

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



ARMY

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OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS NEWS CLIPPINGS

17 January 2016

Sunday

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

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

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Palace expects defiant attacks

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Palace expects defiant attacks

Who's mercy is - and isn't

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Over 80% of Filipinos favor EDCA

Babe Romualdez


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The Manila Times

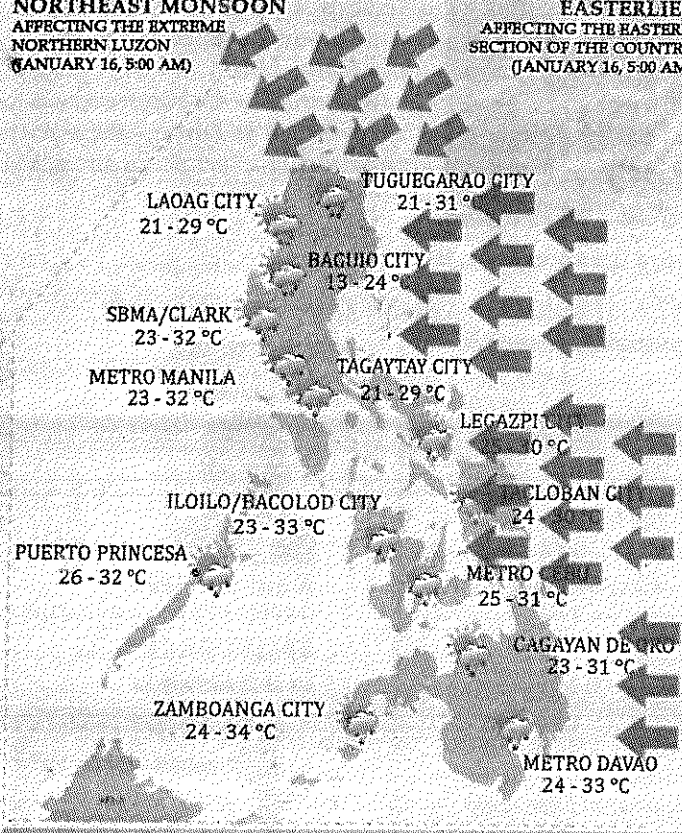
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TODAY'S WEATHER FORECAST JANUARY 17, 2016 | SUNDAY

NORTHEAST MONSOON
AFFECTING THE EXTREME
NORTHERN LUZON
(JANUARY 16, 5:00 AM)



EASTERLIES
AFFECTING THE EASTERN
SECTION OF THE COUNTRY
(JANUARY 16, 5:00 AM)

SUNRISE		SUNSET	
6:25 AM		5:47 PM	
MOONRISE		MOONSET	
11:56 AM		12:00 AM	
FIRST QUARTER		FULL MOON	
JAN 17 7:26 AM		JAN 21 0:45 AM	
LOW TIDE		HIGH TIDE	
9:30 AM 0.06 Meter		2:24 AM 0.60 Meter	

LAOAG CITY
21 - 29 °C

TUGUEGARAO CITY
21 - 31 °C

BAGUIO CITY
13 - 24 °C

SBMA/CLARK
23 - 32 °C

METRO MANILA
23 - 32 °C

TAGAYTAY CITY
21 - 29 °C

LEGAZPI CITY
25 - 30 °C

ILOILO/BACOLOD CITY
23 - 33 °C

PUERTO PRINCESA
26 - 32 °C

ZAMBOANGA CITY
24 - 34 °C

METRO CEBU
25 - 31 °C

CAGAYAN DE ORO
23 - 31 °C


METRO DAVAO
24 - 33 °C

Partly cloudy to at times
cloudy with rainshowers


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

Light rains


JAN 18 MONDAY			JAN 19 TUESDAY			JAN 20 WEDNESDAY		
METRO MANILA	22 - 32 °C	21 - 31 °C	METRO MANILA	22 - 32 °C	21 - 31 °C	METRO MANILA	22 - 32 °C	21 - 31 °C
METRO CEBU	25 - 31 °C	25 - 30 °C	METRO CEBU	25 - 31 °C	25 - 30 °C	METRO CEBU	25 - 31 °C	25 - 30 °C
METRO DAVAO	24 - 34 °C	24 - 33 °C	METRO DAVAO	24 - 34 °C	24 - 33 °C	METRO DAVAO	24 - 34 °C	24 - 33 °C




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on PTV (Channel 4).



WWW

17 January 2016



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More runways on reefs

China rapidly building facilities on PH side of Spratly archipelago

By Nikko Dizon

CHINA has nearly completed construction of a runway and other facilities on Panganiban Reef, on the Philippine side of the Spratly archipelago in the heavily disputed South China Sea, a US-based think tank reported yesterday.

Also known as Mischief Reef, Panganiban Reef is 216 kilometers west of Palawan, well within the Philippines' 370-km exclusive economic zone recognized under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

China is also rapidly complet-

ing construction of a runway and other facilities on Zamora Reef (Subi Reef), also part of Philippine territory in the Spratlys.

Zamora Reef is 23.4 km away from Pag-asa Island (Thitu Island), a small municipality in

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Palawan province that is home to a small civilian population.

The Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative (Amti) released its latest report on the developments in the Spratlys on Friday, complete with satellite images that show in detail China's swift construction undertaken in less than six months.

"Mischief Reef sits just [37.8 km] from the BRP Sierra Madre, which was deliberately grounded by the Philippines at Second Thomas Shoal (Ayungin Shoal) in 1999 and is home to a contingent of Philippine Marines," the Amti report said.

"China has maintained a constant coast guard presence around Second Thomas since 2013 and attempted to prevent resupply of the Sierra Madre in March 2014. Mischief is also about [108 km] from Reed Bank (Recto Bank), where the Philippines hopes to drill for natural gas deposits over China's objections," it added.

Strategic location

"This strategic location combined with its size (China has reclaimed twice as much land at Mischief Reef as it did at Fiery Cross [Kagitingan Reef] and about 50 percent more than at Subi) makes developments at Mischief of particular concern for the Philippines," Amti said.

Security expert Chester Cabalza of the National Defense College of the Philippines (NDCP)

described the progress of China's work on Panganiban and Zamora reefs as "alarming."

"China has become [daring]. They have completed their construction, so what's next?" Cabalza told the INQUIRER by phone.

Cabalza said China was actually "challenging the international community" with its expansive construction activities on the disputed areas in the Spratlys.

"China wants to let the international community know that 'This is ours,'" he said.

Cabalza said China had been able to follow the timeline it set for staking claim to nearly 90 percent of the South China Sea, through which \$5 trillion in global trade passes every year.

"The next step is to totally claim what they say is theirs. They know how the international community, especially the US, Japan and India, would react," Cabalza said.

Private investment

On Friday, China announced that it would invite private investment to build infrastructure on the artificial islands it had built in the South China Sea and that it would launch flights to one of them this year, moves likely to anger the Philippines and the other claimants to territory in the strategic waterway.

Besides the Philippines, Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia and Taiwan also has claims in the South China Sea.

The Philippines controlled Panganiban Reef until 1995

when China seized it and put up structures on stilts there, supposedly to provide shelter for its fishermen. It has controlled the reef since then.

The Philippines responded by grounding the BRP Sierra Madre, a rusting naval hospital ship, on Ayungin Shoal in 1999.

Amti's latest satellite images that showed progress on Panganiban and Zamora reefs were dated Jan. 8, the same day Manila filed a diplomatic protest over China's test flights to Kagitingan Reef.

China rejected the Philippine protest, saying it had "undisputed sovereignty" over the South China Sea, where islands, reefs and atolls are believed to be sitting on vast energy reserves.

On Jan. 6, China landed two test flights on the 3,125-meter-long runway on Kagitingan Reef, a follow-up to the Jan. 2 landing that prompted a protest from Vietnam, which also claims the reef, and drew sharp criticism from the United States.

Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario said China's flights to the Spratlys should be challenged, as it might next impose an air defense identification zone above the contested region similar to the air exclusion zone it had declared in the East China Sea, where it is locked in dispute with Japan over ownership of five uninhabited islands.

The United States urged China to stop land reclamation and militarization in the Spratlys.

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tlys and Britain declared that freedom of navigation and overflight in the area were nonnegotiable.

Faster progress

Amti said only four months after it released images of China's completed construction of its first Spratly airstrip on Kagitingan Reef, "China has not only landed three civilian test flights on Fiery Cross, but is progressing even faster than expected with its work at Subi and especially Mischief."

The think tank observed that if construction of the Kagitingan airstrip took "at least seven months from the start of grading," China's work at Zamora is taking at least six months.

On Panganiban Reef, grading began in September or October, and Amti said that "construction is already approaching completion just three to four months later ... considerably faster than (its work) on Fiery Cross or Subi."

"A fully formed and compacted sand runway could be seen by Oct. 19, and by Dec. 5 the runway and apron had been covered with gravel and about [150 meters] of concrete. As of Jan. 8, concrete covered most of the runway, which appears to be nearing completion," Amti said, describing the work on Panganiban Reef.

Satellite images show that as of Jan. 8, the northwest side of Panganiban Reef already has a 570-m-long seawall,

housing facilities, artificial turf parade grounds, cement plants and docks.

China has also constructed a seawall and completed a dock on the artificial island it has built on the southern end of Panganiban Reef.

'Tower' on Zamora

Zamora Reef, which can be seen from Pagasa Island, now has an "octagonal tower with a conical feature at its top" measuring 27 to 30 m high and 12 m on each side, Amti said.

Construction of the tower, located on the northeast side of Zamora Reef, was almost complete as of Jan. 8.

"A seawall and docks have been constructed, and work continues on a number of hardened buildings," Amti said.

Also as of Jan. 8, the "southern end of the runway" on Zamora Reef "had been paved with concrete as had most of the runway and apron at the northern end, while the gravel base had been completed and concrete strips were visible in the central portion," Amti said.

Edca

Cabalza said the Philippines "reacted with grace" when it pursued the legal and diplomatic track in responding to China's expansionism in the South China Sea.

But the Aquino administration is also pushing for joint patrols with the United States in the South China Sea through

the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (Edca), which the Supreme Court declared constitutional last week.

The Edca is seen as a deterrent to China's aggression as the Philippine and US militaries could conduct joint patrols in the South China Sea, although Manila and Washington stress that the agreement will greatly contribute to faster humanitarian assistance and disaster response.

In a speech at the East-West Center Association International Conference held at Manila Hotel on Friday, President Aquino said the "basic logic behind" the Edca was "interoperability" between the Philippine and the US militaries.

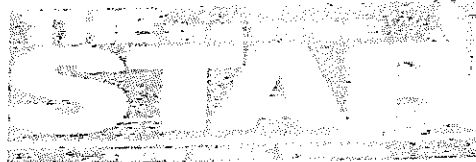
"Anybody who is reasonable will see that this agreement is an enhancement of both our countries' abilities, rather than a threat to anyone else," the President said.

"To my mind, the Edca has a very practical purpose for developing our own armed forces: All the modern hardware carries a significant price tag; yet with the Edca, we have a chance to try the cutting-edge equipment and see just how suitable they are to our needs, without having to buy them first ... On the reverse side, the US gets to learn how to make do with fewer resources, which in a conflict situation is always a high probability if not an intense possibility," the President said. *With a report from Reuters*

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5 soldiers get medals for killing jihadists

Five soldiers who were part of the operations against the Abu Sayyaf in Al-Barka, Basilan last month have received medals.

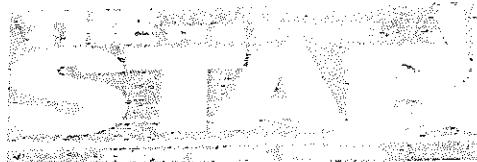
Armed Forces of the Philippines chief Gen. Hernando Iriberry pinned the Gold Cross on Cpl. Jayson Cases and Military Merit Medals on Pfc. Rolan Balada, Jenus Gastar, Ruel Tabon and Mike Elumba during his visit to the 104th Infantry Brigade in Tabiawan, Isabela City yesterday.

Twenty-six Abu Sayyaf bandits and Malaysian jihadist Mohammad Najib Hussein were killed during the military offensive. Hussein reportedly trained Abu Sayyaf bandits on bomb making.

The soldiers are members of the 104th Infantry Brigade led by Col. Rolando Joselito Bautista.

- Jaime Laude

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Reds attack Army patrol base; 1 dead

BUTUAN CITY – A member of the Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit Active Auxiliary was killed when suspected New People's Army (NPA) rebels attacked an Army patrol base in Agusan del Norte, before midnight on Thursday.

Lt. Col. Lynart Castisimo, commander of the Army's 23rd Infantry Battalion, identified the militiaman as Rodolfo Calumpac, a resident of Barangay Manoligao.

Villagers said some 50 NPA guerrillas attacked the patrol base in Barangay Manoligao in Carmen towns. The patrol base is near the Therma Marine Power Barge.

Castisimo said the military is on alert after the incident amid reports that communist rebels plan to attack vital installations.

A manhunt has been launched for the rebels. – **Ben Serrano**

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MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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Militiaman slain in NPA attack

BUTUAN CITY – A member of the Citizen Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU) was killed when an undetermined number of New People's Army (NPA) harassed the militia group's detachment in a mountain barangay of Manoligao, in Carmen town, Agusan del Norte Friday night, a sketchy report reaching this city yesterday said.

Killed was Rodolfo Calumpang, a member of the 23rd CAFGU Infantry Battalion based at Purok 2, Barangay Manoligao of that same town.

Initial report said the harassment of the CAFGU detachment happened at 10 p.m. after the coronation night of Miss Manoligao

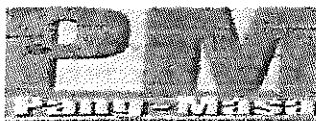
beauty pageant.

Police and military reports said the members of the CAFGU detachment fought back their attackers for almost 10 minutes before the rebels withdrew to a forested area.

According to police and military reports, the militiamen believed that a number of the attackers were wounded in the encounter.

As of press time, the regional command of Police Regional Office 13 (PRO-13) ordered the commanders of the provincial mobile force and Agusan del Norte Police Provincial Office to help the military in the pursuit operations against the fleeing rebels. (Mike U. Crismundo)

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Pahina. 2

BAKBAKAN SA LANAO: 4 PATAY

Nasawi ang apat katao kabilang ang dalawang lokal na teroristang sympathizer umano ng Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) matapos ang sagupaan sa pagitan ng mga tauhan ng Sultan at mga armadong bandido sa

magkakahiwalay na insidente sa Lanao del Sur kamakalawa.

Batay sa ulat ni Major Felimon Tan, Spokesman ng AFP-Western Mindanao Command, dakong alas-6:00 ng umaga ay nasagupa ng mag-amang Panundi Sultan at Noble ang

Ni JOY CANTOS

mga armadong grupo sa Brgy. Gata, Buadipuso ng lalawigan na ikinasawi ng mga ito.

Nang mabatid ang pagkamatay ng mag-ama ay sumugod rin sa lugar ang mga armadong kaanak ni Sultan at nakabak-

bakan ang grupo ng mga armado na tinatayang nasa 40 ang bilang.

Ang palitan ng putok ay tumagal ng may isang oras hanggang sa magsi-atras ang grupo ng mga lokal na

terorista na inabandona ang isang kasagupang napatay na kasamahan na naka-headband pa ng itim na may simbolo ng ISIS kaya ipinalalagay na sympathizers ang mga ito ng naturang kinatatangkang international terrorists.

Habang papatakas ay na-

kasagupa naman ng mga elemento ng Army's 65th Infantry Battalion (IB) ang mga armadong bandido sa Brgy. Lilod, Maguindanao ng lalawigan na ikinasawi naman ng isa sa mga kalaban na nakunan pa ng isang M4 assault rifle.

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Extremist, 2 civilians killed in Lanao encounter

By ALI G. MACABALANG

COTABATO CITY - A local extremist militant, who was wearing an Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) headband, and two civilians were killed in an encounter that could have foiled a reported attempt to ambush soldiers who were patrolling an area in Bauiapuso-Buntong, Lanao del Sur Friday.

The military did not identify the slain extremist but confirmed that he belonged to a group that supported the extremist ideologies of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

A civilian source said that he belonged to Ghuraba, a local jihadist group which is known to be an armed branch of the Khilaffa Islamic Movement (KIM) in Mindanao. Khilaffa is an Arabic term for caliphate.

Col. Roseller Murillo, commander of the Army's 103rd Infantry Brigade based in Marawi City, identified the two

slain civilians as Panundi Sultan and his son Noble.

Murillo said the civilians were killed when they tried to confront some armed men, whom they believed to be extremist elements under the leadership of a certain Maute, on a road in barangay Gata in Buadipuso-Buntong town Friday afternoon.

Sultan and his son reportedly asked the armed men what they were doing in the area, but were immediately fired upon and killed.

"Relatives of the victims retaliated in a firefight which killed one of the terrorists, who was wearing a headband with an ISIS symbol," Murillo said.

"An Army report further disclosed that the terrorists were in an ambush position waiting for a military vehicle," Murillo said.

The group of extremists could have been part of another armed group that soldiers from the 65th Infantry Battalion, which were patrolling a village

in Barangay Lilod in Maguing town, encountered earlier that day, resulting in the killing another extremist and wounding of another.

Murillo said the armed group engaged by government troops in Maguing could be part of the armed group which was seen by the Sultans as positioning itself in Buadapuso Buntong.

Murillo said the troops recovered one M4 rifle.

"We are closely monitoring the movement and veracity of reported locally inspired ISIS operating in Lanao del Sur and Marawi City," Murillo said.

The military national leadership had earlier dismissed reports on the alleged presence of ISIS men in the south, but gave credence to widespread notions that armed extremist militants in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) areas have pledged allegiance to Al-Baghdadi's jihadist ideology.

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New 79th IB head dared to excel in peace efforts

From the Visayan Daily Star (Jan 16): New 79th IB head dared to excel in peace efforts

Brig. Gen. Harold Cabreros, the commanding general of the 3rd Infantry Division of the Philippine Army, yesterday challenged Lt. Col. Roderick Garcia, the newly-installed commander of the 79th Infantry "Masaligan" Battalion to surpass the performance of his predecessor, in efforts to achieve lasting peace in Negros.

Cabreros was the guest of honor and speaker during the turnover of command of the 79th IB, from Col. Harold Anthony Pascua to Garcia, held at the battalion headquarters in Camp Leon Kilat, Tanjay City in Negros Oriental.

Cabreros lauded and thanked Pascua for his excellent performance as battalion commander, citing his unit's achievements that have contributed to making Negros Oriental almost free from the problem of insurgency.

He expressed confidence that Garcia will perform just as well, what with the experience, training and other credentials that the latter possessed.

The first order of the day for Garcia is to continue what his predecessor had started, more importantly pursuing efforts under the Armed Forces of the Philippines' Internal Peace and Security Plan Bayanihan, Cabreros said.

Cabreros highlighted the importance of the Army being able to foster good relations with local government units, non-government organizations and the people who are their partners in the Bayanihan program of attaining lasting peace.

He urged the 79th IB troopers to give their all-out support to Garcia, adding that as he met with them, he gave them one word as a reminder for them to carry on each day.

That word is obedience, Cabreros said. "Observe obedience to the oath you took when you entered the military service to selflessly serve our country and our people," he added.

Also, observe obedience to the laws of the land, to rules, regulations, directives and policies of the military organization, to the commitment and obligation to your families, and to the word of God, Cabreros added.

He emphasized the role of the Army's partners, especially in the IPSP Bayanihan, as he called on them to continue their support for peace to prosper.

Cabreros stressed there is still much work to be done and "we are still in the midst of winning the peace in Central and Western Visayas".

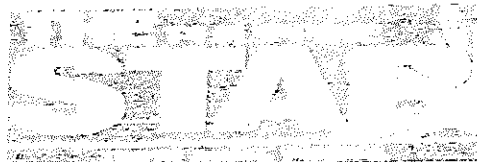
"There is still much ahead of us...and this entails strengthening and intensifying our partnership and collaboration with all our stakeholders, and advancing our skills and programs complementary to the IPSP Bayanihan," he added.

Cabreros officiated in the turnover of command of the 79th IB, that was also highlighted by the promotion of Pascua to colonel.*

<http://www.visayandailystar.com/2016/January/16/negor1.htm>

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AFP cites implications of not arresting Misuari

ZAMBOANGA CITY - The military cited yesterday possible implications on the safety of civilians and unarmed members of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) once it stopped operations to capture fugitive leader Nur Misuari during a plenum early this

week in Sulu.

Armed Forces chief of staff Gen. Hernando Iriberry, who visited Sulu Friday, said they got information that Misuari showed up during the meeting of hundreds of MNLF members in Indanan town, Sulu.

Misuari went into hiding

after he was charged for masterminding the September 2013 siege in Zamboanga City.

Misuari is facing charges of rebellion and violation of the Philippine Act on crime against Humanitarian Law, genocide, and other crimes against humanity, along with

close to 300 MNLF members captured during the siege.

Iriberry said Misuari attended a gathering of MNLF in Zamboanga before the siege in the area occurred.

The warrant of arrest for Misuari is still in effect, the AFP said.

- Roel Pareño

17 January 2016

The
Standard
DEFINING THE NEWS

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TERROR THREAT SEEN TO LINGER

By Francisco Tuyay

SECURITY experts should continue to gather in-depth data and seriously assess the threat of terrorism in the country after the jihadist attack in Jakarta on Thursday and the arrest of four militants in Kuala Lumpur on Saturday, according to a former police intelligence official.

Former police general Rodolfo Mendoza, one of the officials who busted the Bojinka plot to assassinate the pope and crash airplanes into skyscrapers in 1995, said the authorities should step up data gathering and assessment instead of belittling information.

"There must be a continuing process of overt investigation and data gathering in order to determine and approximate the threat of terrorism in the country," Mendoza said, a day after

President Benigno Aquino III again belittled reports of jihadist threats in the Philippines.

"Several Malaysian and Indonesian jihadist already have a physical presence in Mindanao to integrate and consolidate their vision of an Islamic caliphate in this part of the world," said Mendoza, who now heads his own security think tank Philippine Institute for Peace, Violence and Terrorism Research.

In fact, Mendoza said, the military have already killed Indonesian bomb maker Sucipto Ibrahim Ali in November and Malaysian bomb maker Mohamad Najib Husen in December.

Both bomb experts are associates of Dr. Mahmud Ahmad, a lecturer at Universiti Malaya's Islamic Studies faculty who is also known as "Abu Handzalah," who fled Malaysian authorities who were out to arrest him and sought refuge with the Abu Sayyaf group.

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Terror...

From A1

Aside from Ahmad and Husen, Mendoza said the Abu Sayyaf are also believed to be harboring Muhammad Joraimie Awang Raimee, a former employee of the Selayang Municipal Council in Selangor.

The three men belong to an Islamist group in Malaysia linked to an ISIS cell, known as Darul Islam Sabah, and even Malaysia police inspector-general Khalid Abu Bakar confirmed that the three men recruited militants for training in Perak in 2013.

Malaysian authorities said the trio also sent militants to Syria and Iraq as part of the ISIS struggle, Mendoza said.

"I would recommend that Malaysian, Indonesian and Philippine security organization to cooperate cohesively in analyzing the supposed attempt by ISIS to establish a caliphate in Southeast Asia and to respond to the terror group," Mendoza said.

"You cannot assess or analyze information without looking back or reviewing information. If you fail to evaluate an information and you cannot analyze it, that's not intelligence reports. Information is not an intelligence report," he stressed.

Mendoza made the remarks before Malaysian authorities announced that they have arrested

four suspected militants and confiscated a weapon along with Islamic State documents, national police chief Khalid Abu Bakar said Saturday in Kuala Lumpur.

Security forces have been on high alert in the predominantly-Muslim country in the wake of deadly coordinated attacks in neighboring Indonesia earlier this week that were claimed by IS. Seven people, including five assailants, were killed during the incident.

"Congratulations E8 CK [anti-terror unit] for arresting one male suspect on Friday at a train station.... Weapon and IS documents were confiscated [from the suspect]" the police chief said on his Twitter account.

The train station is located near the iconic Petronas Towers in the heart of the capital Kuala Lumpur and houses a huge shopping mall frequented by foreigners.

The country's counter-terrorism assistant director Ayob Khan Mydin Pitchay later confirmed to Agence France Presse that a knife and IS documents were confiscated at the suspect's house.

In a statement, Khalid said the 28-year-old Malaysian admitted that he was planning to be a suicide bomber.

"The suspect admitted that he had planned a suicide attack in Malaysia and was awaiting instructions from a member of IS in Syria," he said.

The police chief added that on Jan.

11, three Malaysian IS suspects were arrested by security forces after being deported from Turkey.

"They were first detained in Turkey while attempting to sneak into Syria to join IS fighters," Khalid said.

Earlier this week, local media reported that a 16-year-old boy clad in militant attire held a woman at knife-point at a supermarket in northwestern Malaysia.

"Investigations revealed that he was influenced by the IS movement through social media and wanted to prove that he was capable of such acts by threatening the woman," Khalid said.

The teenager was later arrested and is being held in police custody.

Muslim-majority Malaysia practices a moderate brand of Islam and has not seen any notable terror attacks in recent years.

But concern has risen in the multi-faith nation over growing hardline Islamic views and the country's potential as a militant breeding ground.

Authorities say dozens of Malaysians have traveled to Syria to fight for the radical IS group and warn they may seek to return home and import its ideology.

Since 2015, police have arrested numerous suspects whom they say were IS sympathizers plotting attacks. Opposition lawmakers, however, say the terror arrests have been shrouded in secrecy, making it difficult to gauge the actual threat level.

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Page 1

AFP vows to prevent IS from gaining Phl foothold

ZAMBOANGA CITY – The government will not allow any local group to establish a local base for the terrorist Islamic State, Armed Forces chief Gen. Hernando

By **ROEL PAREÑO**

Iriberry has vowed. Iriberry said yesterday efforts to contain the homegrown extremist groups trying to reach out to the Islamic

State (IS) were continuing.

Even before a video emerged showing Filipino militants training with the black flag of IS in the background, Iriberry said the military had launched operations that neutralized the terror cell.

"We have always tried our best to neutralize the group," Iriberry said.

He was referring to the Ansar Al Khilafa (AKP), whose camp in Palembang, Sultan Kudarat was raided by government troops last November. Eight militants including Indonesian Abu Al Patah were reported killed.

Iriberry also cited the operation last December against

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AFP

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the Abu Sayyaf and bomb expert Malaysian militant Mohammad Najib Hussein, alias Abu Anas, in Al-Barka town, Basilan.

Anas and 25 Abu Sayyaf militants were killed and troops disrupted the training and captured the camp at Sitio Bohe Buug after a weeklong offensive which began Dec. 12, Iriberry said.

He said the government suffered three dead and 26 wounded.

"Your Armed Forces are trying their best, every time we have the information we validate it and we take action just to make sure we will prevent whatever terror acts they are planning," Iriberry said.

While the government is trying to prevent and disrupt any

link and support from the IS, Iriberry maintained they have not established any direct link.

The local terror groups identified as AKP Ansar Al Khilafa in Central Mindanao, and the group from Basilan Dalw'tul Islamiyah W'liyahtul Masik have declared support to the IS or ISIS.

"But we have not established a direct link between them and the ISIS. Why? Because we have not received any report yet whether they are already taking orders from the ISIS," Iriberry said.

A series of explosions hit Jakarta on Thursday, killing and injuring people. The IS reportedly owned up to the suicide attack. – With Jaime Laude

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MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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Call them 'Daesh' not ISIS or ISIL, says AFP

By ELENA L. AREN

In the wake of the latest deadly terrorist attack in Jakarta, Indonesia that left at least seven people dead and dozens wounded, the media and general public were urged yesterday by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to stop calling "ISIS" (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) by its chosen name, and instead refer to it as "Daesh," an acronym for the Arabic phrase "al-Dawla al-Islamiya al-Iraq al-Sham" (ISIL or Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant or ISIL) which ISIS militants do not favor.

Major Emmanuel Garcia of the AFP's information development group, said this is to lessen the self-proclaimed "Islamic State's" appeal to vulnerable sectors.

Garcia stressed the call is being made as a result of the AFP's discus-

sions with Islamic scholars and Muslim community leaders in the country.

"Pakiusap 'yan ng mga Islamic scholars and Muslim community leaders (It is the asked by Islamic scholars and Muslim community leaders)," he said.

In previous gatherings as early as 2014, the idea of using Daesh instead of ISIS already surfaced particularly in many Islamic religious discourse, academic settings as well as diplomatic circles, said Garcia.

The terror group prefers to be called as IS, ISIS, or ISIL, but according to Islamic leaders and scholars, the right term for the right term for the group is Daesh or "DAIISH."

"The prevalent use of the words IS, ISIS and ISIL when referring to the terror group established by Baghdadi works for the benefit of this terror group and contrary to our efforts to counter,

isolate, deminish, deplete and defeat them," said Garcia in a message sent to reporters covering the AFP.

ISIS which originally meant Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham, which refers to the old Arabic name of the area where they initially planted the seeds of terror and where they have a stronghold.

"Levant" in ISIL, on the other hand, is the geographical term referring to the eastern shore of the Mediterranean that includes present day Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria and is a modern translation of al-Sham.

Meanwhile, Daesh/DAIISH- Daesh (Daes) is an adapted acronym of their Arabic name - Dawlat al-Islamiyah fal-Iraq w Belaad al-Sham that means "to crush, one who crushes something below or (Dahes) one who sows discord."

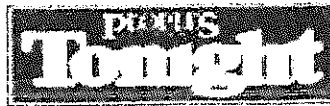
"This is the same situation in 2001 during the time when Jemaah Islamiya

(translated as community of Islam or Islamic Community) is gaining foothold in southern Philippines from Indonesia. Several Islamic scholars of Indonesia and Philippines recommended the use of JM or Jemaah Munafique (translated as Community of evils or evil community) instead of JI to eliminate its appeal to vulnerable Muslim groups

and individuals but we kept on using JI in official reports and in the media," said Garcia.

"We must always be conscious and purposely use Daesh when referring to this group to deny them the opportunity to propagate the idea of ISIS as a Caliphate," read the message sent to reporters.

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No ISIS members in PH, assures AFP

By **ZAIDA DELOS REYES-PALANCA**

THE Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) yesterday stressed that there are no members of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in the country.

The AFP aired this assurance following the pronouncement of Indonesian authorities that the Philippines is one of the countries that has terror cells of the terrorist group. Indonesia made the warning in the aftermath of the terror attack in Jakarta that resulted in the killing and wounding of

several persons.

According to AFP spokesman Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla, those claiming to be members of ISIS are just sympathizers.

Among the groups pretending to have direct links with the international terrorist are the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) under commander Isnilon Hapilon.

The group recently uploaded videos on the Internet airing their claim.

However, the AFP said the video is only part of the bandits' propaganda to make their group appear to be more influential.

Padilla said even the group of Ansarul Khalifs,

who has eight members, was just "ISIS inspired".

The group's members were killed in an encounter in Sultan Kudarat last year.

Meanwhile, a military official in Sulu said they have not monitored any presence of the international terrorists in the area. ISIS members allegedly held regular meetings in Sulu.

In line with this, Padilla appealed to the public and mediamen to refrain using the word ISIS referring to the international terrorist.

Instead, Padilla said, the group should be called Daesh or DAIISH which means in Arabia as "one

who crushes something below or (Daesh) one who sows discord. DAIISH is the Arabic acronym for al-Dawia al-Islamiya fi al-Iraq which is the Arabic name of ISIL".

The appeal was made by Padilla following a meeting of AFP with Islamic scholars and Muslim leaders.

He said this evil-inspired armed group should not be called Islamic State, ISIS and Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL) but Farsi of DAIISH.

The official also called on the public to be more vigilant to counter terrorism in any form.

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Pahina. 2

Walang ISIS sa Pinas-AFP

'Walang Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) sa Pilipinas'.

Ito ang pinandigan ng Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) sa gitna na rin ng pahayag ng Indonesian authorities na kabilang ang Pilipinas sa lugar na may terror cell ang ISIS matapos ang 'terror attack' sa Jakarta, Indonesia noong Huwebes na kumitil ng buhay ng pito katao habang 24 pa ang nasugatan sa serye ng pambo-bomba doon.

Ayon kay AFP Spokesman Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla, ang mga lokal na armadong grupong naghahasik ng karahasan sa Pilipinas ay nagpapanggap lamang na ISIS at hindi kaalyado ng naturang international terrorist.

Kabilang dito ang grupo ni Abu Sayyaf Group Commander Isnilon Hapilon na sa ipinakalat na video ay nakipag-alyansa na umano sa ISIS pero ayon sa mga opisyal ay luma ang video footage at bahagi lamang ito ng

propaganda ng mga bandido.

Maging ang grupo ng Ansarul Khalifa na ang walong miyembro ay pawang mga 'ISIS inspired' lamang umano na napaslang sa engkuwentro sa Sultan Kudarat noong huling bahagi ng nakalipas na taon ay hindi rin mga ISIS, kundi nais lamang sumakay sa pamamagitan ng propaganda sa nasabing international terrorist group.

Nabatid naman sa mga opisyal ng militar sa Sulu na maging sa lalawigan kung saan

sinasabing nagpupulong at nagsisipagtago ang ISIS kasama ng mga bandidong Abu Sayyaf ay wala umano silang namomonitor na presensya ng lehitimong grupo manapa'y mga nagsisipagbalat kayo o nagpapanggap lamang.

Idinagdag pa nito na upang masupil ang terorismo ay dapat na maging vigilante ang lahat at importante rin na makipagtulungan ang mamamayan sa mga otoridad. - Joy Cantos-

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SC: EDCA fears can't stop Noy

By EVELYN MACAIRAN

While fear of the re-establishment of US bases may have prompted opposition to the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA), it cannot justify curtailing President Aquino's constitutional prerogative to deal with issues particularly those involving foreign affairs and national security. This was a position taken by the Supreme Court (SC) in upholding the constitutionality of EDCA last week. "The fear that EDCA is a reincarnation of the US bases so zealously protested by personalities in Philippine

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SC From Page 1

history arises not so much from xenophobia, but from a genuine desire for self-determination, nationalism, and above all a commitment to ensure the independence of the Philippine Republic from any foreign domination," the high court said.

But it added "mere fears" should not cripple the President "when he deems that additional security measures are made

necessary by the times."

The magistrates who voted to uphold EDCA said "we believe fear of an attack on the Philippines is not in the realm of law, but of politics and policy." Furthermore, they said that, "at the very least, we can say that under international law, EDCA does not provide a legal basis for a justified attack on the Philippines."

In its 118-page decision on Jan. 13, the SC in full session dismissed the consolidated

complaint against the EDCA.

The high court cited the Philippines' efforts to rein in an aggressive China, including the filing of an arbitration case with the Permanent Court of Arbitration.

"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," the magistrates said.

"Who they are, and what form

the friendship will take, are for the President to decide. The only restriction is what the Constitution itself expressly prohibits. It appears that this overarching concern for balancing constitutional requirements against the dictates of necessity is what led to EDCA," the SC said.

"As it is, EDCA is not constitutionally infirm. As an executive agreement, it remains consistent with existing laws and treaties that it purports to implement," the SC ruling read.

Aside from its sensitive relations with China, the government is also addressing other security issues like the fragile peace deal with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), terror activities by the Abu Sayyaf, as well as attacks by the New People's Army.

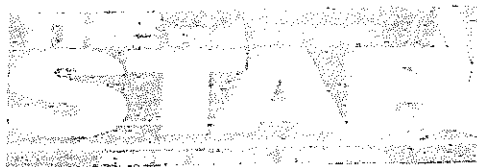
The SC also urged the government to provide its Armed Forces with the capability to "fight with increasing sophistication in both strategy and technology, with employing asymmetric warfare

and remote weapons."

The court also cited the role of the US military in assisting Filipinos in areas ravaged by natural calamities, like the regions in the Visayas devastated by Super Typhoon Yolanda, which killed more than 6,000 people on Nov. 8, 2013.

In upholding the legality of EDCA, the SC also said the deal was based on existing treaties - Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) and the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT).

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US rebalance not purely military, says Carter

The United States' rebalance to the Asia-Pacific region is not a purely military concept, but economic and political as well, according to US Defense Secretary Ashton Carter.

During a media conference for the Second US-Philippines 2+2 Ministerial Consultations in Washington on Jan. 12, Carter said the Philippines

plays a central role in the US rebalance to Asia Pacific.

Aside from Carter, the meeting was attended by US Secretary of State John Kerry, Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert del Rosario and Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin.

"The US rebalance to the Asia Pacific has an important security dimension that can

be captured by looking over the past decades of peace and stability in the region, and the role that the United States and Philippines have played together in keeping the peace," Carter said.

He said the Philippines is a critical ally of the US as the latter continues to gather and

By PIA LEE-BRAGO

strengthen its rebalance.

In a joint statement of the US-Philippines Ministerial Dialogue issued after the Jan. 12 meeting, Manila welcomed US reaffirmation of its ironclad commitment to the Philippines' defense.

Both countries vowed to coordinate closely in implement-

ing the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) and to enhance security and defense cooperation.

The officials reaffirmed their commitment to continue strengthening the alliance by ensuring mutual defense and security, as well as contributing to regional peace, stability, and economic prosperity.

The Philippines and the US are set to discuss and finalize the full implementation of EDCA, which was recently declared constitutional by the Supreme Court.

The Department of Foreign Affairs said a board would review and fine-tune details and implementation of EDCA on a per activity basis.

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Pahina. 2

Walang revamp sa AFP sa eleksyon

Hindi magpapatupad ng revamp o pagbabalasa sa kanilang mga opisyal ang Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) kaugnay ng nalalapit na pagdaraos sa May 2016.

Ito ang inihayag ni AFP Public Affairs Office (AFP-PAO) Chief Col. Noel Detoyato sa gitna na rin ng mainit na labanan ng mga magkakatanggaling kandidato ngayong pumasok sa ang election period.

Una nang binalasa ng PNP ang mahigit 700 nitong mga opisyal partikular na ang mga Provincial Director at Regional Director upang hindi umano maimpluwensyahan ng mga tumatak-bong kandidato.

Ikinatwiran ni Detoyato na hindi naman saklaw ng kapangyarihan ng mga pulitiko ang mga sundalo lalo na sa mga kanayunan kaya hindi na kailangan pa ang mga itong balasahin.

Bukod dito'y upang hindi maapektuhan ang kanilang misyon lalo na sa paglipol sa mga armadong grupo na banta sa pambansang seguridad.

Sinabi ni Detoyato na malinaw naman ang direktiba na hindi makisawsaw sa pulitika ang mga sundalo dahilang kapag sinuway ang nasabing kautusan ay siguradong may kalalagyan ang mga ito.

Sa kasalukuyan, ayon pa sa opisyal ay patuloy ang kanilang paglalansag sa mga Private Armed Groups (PAGs) at mga loose fire-arms katuwang ang PNP upang matiyak ang SAFE (Safe and Fair Elections) 2016. (Joy Cantos)

Modernong barko na binili ng Pinas sa Indonesia, darating na

Inaasahang higit pang mapapalakas ang kapabilidad ng maritime patrol ng Philippine Navy kaugnay ng nakatakdang pagdating ng isa sa dalawang modernong Strategic Sea Lift Vessels (SSVs) na binili ng Pilipinas sa PT PAL, ang state owned ship building company ng gobyerno ng Indonesia kaugnay ng pormal na turnover nito sa Manila sa Mayo ng taong ito.

Ayon kay AFP Spokesman Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla, ilulunsad ang unang SSV sa PT PAL's Subaraya shipyard sa Indonesia na dadaluhan ng mga opisyal ng nasabing bansa at ng mga matataas na opisyal ng Philippine Navy matapos naman ang paglagda sa kontrata mahigit 1 taon na

ang nakallipas.

"The acquisition is a very important milestone for the Philippine Navy and could hasten response during critical times. It can carry sizeable relief and humanitarian assistance and disaster response in critical areas around the country", pahayag ni Padilla.

Sinabi ni Padilla na ang pagdating na unang SSV na binili sa Indonesia ay kaunahan rin sa naturang uri ng barko na mapapasakamay ng Philippine Navy bago ang pagbaba sa puwesto ni Pangulong Benigno Simeon Aquino III.

Nabatid na nabili ang dalawang SSV's mula sa PT PAL sa halagang P 3.8 bilyon sa nilagdaang kontrata noong Nobyembre 18, 2014.

Nakasaad naman sa kontrata sa Indonesian state firm, na ang ikalawang SSV ay idedeliver sa Philippine Navy, isang taon matapos naman ang pormal na turnover ng unang barko o sa Mayo 2017.

Ayon sa PT PAL ang dalawang SSVs ay armado ng 76 Mm at 25 MM guns pero maari namang pumili ang Philippine Navy ng kontraktor nito sa weapon system.

Inihayag pa ng AFP spokesman na ang SSV ay isa sa pinakamahal ang kagamitang nabili ng administrasyon para sa patuloy na pagsulong ng modernisasyon ng Philippine Navy na maari ring magamit sa pagre-supply sa West Philippine Sea kung kinakailangan. (Joy Cantos)

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PN: Expect joint patrol missions with US Navy

Should the country's call for a joint maritime patrol agreement in disputed portions of the South China Sea be honored by the United States, the Philippine Navy (PN) has the necessary ships and training to keep up with their American counterparts.

"Yes, the Navy does. The joint maritime patrol, if and when finalized, by the two navies, will in fact be the application and execution of the many opportunities in the past that they were conducting joint maritime and interoperability exercises," PN spokesman Col. Edgard Arevalo said in a message to the PNA.

"These collaborative activities even before the signing of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (and the SC's upholding of its constitutionality) will surely benefit both countries that are both committed in that part of the sea," he added.

The country's interest for a joint-patrol agreement come out during the Philippine-US 2+2 ministerial meeting held in Washington DC last Jan. 12.

"The 2+2 meeting extensively discussed the South China Sea issue, with the US side reiterating the US ironclad commitment to the

defense of the Philippines while the Philippines batting for joint patrols. The US also conveyed that it remains committed to the AFP's modernization program," Defense spokesman Dr. Peter Paul Galvez earlier said.

During the meeting, the US emphasized that it would not allow China to control the South China Sea and act to ensure that freedom of navigation was respected.

It also stressed that they would continue to fly and sail whenever and wherever international law allows.

The US also committed to maintain presence in the South China Sea to include naval, sub-sea, air and special forces.

In addition, the US urged the Philippines to stay closely coordinated with respect to the developments in the South China Sea.

Noting China's claim that it will not militarize the area, the US suggested the need for parties in the South China Sea to have a common and shared understanding of the term "militarization" to avoid growing tensions.

A common sense among the other parties would put pressure on China.

PNA

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The Manila Times

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NAVY TO GET FIRST SEALIFT VESSEL IN MAY

PHILIPPINE military and defense officials are set to witness the launching in Indonesia of one of two Strategic Sealift Vessels (SSVs) bought by the Philippine Navy for its humanitarian assistance and disaster response (HADR) operations, a military spokesman disclosed on Friday.

The launching or the removal of the ship from the drydock and allowing it to float at sea for its next stage of testing, according to Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla, Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) spokesman, will be held on Sunday at the PT Pal shipyard in Indonesia.

Padilla said the acquisition of the SSVs is a very important milestone for the Navy because they will increase its capacities for HADR during critical moments.

These ships would be the first of their kind to be operated by the Navy.

"What will we benefit from this SSV? It's the ability to bring en masse a sizeable number of relief and human assistance and disaster response personnel [to] critical areas that may be hit by disasters.

Another is, it's a stand-alone command and control ship that can coordinate rescue, recovery and retrieval efforts during disasters, as well as, along with the bulk of goods and relief items that can be provided to our citizens," Padilla explained.

Also, he said, an SSV has the capability to be used as a floating hospital, in case many of health centers and hospitals in provincial areas that may be affected by disasters become unavailable.

It can also be deployed as a command and control ship during contingencies, anywhere in any part of the Philippine archipelago.

After its launching in Indonesia, the first of the ships will be delivered to the Philippines in May this year.

Delivery of the other ship would be in May 2017, he said.

When asked if the ships would be armed, Padilla said, "The SSVs' weapons system will be solely at the discretion of our Navy, and I think they are preparing for that, at the moment I am not at liberty to divulge any of those arrangements." **FERNAN MARASIGAN**

ONLINE NEWS

17 JANUARY 2016

Militants in Mindanao 'pose threat to region'

From the Straits Times (Jan 16): **Militants in Mindanao 'pose threat to region'**



Philippine marines conducting an operation near the site where weapons and ISIS flags were recovered in Palimbang town, Mindanao, on Nov 28, 2015. PHOTO: AFP

The latest terrorist attack in Indonesia's capital Jakarta signals an evolving threat to the region coming from deep in the jungles of the southern Philippine island of Mindanao.

While the Philippine military remains adamant that Islamist militants in Mindanao are nothing more than bandits, most analysts warn that the threat is real. Some have predicted an attack in the region similar in scale to recent lone wolf attacks in Paris and San Bernardino, as the militants appear to move closer to declaring a South-east Asia "wilayat", or province, of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

Reiterating the military's assessment following the ISIS attack in Jakarta, President Benigno Aquino said yesterday: "Is there a credible threat? Is there a specific threat? There is none."

But he acknowledged there is a "general threat", as he disclosed that the Philippines has been coordinating with intelligence agencies in the Middle East to monitor Filipinos there who ISIS is reportedly trying to recruit.

General Lloyd Austin, head of the US military's Central Command overseeing Middle East operations, has warned that ISIS has lately been keen on planting roots in the Philippines and elsewhere, as it comes under increased pressure in Iraq and Syria.

Security expert Richard Javad Heydarian said ISIS is providing a "new impetus" for "relatively marginal" extremists in the Philippines to "rebrand and reorganise themselves", so the government should "ramp up cooperation with moderate elements in major Islamist and Moro groups".

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

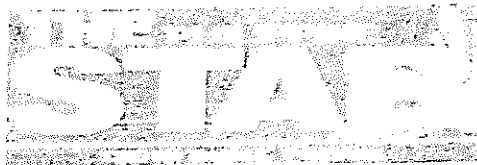
A stalled peace process to end a Muslim insurgency in Mindanao is fuelling support for extremists among Muslims in Mindanao, he said. In March 2014, the Philippines and the 12,000-strong Moro Islamic Liberation Front signed a peace pact to end 40 years of war in Mindanao. But the proposed Bill implementing the agreement is unlikely to become law before President Aquino steps down in June.

For defence analyst Jose Antonio Custodio, local militants are keen on securing recognition from ISIS only because of the money and the logistical support it brings. "Ask (the Abu Sayyaf bandits) about the Sunni-Shi'ite split and they will probably just stare at you, and may even shoot you," he said.

<http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/militants-in-mindanao-pose-threat-to-region>

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

17 January 2016



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Babe's Eye View

By **BABE ROMUALDEZ**

Over 80% of Filipinos favor EDCA

There is no doubt the Supreme Court made the right decision when it ruled in favor of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement, declaring the accord as constitutional and saying it is an executive agreement that does not require Senate concurrence and that it is in keeping with existing laws and treaties – namely the Visiting Forces Agreement and the Mutual Defense Treaty between the Philippines and the United States which allow the entry of foreign troops here in the country.



More than 80 percent of Filipinos look at our relationship with the US in a favorable light as indicated by the Global Attitudes Survey. Local surveys have also shown that 90 percent of Filipinos welcome the continued presence of American military in the Asia Pacific region – information that was seconded by our private homegrown pollster who said Filipinos are comfortable with having the VFA and EDCA in place. All of these, owing to the continually growing aggression that is being displayed by China – something that many other nations are getting wary about as well.

The new top guy of the US Navy – Chief of Naval Operations Admiral John Richardson who took over from Admiral John Greenert four months ago – has warned against China's increasing military capabilities and its growing potential to act irresponsibly as a global power. Short of calling China an aggressor, the Navy chief has urged the US to maintain its maritime supremacy – which is exactly the strategic vision he has outlined. Like Russia, China's goals are backed by "a growing arsenal of high-end war fighting capability, much of which is focused on our vulnerabilities," he said. Intelligence sources say that while Richardson is amenable to the idea of engaging with China – like what his predecessor wanted – he is convinced that the United States should counter China's growing aggression towards its neighbors (which certainly includes the Philippines).

Following the SC ruling, we can now proceed to flesh out the implementing rules and regulations that would govern the EDCA including the areas where US troops can be deployed and where equipment can be located. For sure, a few critics will still have something to say against the agreement and will insist that it violates our sovereignty, etc. But let's face it – there is really nothing new with EDCA considering that the VFA – upon which it has been predicated – has been in existence for over a decade, having been ratified by the Senate during the time of President Joseph Estrada.

The Philippines has benefited from the valuable assistance provided by the US military and their satellite equipment that helped locate notorious terrorists like Commander Robot of the Abu Sayyaf Group. Critics conveniently omit the humanitarian assistance and disaster response component of the EDCA. Admittedly, the single biggest challenge is to make sure that visiting American servicemen will not commit a crime again like in the case of Joseph Pemberton. The implementing regulations should have the soldiers confined in one area with travel restrictions indicated. After all, American troops are supposed to be here on official duty and definitely not as tourists out for some R&R.

Other than that, many Filipinos welcome the EDCA and are convinced that the Philippines has a secure safety net in place. Full credit goes to the Aquino administration where strides are being made to push the AFP modernization plan and bring our military closer to achieving a minimum credible defense posture, as seen in the recent purchase of new fighter jet planes. But until such time as we are able to fully beef up our military, our special relationship with the US should keep us in good stead. In the diplomatic front, we have done very well, too. We commend Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario, who against all odds, stood pat in his position that at this time, the best way to secure the country from external threats is to strengthen relations with our allies like the United States.

Japan: Our closest Asian ally

The planned visit of Japanese Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko is another historical milestone in terms of our relations with Japan. This will be the first time that a Japanese Emperor – more so the Imperial Couple – will be visiting the Philippines since diplomatic relations were established 60 years ago.

The Imperial Couple rarely invite state visitors but they gave a warm welcome to President Aquino on his state visit to Japan last year, where he was invited to stay at the Akasaka Palace guesthouse. The Imperial dinner was attended by 18 members of the Imperial family including the reticent Crown Princess Masako, wife of Crown Prince Naruhito.

OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS – Email add: oacpa.army2012@gmail.com – Tel no. (02) 845-9555 Local: 5285, 5295

At the State dinner hosted by Prime Minister Abe for President Aquino, Japan's Maritime Self Defence Force head, Rear Admiral Hisanori Sato (who was seated next to me), indicated that Japan is ready to play a major role in strengthening the alliance between our countries and in increasing its defense capabilities against external threats.

No doubt our relationship with Japan today is the best it has ever been, and credit is given to Ambassador Manolo Lopez who steadfastly worked on arranging the presidential visit to Japan and now the forthcoming visit of the Imperial family to Manila. Ambassador Lopez recently launched the book *History and Heritage of the Kudan: The Official Residence of the Philippine Ambassador to Japan* (it is featured in "This Week on PeopleAsia" at the Allure section of the STAR today). Seventy years after the war, our relationship with Japan has reached its highest point. In fact, I told the Japanese Ambassador, Kazuhide Ishikawa, that Japan is now the most preferred tourist destination for many Filipinos.

* * *
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