

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



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14 January 2016

Thursday

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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8 Phl camps eyed for US



Chama: US, not China, should set rules in region



EDCA bars building of US bases - SC



STAR hosts Visayas presidential debate



PH offers 8 bases to US

Facilities include Clark, Basa, Lumbia, Maguaysay



Inquirer, GMA - to host first presidential debate



The Manila Times

NEDA chief's new post a 'reward'



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US to help modernize AFP

Kerry, Carter welcome SC ruling upholding EDCA



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Enrile blames Aquino for Mamasapano rout



VP camp hits Senate troika on resumed probe



SC Justices face impeachment over EDCA okay - Roque



Lara tells POC too early to claim SC victory



Lawyer: Duterte bid invalid as papers not in order



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

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The Manila Times

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TODAY'S WEATHER FORECAST JANUARY 14, 2016 | THURSDAY

NORTHEAST MONSOON
AFFECTING NORTHERN LUZON
(JANUARY 13, 8:00 PM)

TAIL-END OF A COLD FRONT
AFFECTING THE EASTERN
SECTION OF SOUTHERN LUZON
(JANUARY 13, 6:00 PM)

SUNRISE

SUNSET



6:25 AM

5:45 PM

MOONRISE

MOONSET



9:34 AM

9:50 PM

NEW MOON

FIRST QUARTER



9:36 AM

7:20 AM

LOW TIDE

HIGH TIDE



8:09 AM

12:02 AM

4.14 Meter

1.05 Meter



Partly cloudy to at times cloudy with rainshowers



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



	JAN 15 FRIDAY	JAN 16 SATURDAY	JAN 17 SUNDAY	JAN 15 FRIDAY	JAN 16 SATURDAY	JAN 17 SUNDAY
METRO MANILA	22-31°C	23-32°C	23-32°C	14-22°C	15-22°C	14-22°C
METRO CEBU	25-30°C	25-32°C	24-32°C	24-31°C	24-31°C	24-31°C
METRO DAVAO	25-33°C	25-33°C	25-33°C	24-34°C	25-34°C	26-34°C
BAGUIO						
PUERTO PRINCESA						
BORACAY						



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14 January 2016

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

Page: 1

Enrile advice to PNoy: 'Think, reflect, assert your leadership'

By HANNAH L. TORREGOZA

"Think, reflect on yourself, and assert your leadership." That's the unsolicited advice given to President Aquino by Senate Minority Leader Juan Ponce Enrile in a radio interview yesterday.

"Well, I am not about to be an adviser to the President, but I would suggest to him to re-examine himself and not to be paranoid in imputing any motives against other people. Think, reflect on yourself, and assert your leadership," Enrile said.

Enrile was one of several lawmakers charged with graft and plunder over the pork barrel fund scam.

He was allowed to post bail in ►6

 twitter.com/manila_bulletin

Enrile advice to PNoy... ◀1

August last year.

Enrile said "there was a failure of leadership in Mamasapano," in that fiasco in Luneta, and in the government's response to the Yolanda super-typhoon tragedy. He has pushed for the reopening of the Mamasapano probe.

Malacañang believes the reopening of the Mamasapano probe is po-

litically motivated. But Enrile said politics is already out of the question since he no longer considers himself a politician.

"Other presidents have also numbers and growth rates, but nobody remembers them. What they will remember is the way you performed your function as a President in crisis

situation," he pointed out.

That is why, he said, he is cautioning voters to be very careful in choosing their leaders in the coming elections.

"My advice to all of you in the upcoming elections is not to allow yourself to allow your emotions to rule you. Read, study the character of each candidate before giving your vote to the next president of the Philippines," he said.

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THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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SC upholds Comelec ruling to disqualify some poll bets

By **REY G. PANALIGAN**

The Supreme Court (SC) has affirmed the ruling of the Commission on Elections (Comelec) which disqualified seven presidential aspirants as nuisance candidates and rejected the registration and accreditation of four party-list groups in the 2016 elections.

Dismissed by the SC during its full court session last Tuesday were the petitions against the Comelec filed by presidential candidates Rizalito David, Elly Pamatong, Juanita Trocenio, Ephraim Defino, Buenafe Briggs, Antonio Obina and Luisito Falcon.

Their certificates of candidacy (COCs) had been cancelled by ►6

SC upholds Comelec... ◀1

the Comelec in separate decisions with a ruling that they are nuisance candidates for president.

Quoting from the SC resolutions that dismissed the petitions filed by the seven candidates, Spokesman Theodore O. Te said: "... petitions for Certiorari, Prohibition and/or Mandamus with applications for restraining order and/or injunction directed against various Resolutions and/or Decisions of the Comelec En Banc and/or its First or Second Divisions cancelling petitioners' respective Certificates of Candidacy for President of the Philippines on the ground of their being nuisance candidates, the Court uniformly, in Minute Resolutions, DISMISSED the Petitions on the ground that the Comelec did not act with grave abuse of discretion...."

Also the SC affirmed the Comelec rulings on the rejection of the registration of four party-list groups identified by Te in his media briefing as the Mindanao Alliance for Reforms (MAR), Bagong Alyansang Manggagawang Pangtransportasyon Para sa Edu-

kasyon at Reporma (BAMPER), Political Party of the People's Movement for Democratic Governance (PMDG) and Aasenso sa Barangay.

The SC, however, required the Comelec to comment or answer the petitions filed by party-list groups Vieva Farmers Coalition and Scholarship ng Masa which also challenged the rejection of their registration and accreditation.

Te said: "The Court required Comelec to COMMENT within a period of 10 days from notice on the Petitions (filed by Vieva Farmers Coalition and Scholarship ng Masa) for Certiorari, Prohibition and Mandamus with application for restraining order and/or injunction directed against the Resolutions of the Comelec denying petitioners' petitions for registration as sectoral organizations under the Party-List system."

Several other petitions filed by party-list groups whose registration and accreditation had also been rejected by the Comelec have yet to be resolved by the SC.

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Senators divided on SC ruling on EDCA

By MARVIN SY

Senators were divided on the Supreme Court (SC) ruling upholding the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) between the US and the Philippines.

Senate President Franklin Drilon and Minority Leader Juan Ponce Enrile both welcomed the SC ruling and saw this benefiting the country in the long term.

Sen. Ferdinand Marcos Jr., on the other hand, questioned the decision of the SC, maintaining the EDCA is a treaty that must be ratified by the Senate.

Drilon, who abstained from the voting on the resolution filed by Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago calling for concurrence of the EDCA by the Senate, said the high court has found the agreement to be constitutional and as such, must be respected.

He said the EDCA is an executive agreement only and therefore no longer has to be sent to the Senate for concurrence like a treaty.

"This is merely an executive agreement be-

cause there was no amendment in any treaty but is just implementing the VFA that was ratified by the Senate in the late '90s," Drilon said, referring to the Visiting Forces Agreement.

"This is a document that will define our existing security agreement, which is particularly important now that we are facing a huge challenge in the South China Sea," he added.

If and when conflict breaks out between the Philippines and any country, Drilon said the VFA would be the basis for whatever action the US will take, not the EDCA.

"Whatever is the obligation of the US under the VFA remains intact. Nothing was added or removed with the EDCA. It is merely an implementation of our obligations and the obligations of America," Drilon said.

Drilon also allayed fears the US could now set up military bases in the Philippines with the implementation of the EDCA.

"This will not happen with the EDCA be-

cause a new treaty must be in place in order to establish bases and this must be ratified by the Senate. There is no foreign military base in the Philippines under the EDCA," he said.

Enrile, who also abstained from the voting on the resolution, said the Philippines needs the assistance of its allies just like the US now more than ever because of the tensions over the West Philippine Sea.

He said that the Philippines has made an enemy out of China and so must do everything it can to protect itself, including allying with a stronger power such as the US.

"That is why I said that we must stay with America under our present condition. It's a matter of necessity for us. Wisely, the Supreme Court made a courageous decision in spite of the public reaction to sustain the EDCA in order to protect the Filipino people and this nation from possible enslavement for centuries by a giant power in Asia," Enrile said.

Marcos said he suspects the administration deliberately classified the EDCA as an executive agreement for fear that the Senate would not ratify it.

Militant groups led by Bagong Alyansang Makabayan continued to criticize the SC ruling, which it said is a violation of the country's national sovereignty.

Sheena Duazo, secretary general of the Bayan Southern Mindanao region chapter, said EDCA cannot help in resolving the crisis in the West Philippine Sea.

Iloilo Archbishop Angel Lagdameo said the SC ruling on EDCA appears "that US does not really like to leave the Philippine Islands. They have been here all the time. And Filipinos keep on going to the US and staying there."

Cubao Bishop Honesto Ongtioco, for his part, said it is now up to the country's leaders to make the right move after the SC ruling on EDCA.

- With Edith Regalado, Evelyn Macairan

14 January 2016

8 Phl camps eyed for US

By ALEXIS ROMERO
and JOSE KATIGBAK

At least eight military camps are being considered as sites for US equipment to be pre-positioned in the country under the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA), an official said yesterday.

Armed Forces of the Philippines spokesman Col. Restituto Padilla said the shortlist includes military installations in Nueva Ecija, Clark, Palawan, Cebu and Cagayan de Oro.

"They can be part of the areas that can be devoted for maritime security and maritime domain awareness. But there is no final agreement yet," Padilla told a press conference yesterday.

He said the priority sites are Fort Magsaysay in Nueva Ecija and Basa Airbase in Pampanga.

Other camps being eyed are the Antonio Bautista Airbase in Palawan, Benito Ebuen Airbase in Cebu, Clark Airbase in Pampanga, Lumbia Airfield in Cagayan de Oro and unnamed naval bases in Palawan and Cebu.

Padilla said negotiators from the Philippines and the US would soon resume discussions on the implementing regulations for EDCA now that the Supreme Court (SC) has upheld its legality.

Voting 10-4, SC justices have ruled that the EDCA is constitutional and is an executive agreement that needs no

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US State Secretary John Kerry (second from right) speaks during a meeting between the Philippine and US delegations at the State Department in Washington on Jan. 12. Joining him (from left) are Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin, Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert del Rosario and US Defense Secretary Ash Carter.

AP

8 Phi

From Page 1

Senate concurrence.

According to the Supreme Court, the EDCA provides for arrangements to implement existing treaties that allow the entry of foreign military troops or facilities under the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) and the Mutual Defense Treaty. The MDT, signed in 1951, allows the Philippines and the US to jointly develop their security capabilities to resist armed attacks.

The high court said the VFA, not EDCA, is the instrument that permits US forces or facilities to enter the country.

Signed by the Philippines and the US in 1999, the VFA allows American soldiers to conduct training on Philippine soil on rotational basis.

The Supreme Court also ruled that EDCA is a valid executive agreement that the President is allowed to enter into under the Constitution.

Padilla said negotiating panels from both countries would come up with recommendations and forward them to the Mutual Defense Board (MDB) and the Security Engagement Board (SEB) for approval.

The proposals will also require the approval of the Council of Ministers composed of the defense and foreign affairs heads of the Philippines and the US.

"If the Mutual Defense Board assesses that it is necessary to increase our interoperability and enhance our capacities then it will be done, but it remains at the level of

the MDB and SEB to make those recommendations," Padilla said.

He could not say though when the negotiating panels would resume their talks.

"It is best to wait for our delegation to come back from Washington, they may have news regarding the timeline that can be followed regarding the preparation of the IRRs that may be required to govern this agreement," Padilla said. IRR stands for implementing rules and regulations.

EDCA was signed by Philippine and US defense officials on April 28, 2014 hours before the state visit of President Barack Obama.

Washington meeting

Within hours of the Supreme Court's upholding the legality of EDCA, top US and Philippine officials began discussions in Washington on possible locations in the Philippines where US troops and equipment as well as humanitarian supplies can be stationed.

The court decision gave clearer direction to the 2+2 ministerial talks on Tuesday between Secretary of State John Kerry and Defense Secretary Ashton Carter and their Filipino counterparts Albert del Rosario and Voltaire Gazmin on troop deployment and storage of logistics.

Del Rosario said EDCA would definitely enhance the security arrangements between the two countries.

He declined to specify the

number of agreed locations that would be offered to US forces.

A flurry of Chinese activities in the South China Sea and the West Philippine Sea in recent days has raised concerns that Beijing may be preparing to impose an air defense identification zone to regulate flights over the area.

Two Chinese aircraft made test landings on contested Kagitingan (Fiery Cross) Reef.

Del Rosario said the Chinese used flashing lights, flares and verbal challenges against Philippine military flights over Spratly Islands.

"We view these provocative actions as a de facto ADIZ in the South China Sea and threats to freedom of navigation and overflights that ultimately will serve to impede lawful commerce," Del Rosario said.

"Given this strategic context, we should be in a position to address such common concerns, as well as contribute to regional peace and stability," Del Rosario said at the State Department meeting.

He said the Philippines is looking at the possibility of joint activities in the West Philippine Sea with the US but has not come to any conclusions yet.

The DFA chief described the EDCA as "an important security component of our alliance and it is going to be helpful in terms of the maritime domain awareness and security cooperation with the US."

He said no matter who becomes the next president of the Philippines after the May elections, the alliance with the US will continue, as surveys

show nine out of 10 Filipinos supporting it.

Kerry hails SC ruling

Before going into their closed door meeting, Kerry voiced his appreciation for the Supreme Court decision, and reaffirmed America's "ironclad commitment" to the security of the Philippines.

He also pledged to cooperate on all issues affecting regional security, such as territorial and maritime disputes in the South China Sea.

Carter, for his part, reiterated US intention to fly, sail and operate wherever international law allows.

"Our security interests are becoming increasingly intertwined, while we grapple with non-traditional security concerns, and natural and man-made disasters; traditional security challenges to include territorial and maritime disputes remain to be fundamental concerns," Gazmin said.

He maintained it is timely for the Philippines and the US to "focus on building a credible defense posture and enhancing interoperability for territorial defense, maritime security and maritime domain awareness, and humanitarian assistance and disaster response."

In his opening address to the 2+2 ministerial meeting, Gazmin said the Philippines looks forward to "deepening our strategic partnership and ensure that we maintain an effective alliance that is responsive to the challenges of the 21st century."

In Manila, Foreign Affairs spokesman Charles

Jose said the SC decision on EDCA has removed a major stumbling block to greater Philippine-US security cooperation.

"Now that the Supreme Court has decided we can proceed with discussions with the US for arrangement for its full implementation," he said in an interview on *ANC's Headstart*.

He also said the trial and conviction of US Marine Joseph Scott Pemberton for the killing in October 2014 of transgender Jeffrey "Jennifer" Laude was "proof" that the VFA works.

Easing aggressiveness

Meanwhile, Speaker Feliciano Belmonte Jr. said the SC decision on EDCA would likely ease China's aggressiveness in the West Philippine Sea.

"China will be a bit more cautious in its takeover of our islands in the West Philippine Sea," Belmonte said.

Palawan Rep. Franz Alvarez called the development "a big help in asserting our territorial rights."

He expressed hopes EDCA would lead "to an enhanced defense posture in the West Philippine Sea."

"Ideally, EDCA should enhance our position, our claims, our presence in that area. That should be the test of its effectiveness," Alvarez said.

He said the Philippines' "budgetary position does not give it the luxury to boost its defense."

"The military budget is by and large a payroll budget. In US dollars, the Army budget for 2016 is about a billion and the Air Force's a third of that, which is small by global standards," he

pointed out.

With the SC's ruling, it is now incumbent on the government to ensure that the Armed Forces would become fully modernized when President Aquino bows out of office on June 30, Valenzuela City Rep. Sherwin Gatchalian said.

"It's about time that the AFP upgrade its air and naval assets so that frequent surveillance of the contested islands in the West Philippine Sea can be conducted. It's really lamentable that our country lags behind in terms of modern planes and ships compared to other claimant nations in the Spratlys," Gatchalian pointed out.

He deplored the military's not having enough aircraft to conduct regular patrols over the West Philippine Sea and that the few planes that the AFP has are not even fitted with basic surface and air surveillance radar.

"If and when our AFP becomes modernized in terms of state-of-the-art tanks, fighter jets and war ships, we are sure that our Army, Air Force and Navy will be one of the best in this part of Asia. Most importantly, we can defend our vast territorial waters from foreign incursions," Gatchalian said.

While modern equipment are necessary, soldiers and personnel remain to be the most important component of a military.

"Without proper training, high morale and patriotism, no amount of modern weapons can make our soldiers the best that they can be," Gatchalian said. - With Jaime Laude, Paolo Romero, Pia Lee-Brage

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PH offers 8 bases to US

Facilities include Clark, Basa, Lumbia, Magsaysay

WASHINGTON—Top diplomats and defense officials of the United States and the Philippines met on Tuesday to discuss arrangements for expanded US military presence in eight facilities in the Philippines in a bid to strengthen maritime cooperation amid tensions with China in the disputed

South China Sea. Speaking to reporters after the talks, Philippine Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario said he discussed with US officials locations where the Philippines could provide access to US forces for "mutual benefit."

The high-level meeting was held at the Department of State hours after the Philippine Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Enhanced

Defense Cooperation Agreement (Edca) signed by the two countries in 2014. The pact will allow American forces, war-

PH OFFERS / A4



ANGRY PROTESTER Members of the League of Filipino Students stage a rally near the US Embassy in Manila against the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement that allows US forces to gain access to more Philippine military facilities.

EDWIN BACASMAS

From page A1.

ships and planes to access to local military camps.

In Manila, Col. Restituto Padilla, spokesperson for the Armed Forces of the Philippines, told reporters that Manila had offered Washington eight bases where it may build facilities to store equipment and supplies under the Edca.

"The list [was] prepared many months ago when we had earlier discussions," Padilla said, adding that five military airfields, two naval bases and a jungle training camp were offered to the United States.

"These are still subject to approval and we're going to hold final discussions about these areas," he added.

China's official Xinhua news agency, in an English-language commentary, said the Edca would only escalate tensions and "could push the situation to the brink of war."

"The deal is groundless because China, which sticks to a defensive defense policy, has never coerced any country on the South China Sea issue," it said.

The Philippines has accused China of using flashing lights and flares to challenge Philippine military flights over the contested Spratly Islands and said it wanted to see more US operations to uphold freedom of navigation and overflight in the region.

Critical ally

US Defense Secretary Ash Carter described the Philippines as a critical ally as the United States looks to boost its presence in the Asia-Pacific region.

He said the two sides were discussing how to use the defense pact "to strengthen our maritime security capabilities and our role in keeping a peaceful region, a region without divisions, without tensions, and a region where everyone has freedom to carry out their affairs, including commerce."

The Philippines has increasingly testy relations with China over their territorial dispute in the South China Sea, where six Asian governments are vying for control of small islands and shoals in seas that serve as a thoroughfare for about one-

third of world trade.

The United States is looking to support the ill-equipped Philippine military and counter assertive Chinese action.

The Philippines has protested China's recent test landings by aircraft on one of several artificial islands Beijing has built in the Spratlys.

'Provocative'

Del Rosario said China's "provocative" challenges to Philippine military flights amounted to China establishing a de facto air defense identification zone, as it did over the East China Sea.

He said the Philippines was looking at the possibility of joint activities with the United States in the South China Sea, but stopped short of saying they were considering joint patrols.

In October a US Navy warship sailed within the supposed 22-kilometer (12-nautical-mile) territorial limit of Zamora Reef, another of the features built by China.

US Secretary of State John Kerry said the United States had an "ironclad commitment" to the security of the Philippines, and that they shared a commitment to democracy and human rights.

Nearly a century of US military presence in the Philippines ended in 1992 when Americans

shut their bases, including the largest military facilities outside the US mainland, after Filipino senators voted a year earlier not to renew the lease on the bases amid a tide of nationalism.

But the maritime dispute with Beijing has prompted Manila to reach out to Washington.

Clark, Subic offered

Padilla said the facilities offered to the Americans were Basa Air Base in Pampanga province, Fort Magsaysay in Nueva Ecija province, Camp Antonio Bautista and a naval base in Palawan province, Camp Benito Ebuen and the naval base in Cebu province, Clark Air Base in Pampanga and Lumbia air field in Cagayan de Oro.

"Many of these sites are already our exercise sites," Padilla said.

The Americans are also seeking access to three civilian seaports and airfields on Luzon, including Subic Bay, a former US Navy base, a senior defense official told Reuters.

Last year, more than 100 US Navy ships docked in Subic and two advanced nuclear-powered stealth submarines made visits in the first two weeks of this year.

"Subic is important to the Americans because it is one of

the few areas in the country where they can actually dock safely," said a defense official, who declined to be named because he was not authorized to speak to the press.

No new deal

Also yesterday, Supreme Court spokesperson Theodore Te noted that the INQUIRER's banner headline on Tuesday "tended to mislead," when it said "SC allows more US forces to base here."

Te said the court decision simply affirmed the rotational presence, not the permanent basing, of US forces in the Philippines.

The high court ruling was clear in saying that Edca should remain within the bounds of both the 1999 Visiting Forces Agreement and the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty, he said.

"The executive agreement must not go beyond the parameters, limitations and standards set by the law and/or treaty that the former purports to implement and must not unduly expand the international obligation expressly mentioned or necessarily implied in the law or treaty," Te pointed out. *With reports from AP, Reuters, Jaymee T. Gamil and Tarra Quismundo*

EDCA bars building of US bases – SC

By EDU PUNAY

Even while the Supreme Court has upheld its legality, the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) will not pave the way for the establishment of US military bases in the Philippines.

This is according to the Supreme Court (SC) ruling last Tuesday upholding the constitu-

tionality of EDCA but reminding authorities of its limits.

"The executive agreement must not go beyond the parameters, limitations and standards set by the law and/or treaty that the former purports to implement and must not unduly expand the international obli-

gation expressly mentioned or necessarily implied in the law or treaty," read the decision penned by Chief Justice Ma. Lourdes Sereno.

Philippine and US officials signed EDCA in April 2014 hours before the state visit of US President Barack Obama.

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EDCA From Page 1

But the Senate, in a resolution, said EDCA should be regarded as a treaty requiring the chamber's concurrence.

In its decision, the SC stressed EDCA would remain "consistent with the Constitution, as well as with existing laws and treaties."

It said Article XVIII Section 25 of the Constitution provides "stringent requirements" before a foreign military base could be allowed in the country.

"The agreement must be in the form of a treaty, it must be duly concurred in by the Senate, and it must be recognized as a treaty by the other state," the high court explained, adding that a treaty is necessary as "instrument that allows the presence of foreign military bases, troops or facilities."

In its ruling, the high tribunal also held that the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) only "allows US troops or facilities to enter" the country and that the agreement between the US and the Philippines on military bases had expired in 1991.

The Philippines hosted the two biggest US overseas bases until 1991 when the Senate voted against renewing the lease agreement on the military facilities.

"The EDCA doesn't allow US bases; not even VFA allows it," SC spokesman Theodore Te told The STAR in a text message.

No constitution crisis

Te also dispelled fears of a possible constitutional crisis due to contrasting stands of the SC and the Senate on the issue.

"The Court has the mandate to resolve constitutional issues, so there can't be a crisis there," he pointed out.

The SC stressed that EDCA is merely an implementing executive agreement for the VFA.

Former senators Rene Saguisag and Wigberto Tañada and militant lawmakers led by Bayan Muna Reps. Neri Colmenares and Carlos Zarate filed the petition with the SC contesting the legality of EDCA.

With Sereno in the majority ruling were nine magistrates: Senior Associate Justice Antonio Carpio and Associate Justices Presbitero Velasco Jr., Diosdado Peralta, Lucas Bersamin, Mariano del Castillo, Martin Villarama Jr., Jose Perez, Jose Mendoza and Bienvenido Reyes.

Associate Justices Teresita Leonardo-de Castro, Arturo Brion, Estela Perlas-Bernabe and Marvic Leonen dissented from the decision.

Associate Justice Francis Jardeleza abstained, citing his previous handling of the case as solicitor general.

Under EDCA, the US will be allowed to build structures, as well as store or preposition weapons, defense supplies and materiel in Philippine military camps for a period of 10 years. The US will also be allowed to station troops, civilian personnel and defense contractors, as well as transit and station vehicles, vessels and aircraft within the period.

Correct decision

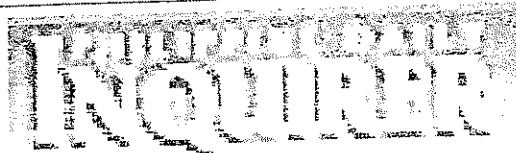
Meanwhile, Liberal Party senatorial candidate and former justice chief Leila de Lima lauded the SC for its ruling.

"The Supreme Court correctly ruled that the EDCA is just an implementing executive agreement of the RP-US Mutual Defense Treaty, and therefore is not a separate treaty that needs the ratification of the Senate to become effective and binding between the two Pacific allies," said De Lima, a member of the VFA Commission when she was justice secretary.

De Lima said the Supreme Court case against EDCA was the final hurdle toward an expansive cooperation between the Philippines and the US that is focused on the modernization of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

"The EDCA is a much needed boost to the existing VFA in modernizing our armed forces' capabilities and equipment, as the AFP is further exposed to training and orientation on state-of-the-art weapon technologies and systems that the United States Armed Forces is expected to bring in under the terms of the expanded arrangements for hosting US forces in Philippine-controlled military bases," she stressed.

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Zambales fishermen hail SC ruling on Edca

by Allan Macatuno
and Tonette Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

OLONGAPO CITY—Fishermen caught in the maritime disputes between China and the Philippines and other Asian countries said the Supreme Court decision to legitimize the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (Edca) ended their sleepless nights.

Adriano Pascasio, 70, a resident of Castillejos town in Zambales province, said the presence of American troops in the country would give Filipino fishermen security when they venture out to sea.

The Chinese Coast Guard has aggressively driven away Filipino fishermen from the West Philippine Sea, which China is also claiming. "Having American troops here will send a clear signal to China that they can no longer drive our fishermen away from our territories," he said.

Pascasio went to the Subic Bay Freeport on Tuesday to see the USS Topeka, a Los Angeles-class attack submarine

that docked at the Alava Pier on the same day the Supreme Court ruled Edca was constitutional.

The Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA) yesterday said former US military bases such as Clark and Subic would not necessarily host returning American troops.

The BCDA president, Arnel Paciano Casanova, said the agency and the Department of National Defense had not discussed opening up former US-controlled lands to help in peacekeeping efforts in Southeast Asia.

Casanova said Edca "covers the existing military bases, not the former ones."

In its Official Gazette, the government said Edca promoted interoperability, allowed capacity building toward the modernization of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, and strengthened the military's skills in external defense, maritime security, and humanitarian assistance and disaster response.

Roberto Garcia, chair of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Au-

thority (SBMA), said the Subic Bay Freeport remained civilian but would be available to the military during emergencies.

According to Garcia, the government would proceed with the rehabilitation of old military and naval facilities in the free port to house a squadron of combat planes of the Philippine Air Force (PAF). Part of the expansion of the AFP in Subic is the restoration of a 13-hectare section of Subic Bay International Airport (SBIA). The new PAF facility will operate at the former Federal Express (FedEx) terminal inside the SBIA, Garcia said.

War games covered by the 1999 Visiting Forces Agreement were held in former US bases and facilities such as Clark Air Base in Pampanga and Tarlac provinces, O'Donnell Firing Range in Tarlac, Subic Naval Base and Loran Station in Zambales, and Sangley Point Naval Base in Cavite province.

Clark and Subic as well as Camp Wallace (Poro Point) in La Union province and Camp

John Hay in Baguio City have been converted by the government into economic hubs through Republic Act No. 7227 (the BCDA law).

"We look at Edca as a positive development to ensure regional security that would further enhance the economic growth of the Philippines. The former bases are now economic centers that will benefit greatly from the foreign investments that we foresee to come to the Philippines," Casanova said.

Olongapo City Mayor Rolan Paulino expressed hopes that US troops would be allowed rest and recreation in Olongapo.

He said the business sector had been losing about P54 million in potential daily revenues since liberty activities were canceled after US Marine Lance Cpl. Joseph Scott Pemberton was accused of killing transgender woman Jeffrey "Jennifer" Laude in 2014. The Olongapo trial court has sentenced Pemberton to six to 12 years in prison for homicide.

14 January 2016

MANILA BULLETIN
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US to help modernize AFP

Kerry, Carter welcome SC ruling upholding EDCA

By AFP, AP, CHARISSA M. LUCI, and HANNAH L. TORREGOZA

WASHINGTON, DC - US Secretary of State John Kerry, welcoming the Philippine Supreme Court decision upholding the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA), said yesterday the deal will see Washington help modernize Philippines' forces to be better able to work alongside the US fleet.

As the court in Manila voted to approve the 10-year agreement, Secretary Kerry and Secretary of Defense Ash

Carter met their counterparts, Secretary Albert del Rosario and Secretary Voltaire Gazmin at the State Department here.

Under the accord, more US troops and warships will rotate through bases in the Philippines at a time of tension with China over control of the South China Sea.

"Our strategic relationship begins with a very firm pledge that the United States has an ironclad commitment to the security of the Philippines," Kerry said.

"We will continue to consult ►6

US to help modernize... ◀1

and cooperate on all issues affecting regional security, such as territorial and maritime disputes in the South China Sea," he added.

The United States will not reopen its former military bases in the Philippines, officials said.

Pentagon spokesman Commander Bill Urban said the accord was "mutually beneficial" and would help the militaries to respond jointly to humanitarian crises.

The EDCA was signed in 2014 but was challenged by groups opposed to US involvement in the Philippines, which was a US colony in the Pacific from 1898 to 1946.

The Philippines hosted two of the largest overseas US military bases until 1992, when lawmakers voted to end the leases in the face of anti-American sentiment.

But Presidents Benigno Aquino and Barack Obama pushed for stronger ties in the face of an assertive China, which has maritime boundary disputes with Manila.

US welcomes ruling

The United States on Tuesday welcomed a court ruling on the constitutionality of a defense pact with the Philippines, saying it would allow the allies to strengthen their maritime cooperation amid tensions with China in the disputed South China Sea.

The Philippines has accused China of using flashing lights and flares to challenge Philippine military flights over the contested Spratly Islands and

said it wanted to see more US operations to uphold freedom of navigation and overflight in the region.

Top diplomats and defense officials of the US and the Philippines met at the State Department Tuesday, hours after the Philippine Supreme Court ruled that the EDCA, signed by the two governments in 2014, is constitutional. The pact allows American forces, warships, and planes to temporarily base in local military camps.

Defense Secretary Ash Carter described the Philippines as a critical ally as the US looks to boost its presence in the Asia Pacific. He said the two sides are discussing how to use the defense pact "to strengthen our maritime security capabilities and our role in keeping a peaceful region, a region without divisions, without tensions, and a region where everyone has freedom to carry out their affairs, including commerce."

Philippine Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario said they discussed locations where the Philippines can provide access to US forces for "mutual benefit."

The Philippines has had increasingly testy relations with China over their territorial dispute in the South China Sea, where six Asian governments are vying for control of small islands and shoals in seas that a thoroughfare for about one-third of world trade. The US is looking to support the ill-equipped Philippine military and counter assertive Chinese action.

In the House

House administration and opposition leaders urged the Aquino government yesterday to take advantage of the Supreme Court's (SC) ruling on the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) to fully modernize the military hardware and further strengthen the country's maritime defense.

Speaker Feliciano "Sonny" Belmonte Jr. and House Independent Bloc leader and Leyte Rep. Martin Romualdez welcomed the SC's ruling upholding the constitutionality of EDCA between the Philippines and the United States.

Like Belmonte, Romualdez expressed strong belief that the SC decision "will help secure the sovereignty and integrity of the country's national territory."

"The government should take the opportunity of EDCA victory to fully modernize the country's military equipment by urging the United States to provide us tanks, war ships, patrol boats, surveillance and fighter aircrafts, and extend other support such as training," he said.

Gabriela party-list Rep. Luz Ilagan and I-BAP partylist Rep. Silvestre Bello III, members of the House minority bloc, however, protested the SC decision. "The SC just gave its imprimatur to an agreement that transforms the entire nation into a military outpost and exposes us to war," Ilagan said.

Bello, who served as justice secretary during the Ramos administration, said: "An agreement that grants to a foreign country the right to occupy Philippine sovereign territory should be ratified by the Senate."

In an en banc session, the SC affirmed the constitutionality of EDCA which allows the US government to build structures, store as well as preposition weapons, defense supplies and material, station troops, civilian personnel and defense contractors, transit and station vehicles, vessels, and aircraft for a period of 10 years from 2014 to 2024.

Drilon and Enrile

In the Senate, Senate President Franklin Drilon said that in upholding the EDCA's constitutionality, the SC sided with its proponents it is an executive agreement and therefore, does not need the Senate's ratification.

Drilon and Senate Minority Leader Juan Ponce Enrile both abstained from voting on a resolution sponsored by Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago stating that EDCA is invalid without the Senate's concurrence.

Both the Philippines and the US

"have a common interest here" Drilon said which is freedom of navigation. The obligation of both countries under the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA), he said, will prevail should there be an outbreak of violence as a result of the dispute.

Enrile said the SC made "a historic decision" and "in time they will be proven right."

He added: "Me, I will clap my hands applauding the SC for what they did on EDCA, precisely because we have no preparation to secure this country."

Enrile said he made an effort to cut ₱10-billion from three government bodies to fund the Department of National Defense's (DND) budget to buy warplanes. But only ₱1-billion was approved.

"That is why I said that we must stay with America under our present condition in order to survive," he emphasized. (With reports from Chito Chavez and Leslie Ann G. Aquino)

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Postscript

By FEDERICO D. PASCUAL Jr.

Phl, US share view: EDCA not a treaty

THE LEGAL debate over the long-term presence on Philippine soil of American military men and materiel revolves mainly around Section 25 of Article XVIII that gathers in the last part of the Constitution various transitory provisions, one of them on foreign bases.



Understanding Section 25 in the context of geopolitical realities in the region is key to accepting the Supreme Court ruling handed down last Tuesday that the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) between Manila and Washington is constitutional.

Section 25 provides: "After the expiration in 1991 of the Agreement between the Republic of the Philippines and the United States of America concerning military bases, foreign military bases, troops, or facilities shall not be allowed in the Philippines except under a treaty duly concurred in by the Senate and, when the Congress so requires, ratified by a majority of the votes cast by the people in a national referendum held for that purpose, and recognized as a treaty by the other contracting State."

This is to be read alongside Section 21 of Article VII (Executive Department) which provides: "No treaty or international agreement shall be valid and effective unless concurred in by at least two-thirds of all the Members of the Senate."

But focus is on the more detailed Section 25 in Article XVIII, because it speaks specifically of foreign military bases, while Section 21 applies in general to all treaties or international agreements.

After 44 years, the Phl-US bases agreement mentioned in Section 25 expired in 1991. It was not renewed, resulting in the physical pullout of the US bases the following year.

An important footnote to the pullout was that the other pact, the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty, has remained in place. The open-ended MDT continues to be in effect – to expire only one year after either party serves a notice of termination.

The text of the Supreme Court ruling was not immediately made available, but the tribunal reportedly said after a 10-4 vote that EDCA is just an executive agreement, not a treaty requiring concurrence by the Senate as provided under Section 21 and Section 25.

An agreement is, in a manner of speaking, a notch lower than a treaty. It does not adopt or lay down a new principle or dictate a major policy shift that will require the advice and consent of the Senates of the contracting parties.

At times, as in the case of EDCA, an executive agreement merely implements an older and more encompassing contract such as the Mutual Defense Treaty. With EDCA deemed as not a treaty, the requirement for Senate concurrence under Section 21 and Section 25 does not apply.

• Manila too timid to insist on a treaty?

WHY DOES the Philippines not insist that EDCA be raised to the status of a treaty? Official sources said that that option has been ruled out by Washington.

Not only the White House but also several senior US congressional leaders reportedly frown on readily making such upgrades, not only in agreements with the Philippines but also with most other countries.

There is widespread opinion in Washington that treaties have the unwanted effect of eroding a country's sovereignty in the process of giving and taking of substantial concessions with the consent of the Senate.

In pushing EDCA, the two countries merely fell back on the rationale that the new contract, like the earlier Visiting Forces Agreement defining the status of US forces in the country, is just part of the implementation of the basic MDT.

In the context of the times when Section 25 was written, the "foreign military bases" it mentions are permanent installations similar to or reminiscent of Clark air base, Subic naval base and Camp John Hay (among more than a dozen other long-term US installations).

In contrast, the areas to be made accessible to the US military under EDCA are not permanent. The servicemen's temporary presence is described as "rotational" – probably meaning that they will come and go depending on the shifting priorities of the two countries.

There is no section in the EDCA, however, defining what temporary, permanent and rotational mean. And it appears that the Philippine side – concerned about beefing up its military capability in the least time with the least expense – is too timid to insist on definitions.

• Can EDCA deter Sino landgrabbing?

UNDER the old (1947-1991) bases agreement, Clark and Subic were full-blown permanent bases under American operational control. As home of the 13th US Air Force at the time, Clark was the biggest military installation outside the US mainland.

Then projecting US military might into the region, Clark and Subic were deeply involved in military operations, including waging a losing war in Vietnam. Honolulu and Guam in mid-Pacific were farther away from the Indochinese peninsula where the fighting raged.

Proponents of EDCA are lucky that the constitutionality question was raised before the SC at a time when the Philippines is being harassed by the Chinese red dragon gobbling up valuable bits and pieces of Philippine maritime areas.

The pre-positioning of US forces under EDCA may be viewed in Manila as deterrence to Chinese incursions into the Exclusive Economic Zone of the Philippines. That remains to be seen.

As expected, the US embassy said after the SC ruling was announced. "The EDCA is a mutually beneficial agreement that will enhance our ability to provide rapid humanitarian assistance and help build capacity for the Armed Forces of the Philippines."

That found an echo in Malacañang where President Noyoy Aquino's spokesman said that EDCA would introduce the Philippine military to "the most modern equipment and have a generational leap in our abilities."

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Malaya
The National Newspaper

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Fighting with EDCA

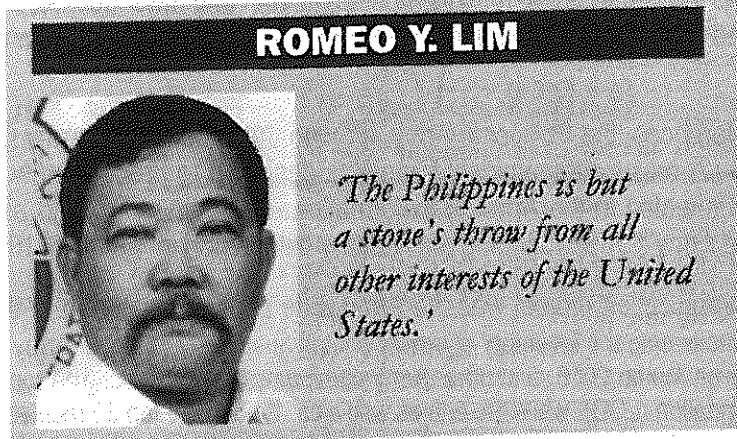
WHEN the Supreme Court upheld the validity of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA), it actually was no surprise to me.

Over the last few years, the EDCA was already on its way to become a kind of IRR (implementing rules and regulations) of the Visiting Forces Agreement, the Mutual Defense Treaty and even Commonwealth Act 1.

No thanks to China's very aggressive acts of territorial infringement, what with its infamous artificial islands, I think it was these acts that pushed the hand of the United States.

You see, we have something that no one can take away from us unless we get to be colonized – our strategic location in the Asia-Pacific region. The Philippines is but a stone's throw from all other interests of the United States and many continents.

So the signs were there that whatever obstacles stand in the way of direct US involvement in territorial disputes, these will be taken care of. In this event, the Supreme Court ruled exactly the way it would be beneficial to the parties concerned.



ROMEO Y. LIM

Our acquisition of new defense equipment for land, air and sea was a portent of more forceful presence in the disputed islands. The statement last year of US Defense Secretary Ashton Carter who told Philippine Defense Secretary Voltaire Gamini that "Washington's pledge to defend the Pacific nation remained 'iron-clad,' and called for an end to land reclamation in the South China Sea," was a strong indication of a commitment they do not intend to back out from.

Then the recent arrival of US submarine, Topeka, seemed to many a subtle hint of continuous military assistance to the Philip-

pinas should there be an outbreak of hostilities. Officially, of course, the Topeka will conduct a multitude of missions and maintain proficiency of the latest capabilities of the submarine fleet, according to the US Embassy.

If we are to gauge the recent actions of the United States then, it seems our old ally has our back. As they say, actions speak louder than words and our ally seems committed to join in the action should, heaven forbid, there be one.

While I am sure that none of the parties involved really want to engage in a war where no one really stands to win, China seems to be

like a recalcitrant teenager out to see just how far his parents will draw the line.

Apparently, ignoring the actions of this rebellious teenager seems to come across not as dismissive tolerance but outright acquiescence. Henceforth, the appearance of these artificial islands.

Perhaps this giant bully became smug knowing that the US owes it trillions of dollars in debt. But something inside of me feels the US has more than its economy or its debt at stake here.

National pride? Perhaps. The US does not take kindly to situations where it is "bullied" or its authority severely questioned in global events. It also doesn't hurt that China's economy is slowly fizzling out and nearly imploding because of its own overconfidence and destructive economic practices.

It would be ideal if we are able to fight our own battles because history tells us that if other people fight our battles for us, we end up paying more than we bargained for.

And yet, we know that we cannot fight this one without help. In the end, we really just have to grin and bear it.

So we can fight another day.

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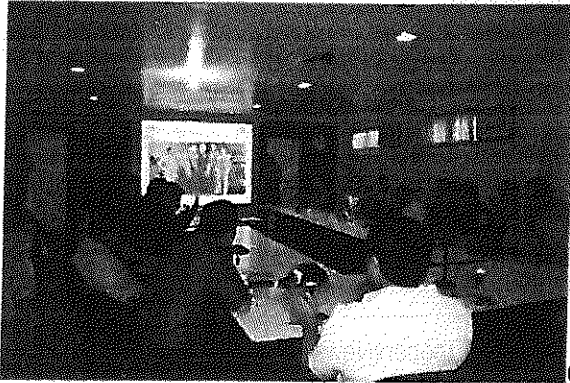
ONLINE NEWS

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LINKING AND LEARNING // CSOG starts it's 2016 activities

On January 13, 2016, the Combined Special Outreached Group (CSOG) held a meeting at Civil Relations Service Conference Room led by Media and Civil Affairs Group, CRS and Captain Cole Livieratos of the US Embassy- Military Information Support Team.



Quezon City – The Combined Special Outreached Group (CSOG) held a meeting at Civil Relations Service Conference Room led by Media and Civil Affairs Group, CRS and Captain Cole Livieratos of the US Embassy- Military Information Support Team. Undersecretary Bobby Garcia of the Office of the Political Affairs stressed the importance of spreading information with the means of Social Media using 2 L's: Linking and Learning.

The meeting was attended by the Military Information



Support Team, PNP Anti-Cybercrime Group, AFP 7th Civil Relations Group, PNP Police Civil Relations Group, PNP Special Action Force and AFP Civil Military Operations School.

The focus of the meeting is about Social media playing an important role in raising awareness to the society. Representative from every group also highlighted the accomplishments of the programs that have been implemented in cooperation with different sectors last 2015 and they proposed future programs that would be implemented this year.

Though, some of the members of US Embassy-MIST will go back to their mother land (United States) this January, Captain Stefan Goray will continue his group's advocacy as one of the active members of CSOG.

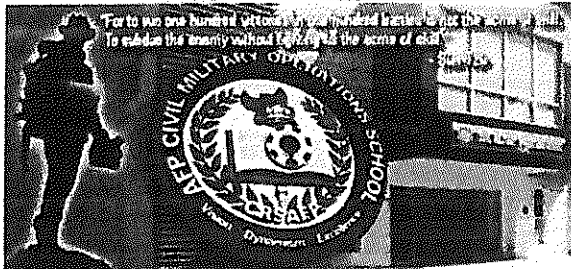
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AFPCMOS Announces 2016 Courses

11 January 15 2016 06:00pm PHILIPPINE TIMES ONLINE



Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City-- The Armed Forces of the Philippines Civil-Military Operations School (AFPCMOS) announces the list of courses that they will offer in 2016.

AFPCMOS Commandant, MAJOR EDGARDO V. TALAROC, JR., encourages all qualified personnel to enrol in any of their courses that would develop more warrior diplomats for the AFP.

The courses they are scheduled to open this year include Strategic CMO Officers Online Course; Information Support Affairs Officers Course; Strategic CMO NCO Course; and Social Media Management and Product Development Training.

These courses are open to all personnel – officers, non-commissioned officers (NCO) and civilian employees of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, especially those assigned in Civil-Military Operations Units, as well as personnel from other government agencies, and non-government organizations (NGO's).

www.pna.gov.ph

Use EDCA to buy war ships, state-of-the-art equipment to modernize AFP --Solon

By Sammy F. Martin

MANILA, Jan. 13 (PNA) -- Now that the Supreme Court has upheld the legality of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) between the Philippines and the United States, it is now incumbent on the government to ensure that the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) will become fully modernized in terms of war materiel and equipment before President Benigno S. Aquino III bows out of office on June 30.

Valenzuela City Rep. Win Gatchalian expressed this view on Wednesday as he urged the Aquino administration to use the EDCA to its advantage in terms of securing additional war ships and patrol boats from the US government.

"It's about time that the AFP upgrade its air and naval assets so that frequent surveillance of the contested islands in the West Philippine Sea can be conducted. It's really lamentable that our country lags behind in terms of modern planes and ships compared to other claimant nations in the Spratlys," Gatchalian said.

The veteran lawmaker deplored that the AFP presently does not have enough aircraft to conduct regular patrols in the West Philippines Sea.

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"If and when our AFP becomes modernized in terms of state-of-the-art tanks, fighter jets and war ships, we are sure that our Army, Air Force and Navy will be one of the best in this part of Asia. Most importantly, we can defend our vast territorial waters from foreign incursions," said Gatchalian, a majority member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

While he maintains that modern equipment is needed to make an Army the best it can be, the most important component remains to be the soldiers themselves since they will be the ones using the top-of-the-line firearms and war materiel.

"Without proper training, high morale and patriotism, no amount of modern weapons can make our soldiers the best that they can be," he pointed out.

Gatchalian has been pushing for the revival of the Reserved Officers Training Corps (ROTC) as a means of inculcating in the youth patriotism and nationalism in the wake of renewed activities of the Chinese military in the West Philippine Sea.

While the Philippine Military Academy (PMA) remains to be the premier military school for future officers and generals of the AFP, the ROTC is also a major source of officers, particularly for the Philippine Army.

The senatorial candidate said making ROTC mandatory for all male students enrolled in colleges, universities and technical or vocational schools is in line with the Constitutional provision which states that "the Government may call upon the people to defend the State and, in fulfillment thereof, all citizens may be required, under conditions provided by law, to render personal, military or civil service."

"The ROTC program will bolster confidence in our military preparedness and capability while at the same time provide our country with support from student-cadet reservists and potential commissioned officers," he explained.

Under House Bill No. 2338, Gatchalian wants ROTC to form part of the curriculum of all college degree courses as well as technical or vocational courses, and shall be a prerequisite for graduation. Students shall be required to complete the ROTC for an academic period for two years.

The administration is aware that the AFP lags behind in terms of acquiring equipment and President Aquino has done more for the military than the three previous administrations combined, according to Palace spokesmen.

Several "big-ticket items" are now being acquired by the government for the AFP as part of the military organization's modernization program. Among these assets are two navy frigates worth PhP18 billion, three air surveillance radars worth PhP2.68 billion, six close air support aircraft worth PhP4.97 billion, two units of long-range patrol aircraft worth PhP5.98 billion, multipurpose attack craft project worth PhP864.32 million, night fighting system worth PhP1.116 billion, two C-130 aircraft worth PhP1.6 billion, two naval helicopters worth PhP5.4 billion, and lead-in fighter trainer jets ammunition worth PhP4.47 billion. (PNA) SCS/SFM

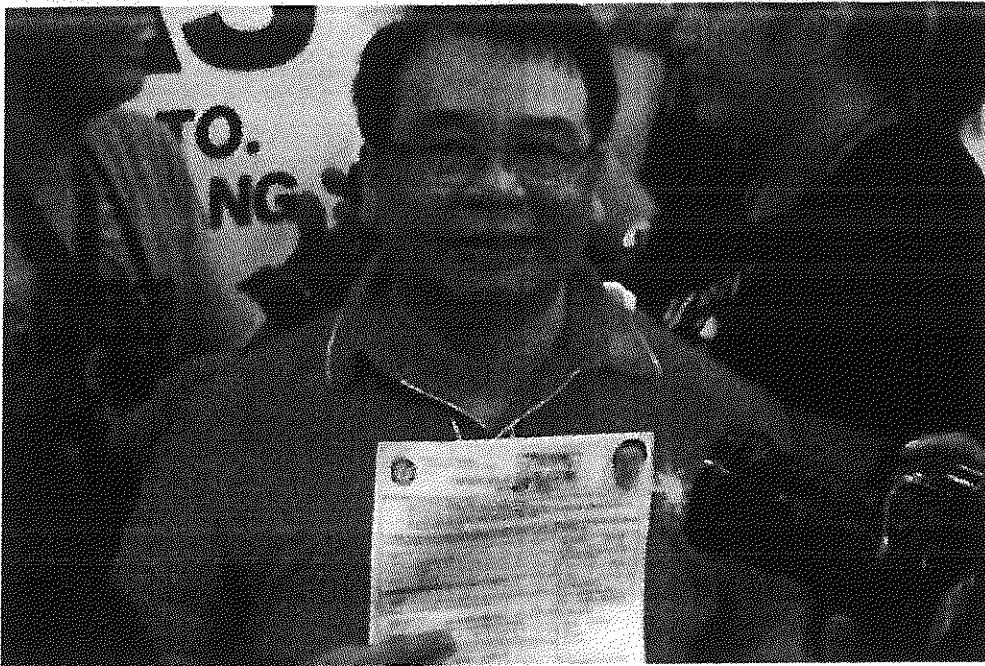
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Colmenares: Philippines to become 'magnet of attacks' with EDCA

By Patricia Lourdes Viray (philstar.com) | Updated January 13, 2016 - 3:26pm



Bayan Muna Rep. Neri Colmenares on Wednesday stressed that Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement would make the Philippines a "magnet of attacks" for opponents of the United States. [Philstar.com/Efigenio Toledo IV](http://Philstar.com/EfigenioToledoIV)

MANILA, Philippines - Bayan Muna Rep. Neri Colmenares on Wednesday said that the Philippines may become an easy target of the United States' foes, such as the Islamic State, due the Enhance Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA).

Colmenares said in a telephone interview with ANC's Headstart that the petitioners against the agreement are set to file a motion for reconsideration against the ruling of the Supreme Court upholding its constitutionality.

The lawmaker argued that the decision of the high court was not unanimous and that there were dissenting opinions. He insisted that the EDCA should be reviewed by the Senate.

Colmenares expressed his concern that the Philippines would become a "magnet of attacks" due to the presence of US troops in the country.

The agreement would allow US troops to have access to existing Philippine military facilities.

"Ang mga facilities na 'yan will be used to attack the enemies of the United States... We don't want to be involved in the wars of the United States," Colmenares said.

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The lawmaker expressed his doubts that the US would help the Philippines against China in connection to the West Philippine Sea dispute.

"Nagtayo na ang China ng airstrip sa West Philippine Sea wala man lang ginawa ang Amerikano," the lawmaker said.

Colmenares suggested that the Philippines seek assistance from the international community instead of the United States.

He added that the Philippines should unite with other countries in the Southeast Asia region who also have territorial disputes with China such as Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei.

Meanwhile, the Philippines and the United States are now set to discuss the full implementation of the agreement following the SC ruling.

Voting 10-4, the high court ruled to uphold the constitutionality of the executive agreement between the two countries.

The SC also ruled that the EDCA is an executive agreement that does not need Senate concurrence.

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PH vows 'prompt, mutually beneficial' implementation of EDCA

Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario says the Supreme Court ruling on EDCA 'opens up new opportunities to further deepen our enduring alliance with the US'

Rappler.com

Published 11:08 AM, January 13, 2016

Updated 11:08 AM, January 13, 2016

MANILA, Philippines – The Philippines on Tuesday, January 12, vowed to work on the "prompt and mutually beneficial" implementation of the PH-US Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA), following the Philippine High Court's decision upholding the constitutionality of the executive agreement.

Philippine Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario made the statement after the 2nd Philippines-US 2 plus 2 Ministerial Consultations at the US State Department in Washington, DC, where he and Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin met with their US counterparts, Secretary of State John Kerry and Defense Secretary Ashton Carter.

"The recent validation by the Supreme Court of the constitutionality of the EDCA opens up new opportunities to further deepen our enduring alliance with the US, and we have committed to work towards the prompt and mutually beneficial implementation of this agreement," Del Rosario said.

EDCA is an executive agreement that gives US troops, planes, and ships increased rotational presence in Philippine military bases, and allows Washington to build facilities to store fuel and equipment there.

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Proponents say the deal aims to help build the capacity of the Philippine military, one of the weakest in Asia, especially in the face of challenges posed by the country's dispute with China in the West Philippine Sea (South China Sea).

Del Rosario said that during the dialogue, which lasted for two hours and 15 minutes, the officials "welcomed the renewed focus on the area of maritime security and maritime domain awareness."

"In terms of defense and security, we discussed concrete ways to leverage the alliance to contribute to the stability and prosperity of our region," Del Rosario said.

The officials also reviewed "robust" bilateral cooperation on defense and security, and on trade, investments, tourism, and development; and common challenges posed by "violent extremism" and climate change," Del Rosario said.

'Increasingly intertwined security interests'

The dialogue, convened months away from the 70th anniversary of the establishment of PH-US bilateral ties, took place as tensions continue to rise in the South China Sea.

In his opening remarks at the ministerial consultations, Del Rosario cited the "tremendous progress" made by both countries in further revitalizing their alliance since the first meeting in 2012.

"I believe that our relations are truly at [their] best at this point. One factor behind this is the conscious effort of our leaders to invest in our enduring engagement. Another factor is the emergence of regional challenges that have underscored the need for concerted effort to protect our common values," he said.

"Our defense and security engagement has never been stronger nor more focused. Our cooperation in the area of maritime security and maritime domain awareness benefits not just for our mutual defense, but also contributes actively to maintaining regional stability," Del Rosario added.

In his opening remarks at the ministerial consultations, the Philippine defense chief noted the "increasingly intertwined" security interests of the Philippines and the US.

"While we grapple with non-traditional security concerns and natural and man-made disasters, traditional security challenges to include territorial and maritime disputes remain to be fundamental concerns. Given this strategic context, we should be in a position to address such common concerns, as well as contribute to regional peace and stability," said Gazmin.

"It is timely for the Philippines and the US to focus on building a credible defense posture and enhancing interoperability for territorial defense, maritime security and maritime domain awareness, and humanitarian assistance and disaster response," he added.

Gazmin also noted that the Aquino administration has provided "unprecedented levels of funds" for the Armed Forces of the Philippines' modernization, in pursuit of its mandate not only "to protect the State but also to fulfill our obligations as an ally and an active contributor to regional peace and stability."

On the economic front, Del Rosario noted the resolution of issues hampering the growth of PH-US trade ties, such as the termination of the US Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) labor review on the

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Philippines, the removal of the Philippines from the Special 301 Watchlist, and reinstatement of the Philippines to US Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) Category 1 status.

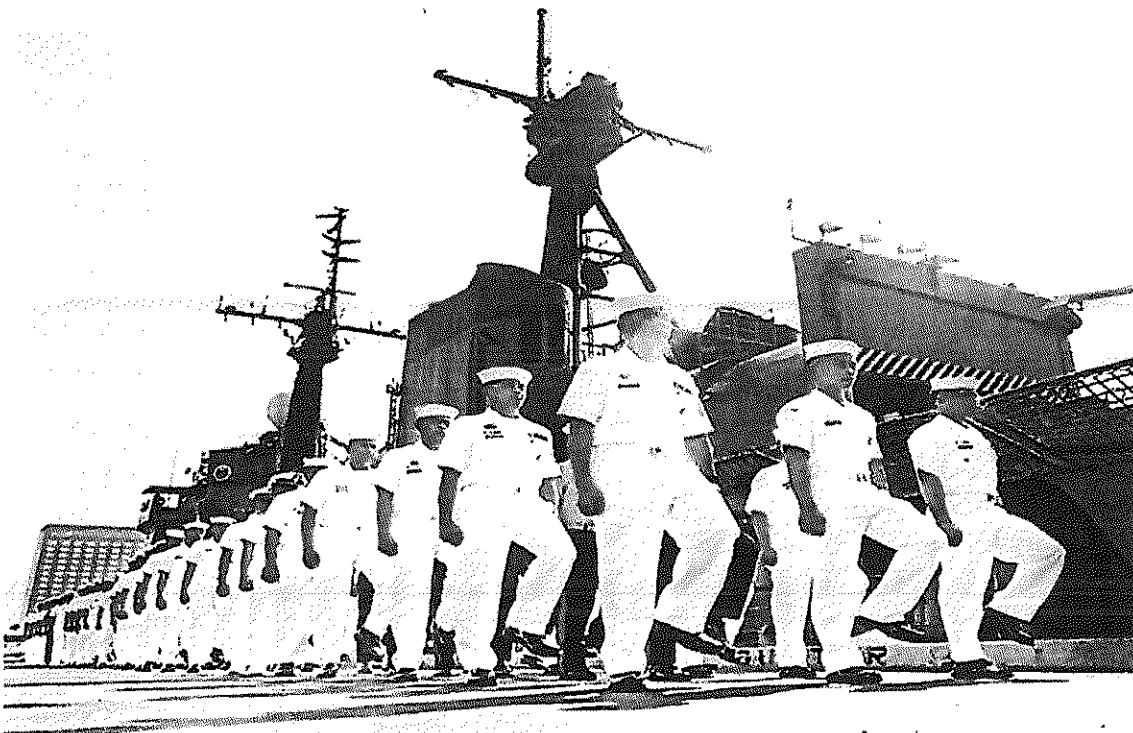
"Moving forward, we remain in close consultations with the US on how the Philippines can accede to the Trans Pacific Partnership at the soonest possible time," the Philippine official said.

Del Rosario also said the Philippine officials welcomed the 2nd Millennium Challenge Compact for the Philippines, "which will build on the success of the first compact which has contributed to poverty alleviation, inclusive growth, and elimination of corruption." – **Rappler.com**

www.philstar.com

New Navy Western Mindanao chief installed

By Roel Pareño (philstar.com) | Updated January 13, 2016 - 4:58pm



Commodore Jorge Amba is the new commander of the Naval Forces Western Mindanao. **Philstar.com/File photo**

ZAMBOANGA CITY, Philippines - Philippine Navy chief installed Wednesday afternoon a new commander in its naval command in this port city to keep the government's fight against terrorism and lawless activities in southern Philippines.

Navy chief Vice Admiral Caesar Taccad installed Commodore Jorge Amba to replace Rear Admiral Premitivo Gopo, a member of the Philippine Military Academy (PMA) Class '83, who will retire from service on Friday as he reaches the mandatory age of retirement.

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

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

Amba, a member of PMA Class '85, took over the command as commander of the Naval Forces Western Mindanao (NFWM) during a formal ceremony inside the headquarters of the Naval Station Romulo Espaldon in Barangay Calarian.

Amba, formerly commander of Marine fleet and Northwest Command, had been assigned in Zamboanga City as intelligence officer in 1989 to track down cases of human trafficking.

Taccad credited Gopo, despite his short stint, in helping defeat the Abu Sayyaf group in Basilan and Sulu as commander of the Joint Task Force Zambasulta.

Gopo described his five months and 15 days as Navy commander to be challenging and a litmus test for employing various tactics to run after the Abu Sayyaf and its terror cohorts behind the series of kidnappings and attacks.

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Amba, for his part, vowed to continue the programs left by his predecessor and increase collaborations with stakeholders.

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PN MPAC up for dry-docking, repairs

MANILA, Jan. 13 (PNA) --- In line with efforts to ensure that all its available naval craft are mission and seaworthy at all times, the Philippine Navy (PN) announced it is allocating Php2,575,609.76 for the dry-docking and repairs of one of its six multi-purpose attack craft (MPAC).

Scheduled for maintenance is MPAC with hull number BA-485.

Winning bidders are required to deliver the services and other items needed for the repairs within 45 calendar days, the bid bulletin from the Philippine Government Electronic Procurement System said.

Bid opening is on Jan. 18, 9 a.m. at the Office of the PN Bids and Awards Committee Bonifacio Naval Station, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City.

An MPAC measures 16.5 meters long, 4.76 meters wide and has a draft of one meter and a top speed of 45 knots.

Each costs around Php90 million and has a range 300 nautical miles.

The hull is made of high-quality aluminum and is crewed by one officer and four enlisted personnel.

It is capable of carrying 16 fully-equipped troopers or two tons of cargo.

MPAC is capable of operating in territorial waters up to "Sea State 3" (slight waves) without any system degradation.

It is armed with one .50 caliber and two 7.62mm machine guns. (PNA)
FPV/PFN

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