the Constitution itself expressly prohibits. It appears that this was the overarching concern for balancing constitutional requirements against the dictates of necessity that led to EDCA."

Several separate draft opinions have been released either dissenting or concurring with Sereno's ponencia. Voting on the EDCA case was reset several times last year.

Senior Associate Justice Antonio Carpio supports Sereno's position, saying time is of the

essence in defending the Philippines from the "bullying" of China in the West Philippine Sea (South China Sea).

In one of the en banc sessions last month, Carpio was quoted by an SC insider that EDCA is needed to save Philippine islands.

"We should not wait until the other islands will be conquered by China," Carpio was quoted by *The Manila Times* source.

Justices Teresita Leonardo-De Castro, Arturo Brion and Marvic Leonen, however, do not share the same view.

The three circulated their separate dissenting opinions last year.

Only 14 justices are expected to vote because Associate Justice Francis Jardeleza recused himself, having argued for the government when he was still the Solicitor General.

The source said a 7-7 vote is possible.

If this happens, another voting shall be made and if the result is the same, the petition against EDCA shall be dismissed.

12 January 2016

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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PH, US set high-level defense, economic talks in Washington

By **ROY C. MABASA**

For the first time in more than three years, top defense and foreign affairs officials of the Philippines and the United States will meet to discuss a wide range of bilateral issues significant to developments in the West Philippine Sea (South China Sea) and other economic and climate change engagements.

Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) Secretary Albert del Rosario and Department of National Defense (DND) Secretary Voltaire Gazmin will meet with US Secretary of State John Kerry and US Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter on January 12 in Washington, District of Columbia, for the second "2+2 Philippines-US Ministerial Meeting."

The last 2+2 Ministerial Meeting was held on April 30, 2012 in Washington, D.C. with Del Rosario and Gazmin coming face-to-face with then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and former Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta.

The officials will tackle regional and global issues that impact on both countries, including the upcoming Special Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)-US Summit in California, and cooperation on climate change.

Critical timing

This meeting comes at a critical time when Manila and Beijing are at a diplomatic stalemate over the Panatag (Bajo de Masinloc or Scarborough) Shoal and other areas in the West Philippine Sea claimed by both countries.

It was during a routine patrol of BRP Gregorio del Pilar, a refurbished former US Coast Guard cutter, when eight Chinese fishing ships were discovered illegally seizing coral and live sharks.

Subsequently, two Chinese surveillance vessels positioned themselves between the Philippine ship and the Chinese fishermen, preventing any arrest or further action.

The Philippine officials formally sought the assistance and cooperation of the US to achieve, at the very least, a "minimum credible defense posture" which they pointed out is a fundamental attribute of any sovereign country.

It was no less than the DFA Secretary who disclosed that the Philippine government asked the US, its closest security partner, to give Manila at least two more military ships and a squad-

ron of excess F-16 fighter jets to help upgrade its territorial defenses and two more military ships amid increasing tensions with China in the disputed South China Sea.

The request for US military assistance was first discussed during the visit of the former Secretary of State (Clinton) in the Philippines in November 2011.

Alliance reaffirmed

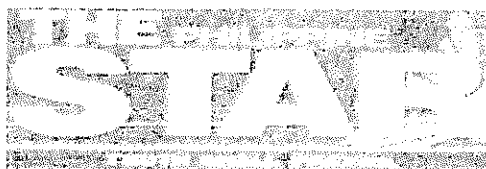
Following the successful visit of President Obama to Manila in November, 2015, the Philippines and the United States reaffirm the enduring strength of the bilateral alliance. The

two governments are also committed to further enhance the historic friendship to better serve their respective national interests.

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the establishment of PH-US diplomatic relations.

Del Rosario is expected to thank Secretary Kerry for the continued assistance of the United States to PH defense modernization and support to PH efforts to promote inclusive growth. The Philippines has been selected for a second Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact and has expressed interest in joining the Transpacific Partnership trade agreement.

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DFA, DND chiefs to meet with US counterparts

Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert del Rosario and Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin will meet their US counterparts today in Washington for the second 2+2 Philippines-US Ministerial Meeting, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said yesterday.

The DFA said Del Rosario

and Gazmin are expected to discuss with US Secretary of State John Kerry and US Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter a range of bilateral issues including defense and security cooperation and significant developments in the economic engagement of the two countries.

By PIA LEE-BRAGO

The agenda will also cover regional and global issues that impact on both countries, in particular, the recent developments in the South China Sea, the upcoming Special Association of Southeast Asian nations (ASEAN)-US Summit in California, and cooperation

on climate change.

Following the visit of President Barack Obama in Manila last November, the Philippines and the United States reaffirmed the enduring strength of the bilateral alliance.

The two governments are also committed to further en-

hance the historic friendship to better serve their respective national interests.

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the establishment of Phil-US diplomatic relations.

Del Rosario is expected to thank Kerry for the continued assistance of the US to Philippine defense modernization

and support to Philippine efforts to promote inclusive growth.

The Philippines has been selected for a second Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact and has expressed interest in joining the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement.

02 January 2016

The Manila Times

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Abu Sayyaf rebels officially vow allegiance to ISIS

BY MOH SAADUDDIN
CORRESPONDENT

THE Abu Sayyaf Group had "officially" pledged allegiance to the caliph of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and named new leaders aligned with the in-

ternational Islamic extremist group, according to a video released by the ASG.

The video, which was uploaded at Archived.org website on January 4, showed more than 30 armed militants led by Isnilon Hapilon hiking in the hinterlands

► **ISIS A2**

of Basilan province while chanting the "Dawlah Islamiyah [Islamic State]" after which they recited an Arabic script of bayah or pledge of allegiance.

Hapilon alias Abu Abdullah was named as the new leader of the "Harakatul Islamiyah" [Islamic Movement] the new name given to the ASG, which is known for having carried out kidnappings, bombings and other criminal activities in Mindanao in the past.

The US government offered a \$5 million reward for Hapilon's head.

Hapilon was shown in the video with Abu Harith Al-Filibbieni, an alleged deputy commander of the al-Ansar Infantry Division of the ISIS, and

Mohd Najib Husen alias Abu Annas Al Muhajir, an alleged division head of the Ansar al-Sharia of the ISIS.

The rebels explained in the video that they had previously done the bayah but were doing it again "officially" in front of their named leaders.

It was unknown when the video was created but it was released after the Army's Western Mindanao Command claimed last month that Husen was killed during operations in Basilan against the ASG bandits.

Husen was with other Malaysian foreigners namely Mahmud Ahmad, Muhammad Joramee Awang Raimee, Amin Baco and Jeknal Adil, who fled to southern Philippines reportedly

to recruit militants and send them to "Dar al-Harb [place of war], referring to Syria and Iraq, where the ISIS had established its own caliphate state.

The ASG hoisted a black flag similar to those being used by the Khilafah Islamiyah Movement (KIM) and other hardline radical jihadist groups like the Boko Haram in Africa.

In Maguindanao and nearby provinces, the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) and the Ansarul Khilafah had also pledged allegiance to the ISIS "officially."

Radical militants in Indonesia and Malaysia including the Southeast Asian terror group Jema'ah Islamiyah had also done the same.

92 January 2016



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AFP ready to evacuate OFWs from Middle East – Iriberry

The Philippine economy is heavily dependent on overseas Filipino workers, or OFWs, who collectively remitted around \$30 billion in 2015.

But with the security situation in the Middle East deteriorating, there are mounting fears in Manila for the 2.5 million OFWs working in the region.

The bombing of a Filipino community center in Saudi Arabia by Yemeni rebels on January 5 fueled concerns about the safety of the 1.1 million OFWs in the country, as have tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

At the weekend President Aquino downplayed the economic impact of any Saudi exodus, saying that the booming Philippine economy would be able to absorb all the OFWs working there should they be forced to return.

Military chief General Hernando Iriberry told reporters at the weekend that the Philippine armed forces stands ready to evacuate

OFWs from the Middle East should it become necessary but the Philippine military lacks the capacity to mount any large-scale rescue mission.

This developed as Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif accused Saudi Arabia of trying to incite conflict in the region and disrupt the implementation of the deal on the Iranian nuclear program.

Zarif's words came shortly after the breakdown of relations between Riyadh and Tehran. Earlier this month, protesters stormed the Saudi Arabian embassy in Iran after Riyadh executed top Iranian Shiite cleric Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr. Following the unrest, Saudi Arabia cut official ties with Iran.

"Following the signing of the interim nuclear deal in November 2013, Saudi Arabia began devoting its resources to defeating the deal, driven by fear that its contrived Iranophobia was crumbling. Today, some in Riyadh not only continue to impede nor-

malization but are determined to drag the entire region into confrontation," Zarif wrote in an op-ed article in The New York Times newspaper Sunday.

According to the minister, Riyadh is afraid that after the international community stops considering the Iranian nuclear program a threat, it will direct its attention to Saudi Arabia sponsoring terrorism.

"The Saudi strategy to derail the nuclear agreement and perpetuate — and even exacerbate — tension in the region has three components: pressuring the West; promoting regional instability through waging war in Yemen and sponsoring extremism; and directly provoking Iran," Zarif said.

On July 14, Iran and the P5+1 group of mediators — Russia, the United States, China, France and the United Kingdom plus Germany — reached an agreement on ensuring a peaceful nature of Tehran's nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief. (Dow Jones/PNA/Sputnik)

2 January 2016



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AFP hopes no 'Garcí' repeat in May polls

By Mario J. Mallari

The Armed Forces of the Philippines yesterday declared that it had recovered from the controversies sparked by the "Hello Garcí" recordings which implicated active military officials to partisan politics during the 2004 presidential polls, expressing confidence that no AFP personnel would get involved again in partisan politics this coming May presidential elections.

"Those instances are already considered as lessons learned. We are very optimistic and we are looking forward that nothing like that will happen," Col. Noel Detoyato, AFP-Public Affairs Office chief, said.

At a press briefing, Detoyato cited the performance of the military during previous elections when not a single election-related case was filed to any AFP personnel.

"We can confidently declare that we have long strides from the effect of the scandal. For the past elections, we have no more cases like that," Detoyato said.

"There was a survey prior to the conduct of the Army Transformation Roadmap in 2013 when the AFP got a 75 percent acceptance rating, so I am sure that speaks for itself that we have recovered already," he added.

In 2004, several top ranking AFP officials were mentioned in the infamous "Hello Garcí" recordings of conversations of then Commission on Elections Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano, who was accused of manipulating the results of the polls in favor of then incumbent President Arroyo.

Arroyo won over opposition standard-bearer actor Fernando Poe Jr., who subsequently filed an election protest.

Among those mentioned were then AFP deputy chief of staff for operations Maj. Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr., former Southern Command (Southcom) chief Lt. Gen. Roy Kyamko and Marine Brig. Gen. Francisco Gudani.

The AFP leadership conducted a full-blown investigation of the controversy.

Detoyato said the AFP chief has been constantly reminding troops to remain apolitical during elections.

12 January 2016

Malaya
The National Newspaper

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No 'Hello Garci' scandal in 2016, vows Armed Forces

BY VICTOR REYES

THE Armed Forces yesterday said it has already erased the stigma of the "Hello Garci" scandal that linked several of its generals in the supposed rigging of the 2004 presidential elections.

"We have had no similar case during the past elections. Also, a 2013 survey showed a 75 per cent approval rating of the AFP," said Armed Forces public affairs office chief Col. Noel Detoyato.

The Hello Garci scandal involved wiretapped conversations between then presidential candidate Gloria Arroyo and elections commissioner Virgilio Garcillano.

It was implied in the tape that several military generals were involved in the rigging of the election results in favor of Arroyo, including then AFP deputy chief of staff for operations Maj. Gen. Hermogenes Esperon who rose to become AFP chief.

A military fact-finding board investigated the officers mentioned in the wiretapped conversations but were later cleared for lack of evidence

and witnesses. The board was headed by then AFP inspector general Vice Adm. Mateo Mayuga who was later promoted to become Navy chief.

"Those instances are already considered as lessons learned and we have made strides," Detoyato said, noting the transformation programs of the AFP, the Army, Navy and the Air Force.

"We have our scorecards, the commanders have scorecards, the individual soldiers have scorecards," he said, referring to the what-to-do lists.

"If you will follow these scorecards, you will not go wrong and consequently follow the non-partisan stance of the AFP," he said.

Detoyato expressed confidence that the controversy will not be repeated in this year's elections, noting that AFP chief Gen. Hernando Iriberry has issued "strict and very specific orders for the AFP to remain non-partisan during the elections."

"We are very optimistic and we are looking forward that there will no repeat of that,"

said Detoyato, adding that military officers and men who will be found engaged in such activity will face sanction, including possible dishonorable discharge from the service.

Detoyato also cautioned all military personnel against sharing, commenting, and liking articles about the candidates through Facebook and other social networking sites, saying this is tantamount to partisan politics.

"The soldiers are also reminded on the proper use of the social media. There are very harsh repercussions if you click and share (articles). Just one click or one share will spell it out, because you are already expressing yourself publicly," said Detoyato.

Detoyato noted that Facebook and the other social networking sites are considered as public domain.

He said the military released a handbook on the proper use of social media way in 2014. "That (sharing, commenting and liking) will border or constitute partisanship. That is not allowed," he said.

AFP to pols: Ignore NPA demands

BY VICTOR REYES

THE Armed Forces yesterday appealed to politicians running in the coming elections not to pay Permit to Campaign and Permit to Win fees to the communist New People's Army, saying this will mean more rebel atrocities.

"Our advise to them is not to give in to extortion because the money that you will give to them will be used for more violence," said AFP public affairs office chief Col. Noel Detoyato in a press briefing in Camp Aguinaldo.

Detoyato said there are unconfirmed reports that the rebels have already started sending

letters to candidates, demanding PTC and PTW fees, but added they have yet to receive official reports from the field.

"They may call it some other ways but for us, it is plain and simple extortion," Detoyato said of the communist movement's PTC and PTW. "Don't give in (to the demands of) extortionists."

Citing figures in the past, Detoyato said the rebels were able to collect hundreds of millions of pesos from this scheme during an election period. He said the rebels usually demand P500,000 in PTC and PTW fees from gubernatorial candidates.

Candidates who refuse to

heed the extortion demands are usually subjected to attacks by the insurgents.

Detoyato said candidates who receive extortion demands need to coordinate with authorities so that their movement can be secured. "We will provide area and route security. They just have to be in constant coordination with the AFP on the ground," he said.

"We encourage them to report it to the Comelec, to the police, to the nearest military so that we can take proper action. We are always dependent on the information that you give us," said Detoyato.

ONLINE NEWS

12 JANUARY 2016

www.philstar.com

AFP reminds soldiers: Don't engage in partisan politics in social media

By Alexis Romero

MANILA, Philippines - The military on Monday reminded soldiers to be careful in using social networking accounts and to make sure that they do not promote or denigrate any candidate or political party.

Armed Forces public affairs chief Col. Noel Detoyato said liking, sharing information or commenting about a candidate would be construed as engaging in partisan politics and could lead to sanctions.

"Even liking or sharing in social media, these border on or constitute partisanship, which is prohibited," Detoyato said in a press briefing in Camp Aguinaldo.

"The soldiers are reminded on the proper use of the social media. There are very harsh repercussions (for violators)," he added.

Detoyato said those who would be caught promoting or criticizing candidates or political groups may be demoted, discharged or lose their benefits.

He also has warning for soldiers who use anonymous accounts for political purposes.

"They can but if they are caught, they will suffer," Detoyato said, adding that the only partisan activity soldiers are allowed to perform is to vote.

The military, nevertheless, is confident that soldiers will remain apolitical during the election season.

Detoyato said the military has recovered from the stigma of the "Hello Garci" scandal, which raised doubts about the credibility of the 2004 elections.

"We did not have similar incidents in the past elections," he said.

In 2005, some generals were accused of rigging the 2004 polls after their names were mentioned in the so-called "Hello Garci" tapes.

The wiretapped recordings allegedly described the ways the canvassing was manipulated to ensure the reelection of then President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

In the audio files, a woman believed to be Arroyo was asking a man said to be then Commission on Elections Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano if she could win by more than one million votes.

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

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

Arroyo apologized for talking to an election official but was silent on accusations that she benefited from poll fraud.

www.dwdd.com.ph

OATH-TAKING // Newly-Appointed General and Flag Officers

By: Alvin Santiago



Hall, Malacañan Palace (DWDD) – President Benigno S. Aquino III led the Oath-Taking Ceremony of 52 newly-appointed General and Flag Officers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). AFP Chief of Staff Lt Gen Hernando DCA Iriberry, who had been promoted to the rank of General last July 2015, was among those who had taken their oath of office.

Joining Iriberry, were MGen Ricardo Visaya, MGen Eduardo M. Ano, RAdm Caesar C. Taccad, MGen Romeo T. Tanalgo who were promoted to Lieutenant General and Vice Admiral of the AFP. Each of the 52 newly-appointed officers together with their family posed for a photo opportunity with the President. **RTVM / MCAG**

www.inquirer.net

Nur Misuari leads meeting of 2,000 MNLF members, supporters in Sulu

By: Julie S. Alipala

ZAMBOANGA CITY, Philippines – Led by their founding chair, the fugitive Nur Misuari, over 2,000 members and supporters of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) from all over Mindanao converged in Sulu.

Misuari faces several charges for the 2013 Zamboanga Siege that left more than 200 people dead and hundreds of thousands of families homeless.

Habib Hashim Mudjahab, chair of the Islamic Command Council of the MNLF (ICC-MNLF), said the gathering led by Misuari was a “general leadership meeting where discussions were focused on the preparation of the incoming tripartite meeting.”

Last week, over 40 MNLF members, who were intercepted in this city, were monitored until they boarded a boat bound for Sulu.

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

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

Mudjahab said the MNLF leaders ironed out some details "for the January 25 to 27 (Organization of Islamic Cooperation) Tripartite meeting in Jeddah, and the replacement of the late Ustadz Zain Jali by Alibashier Sidri as new chair of the Bangsamoro Parliament."

Brig. Gen. Alan Arrojado, commander of the 501st Army Brigade, confirmed the presence of Misuari in the meeting held in Barangay (the village of) Kagay in Indanan town.

Arrojado said Misuari presided over the assembly of about 2,000 members and supporters.

But there was no move to arrest Misuari, who has been charged with multiple murder for the 2013 Zamboanga siege where MNLF forces allegedly tried to occupy the city. Hundreds of thousands of residents were displaced by the three-week fighting between national government forces and MNLF members in 2013.

"It is not our job to serve the warrant of arrest. It's the mandate of our police. If they (police) need our help as back-up support, we will do so," Arrojado said.

Mudjahab said government security forces would have had difficulty arresting Misuari as thousands of MNLF members and supporters were in the meeting.

"The meeting was in full coordination with the local authorities, and maybe they made an evaluation about the repercussion (of a Misuari arrest)," Mudjahab said. **SFM**

www.dwdd.com.ph

PHL-US 2+2 // PH Sec to Meet US Ministers in Washington

By: Alvin Santiago

Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert del Rosario and Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin will meet with US Secretary of State John Kerry and US Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter on January 12 in Washington for the second 2+2 Philippines-US Ministerial Meeting.

MANILA (DWDD) – The two sides are expected to discuss a range of bilateral issues including defense and security cooperation and significant developments in the economic engagement of the two countries. The agenda will also cover regional and global issues that impact on both countries, in particular, the recent developments in the South China Sea, the upcoming Special ASEAN-US Summit in California, and cooperation on climate change.

Following the successful visit of President Obama to Manila in November 2015, the Philippines and the United States reaffirm the enduring strength of the bilateral alliance. The two governments are also committed to further enhance the historic friendship to better serve their respective national interests.

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the establishment of PH-US diplomatic relations. Secretary Del Rosario is expected to thank Secretary Kerry for the continued assistance of the United States to the Philippine defense modernization and support to the Philippines' efforts to promote inclusive growth. The Philippines has been selected for a second Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact and has expressed interest in joining the Transpacific Partnership trade agreement. The last 2+2 Ministerial Meeting was held in 2012. **DFA / DND / MCAG**

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

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

www.interaksyon.com

PVAO wants P1.8 billion to raise monthly pension for WWII veterans from P5,000 to P20,000
By: Philippines News Agency

InterAksyon.com

The online news portal of TV5

LINGAYEN, Pangasinan -- The Philippine Veterans Affairs Office (PVAO) has sought the increase of the monthly pension of surviving World War II veterans from P5,000 to P20,000.

This is contained in the bill seeking a P1.8-billion annual budget for the agency to provide additional benefit to around 12,000 living WWII veterans throughout the country. Philippine Veterans Bank puts the number of World War II veterans at 9,000.

PVAO Administrator Ernesto Carolina said his office had proposed the increase of the monthly pension of the WWII veterans by 300 percent to P20,000.

He said that the bill to this effect was already passed by the House Committees on Veterans Affairs and Appropriations and this is now being tackled before the Senate.

He added that they are awaiting certification from the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) that there is available fund for this purpose.

"This DBM certification would speed up the passage of the bill," noted Carolina in a talk to newsmen after he delivered his speech as guest speaker during the 71st Anniversary of the Lingayen Gulf Landings and 9th Pangasinan Veterans' Day held at the Veterans Memorial Park, Capitol Complex, Lingayen on Saturday, January 9.

Carolina expressed optimism that the DBM will eventually find appropriation for the P1.8 billion needed.

"Through the years, the P1.8 billion will be decreased as the World War II veterans are dying at an average of 300 to 350 veterans per month," he said, noting that after WW11, there were 360,000 veterans.

He said further that the national government has approved in its 2016 budget an appropriation worth P3.5 billion to provide a P1,700 monthly disability pension to the more than 20,000 war veterans' surviving spouses.

Meanwhile, the PVAO head thanked the provincial government, led by Gov. Amado Espino Jr., in partnering with them to honor the heroic deeds of the veterans and in "molding the younger generation to be future defenders of the nation."

He hailed the province's move in declaring January 9 of every year as Pangasinan Veterans Day, in providing facilities to the PVAO field office serving not only Pangasinan but outlying provinces, and in providing "cozy place" (Capitol Complex) for the veterans to relive their experiences.

He added that Pangasinan can be considered as the Philippine cradle of heroes since it has the most number of veterans across the country.

A retired lieutenant general of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, Carolina also recalled the vital role Lingayen played "not only in Philippine World History but in the whole World War 2 History."

He said there would've been no battle to liberate Manila if there was no landing at Lingayen Gulf.

Lingayen was the most suitable backdoor to Manila for its would-be liberators as it provided protected anchorage; was near to several roads in Luzon leading to Manila; was well-removed from heavy concentration of forces and enforcement around Manila Bay; and provided continuous supply of food, weapons, and other logistics, he said.

For his part, Espino told the public to continue the fight of the veterans.

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

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

"Let us protect the environment and fight poverty and crimes as illegal drugs," he remarked.

After the commemorative program, the veterans and their children were provided with free medical mission.

Espino said the province's observance of Veterans Day since 2008, by virtue of a provincial proclamation in 2007, is a way of thanking the heroism and valor of the war veterans.

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