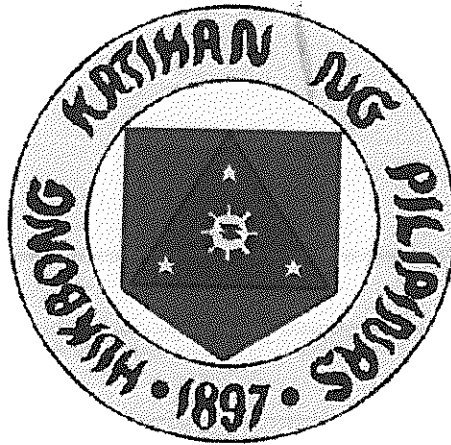


Army Vision: By 2028, a world-class Army that is a source of national pride



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26 January 2016

Tuesday

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STAN

Pia wants to enter politics

House undecided on probe of Marcelino's drug links

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Pia gets her own 'Pia's Paradise' parade

SAF 44 kin dejected at remorseless Noy

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Tribune

All evidence of carnage must be made public—JPE

Obama puts big freeze on cross-challenged Washington

Obama puts big freeze on cross-challenged Washington

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January 2016

The Manila Times

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The Manila Times

TODAY'S WEATHER FORECAST

JANUARY 26, 2016 | TUESDAY

NORTHEAST MONSOON
AFFECTING LUZON AND VISAYAS
(JANUARY 25, 5:00 PM)

SUNRISE

SUNSET



6:25 AM

5:52 PM

MOONRISE

MOONSET



7:49 PM

7:45 AM



JAN 24
6:45 AM

FEB 1
11:27 AM

LOW TIDE

HIGH TIDE



6:50 AM

11:26 PM

-0.19 Meter

1.01 Meter



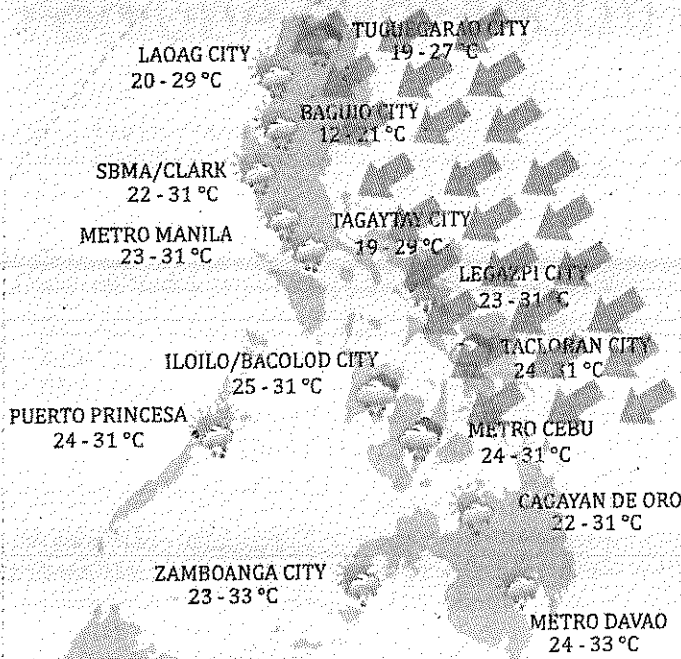
Partly cloudy to at times
cloudy with rainshowers



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



Tight rains



	JAN 27 WEDNESDAY	JAN 28 THURSDAY	JAN 29 FRIDAY	JAN 27 WEDNESDAY	JAN 28 THURSDAY	JAN 29 FRIDAY
METRO MANILA	23 - 31 °C	23 - 31 °C	23 - 31 °C	12 - 21 °C	13 - 23 °C	15 - 23 °C
METRO CEBU	25 - 31 °C	25 - 32 °C	25 - 32 °C	25 - 31 °C	25 - 31 °C	25 - 32 °C
METRO DAVAO	24 - 33 °C	24 - 32 °C	24 - 33 °C	24 - 33 °C	24 - 33 °C	25 - 33 °C
BAGUIO						
PUERTO PRINCESA						
BORACAY						



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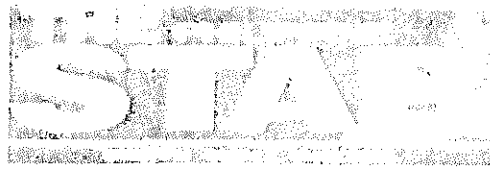


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20 January 2016



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MILF no longer optimistic on BBL

By PIA LEE-BRAGO

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) is no longer optimistic that Congress will pass the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) that will create an autonomous Bangsamoro region in Mindanao.

MILF peace panel chairman Mohagher Iqbal said there were signs that the BBL would not be passed and there would

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MILF From Page 1

be frustration in the ranks of the MILF. But the MILF would still pursue the path of peace even if the measure is not enacted.

"Signs are already pointing to that direction. There's lack of quorum in the House of Representatives this afternoon session towards Tuesday and Wednesday. If it would not be passed these three days, I don't think it would ever be passed at all," Iqbal said yesterday at the launch of the book "Journey to the Bangsamoro," a compilation of all agreements signed by the government and MILF.

"I'm no longer optimistic but I'm still hoping this will pass. If the BBL doesn't pass, I think we're back to zero.

"But in terms of the peace process, I don't think we'll be back to zero, except if a new president would adopt a war policy, that's another matter," he added.

Iqbal also said that the MILF would raise the BBL with the new administration because of the Aquino government's failure to do its obligation on the peace

process.

Government peace panel chair Miriam Coronel-Ferrer said both the House and the Senate have conducted a total of 45 public hearings on the BBL, 40 in the House and 15 in the Senate.

She noted that lawmakers interpellated separately in both chambers in a total of 33 session days up to December 2015 with millions of taxpayers' money spent.

"Legislators who say the bill is being rushed have all the opportunity to correct whatever perceived flaws they have on the draft BBL since these are all within their powers. But they cannot accomplish the task if they are not inside the session hall during deliberations," Ferrer said.

"There is still a slim chance that the BBL will pass this Congress. But if it doesn't, it is up to the next administration and the MILF how they will deal with the matter. But of course, we very much prefer to pass on a solution rather than a problem to the next president, so we are still trying very hard to get our legislators on board," she added.

26 January 2016



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Noy to SAF kin: Beware of opportunists

By DELON PORCALLA

Several groups and individuals are using the Mamasapano tragedy for sinister ends, especially to sow division in the police and the country in

general, President Aquino said yesterday at the commemoration of the first anniversary of the carnage that left 44 police

commandos dead at the hands of Muslim guerrillas. "Some would take advantage of the controversies in your

ranks to create disunity, to use the tragedy for selfish agenda," Aquino said in a speech delivered in Filipino at Camp Crame.

Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile has persuaded a Senate panel to reinvestigate the Mamasapano tragedy, citing new evidence.

Turn to Page 5

Noy From Page 1

Aquino yesterday posthumously awarded two Medals of Valor to two of the 44 slain SAF troopers - Chief Insp. Gednat Garambas Tabdi and Police Officer 2 Romeo Cumanoy Cempron for exceptional heroism.

In his speech, Aquino said he was wondering why justice has remained elusive for the fallen commandos, adding he couldn't help but compare the pace of the investigation with that of the Boston marathon bombing in the US. In the US incident, authorities were able to make the perpetrators account for their crime just after a year.

"Like you, I'm getting impatient with the slow pace

of justice in this country. As they say, justice delayed is justice denied," he said.

Also yesterday, Aquino met with families of SAF troopers after the ceremonies, according to Secretary Herminio Coloma Jr. of the Presidential Communications Operations Office.

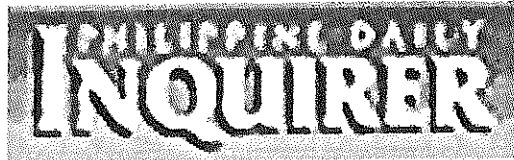
Coloma said the President discussed with the SAF families the implementation of various forms of government assistance.

He said Aquino has "instructed concerned government officials to exert all efforts to extend the needed assistance to the families."

Interior Secretary Mel Senen Sarmiento, meanwhile, appealed to some groups not to politicize the quest for justice for the 44 slain commandos.

- Paolo Romero, Cecille Suerte Felipe

24 January 2016



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Cornfields rise anew at scenes of bloody encounters

By Nash B. Maulana
Inquirer Mindanao

MAMASAPANO, Maguindanao—Farmers are looking forward to their first corn harvest, a year after blood literally sprinkled the fields in Barangay Tukanalipao where elite police commandos died in battle while on a mission to get a wanted Malaysian terrorist.

Malumpil Dagandalan, who owns the small farmland that was the scene of the bloodbath, says he used to harvest 30 sacks of corn grains from his field. He doubts if he could even reap four sacks, but for another reason—rat infestation.

Dagandalan's house was hit and damaged by an M-79 mortar bomb fired during the encounter between members of the 55th Company of the Philippine National Police's Special Action Force (SAF) and armed followers of the Malaysian terrorist Zulkifli bin Hir, alias "Marwan," and rebels of the Moro Islamic

Liberation Front (MILF).

Thirty-five SAF members were killed in Dagandalan's land, while nine others belonging to the 84th company also died in another battleground in nearby Sitio Inogog. The MILF reported the death of 17 rebels and three civilians.

Fertile delta

The places are part of a delta of fertile soil formed by the erratic downstream course of the Ala and Dansalan rivers.

The clash on Jan. 25, 2015, variably called a massacre and a misencounter, has put in doubt the passage of what could be the Aquino administration's landmark bill on a Bangsamoro autonomous setup that seeks to end decades of Moro insurgency in Mindanao.

Mayor Benzar Ampatuan says this year's harvest time for corn farmers comes during the week of commemorating the first anniversary of the Mamasapano fighting. Erstwhile areas of conflict has turned to productive use, including the clash sites, he says.

Farmers used to harvest 3,800 tons of corn grains from the two encounter sites, according to municipal agriculture officer Modrika Masukat. This time, he says, the harvest would only be about one-seventh of the usual volume, blaming rat attacks.

In Sitio Inogog, where Marwan was killed, only 1.5 hectares of cornfield will be harvested, he added.

Livelihood aid

Tukanalipao village Chair Esmael Hasim says the wounded and fatalities among civilians have been accounted for by relatives and authorities, and were given assistance. Livelihood packages were extended to them by Mayor Ampatuan, through the municipal social welfare and development office, he says.

The office of Gov. Mujiv Hataman of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) also provided tricycles and small tractors with trailers.

The victims's relatives also re-

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ceived cash assistance in tranches from the ARMM's Humanitarian Emergency Action Response Team from its director, Ramil Masukat, and staff member Myrna Jo Henry, Hasim says.

Norham Dagadas, who coordinated with the MILF leadership, says families of the rebel fatalities also received cash from the group's central committee in Camp Darapanan, Maguindanao province.

Affected farmers received 400 bags of corn seeds from the ARMM Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, through the municipal agriculture office.

But Hasim says there had been no replacement yet for farmers who lost nine work animals—five carabaos and four cows—who were hit by stray bullets when these were left unattended following the sudden evacuation of residents.

Slow farm recovery

It was a nightmare for residents of Mamasapano, basically an agriculture-based town, but

Masukat says the farmers are slowly recovering from that tragedy.

Maj. Gen. Edmundo Pangilinan, commanding general of the 6th Infantry Division, says the situation has been back to normal since the military's all-out pursuit of Moro guerrillas involved in the carnage took off here and in the Maguindanao towns of Datu Salibo, Datu Saudi Ampatuan, Shariff Saydona Mustapha and Datu Piang.

Pangilinan says the Army, through its engineering battalions, has partnered with the PNP and civilian agencies in implementing infrastructure projects, such as barangay roads and school buildings in remote areas, including those in Mamasapano and in neighboring areas.

In deference to the families of the dead, officials and residents have agreed to moderate celebrations of the town's gains, Mayor Ampatuan says, following the consensus reached during Mamasapano's 17th founding anniversary on Oct. 31.

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26 January 2016

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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NPA extortion eyed as motive for burning of construction equipment

By JOSEPH JUBELAG

GENERAL SANTOS CITY - The military has launched a manhunt against a group of New People's Army (NPA) members who allegedly burned a fleet of heavy equipment owned by a private contractor while undertaking the construction of a private airport in T'boli, South Cotabato last Friday night.

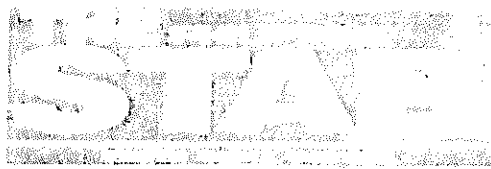
Lt. Col. Ronald Jess Alcudia, 27th Infantry Battalion commander, said security forces have been dispatched to track down at least 10 NPA rebels responsible for torching the fleet of heavy equipment which consisted of grader, back hoe, dump truck and compact

roller. The equipment were owned by AJ Construction Corp. which is constructing the airstrip of Sumifro Corp., a multi-national fruit processing firm in Barangay Edwards in T'boli town.

Police said at least 10 heavily armed NPA rebels stormed the construction site inside the banana plantation owned by the company and held the four security guards at gun point before setting on fire the heavy equipment worth P20 million.

Police eyed extortion as the possible motive for the attack as the contractor and Sumifro management had reportedly received extortion letter from the NPA prior to the incident.

24 January 2016



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House undecided on probe of Marcelino's drug links

The House committee on dangerous drugs is still deciding whether or not it will conduct an inquiry on the alleged involvement of Marine Lt. Col. Ferdinand Marcelino in the illegal drug trade.

By PAOLO ROMERO

Belmonte, committee chairman, said yesterday he is waiting for more reports from the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) and the Philippine National Police Anti-Illegal Drugs Group (AIDG) as

well as resolutions, if any, to be filed by committee members.

Belmonte expressed doubts about Marcelino's story that he was conducting an undercover operation, but said the officer must be given the benefit of

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House

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the doubt and accorded due process.

"The way I see it, he has no authority at all," Belmonte told The STAR. "No matter how secret his intelligence operation may be - assuming there was one - he must be reporting to a higher authority or official."

He said such an operation, no matter how secret, has a case study prepared before it is launched.

"It also can't be that he is undertaking this in his private capacity because he is supposedly an anti-drug advocate," he said.

Anti-Crime and Terrorism through Community Involvement and Support party-list Rep. Samuel Pagdilao said large-scale anti-drug opera-

tions must be cleared by a single government agency to avoid them being duplicated, compromised or abused.

Pagdilao, former head of the police Criminal Investigation and Detection Group, said the surprising arrest of Marcelino, who was a former official of PDEA, in a shabu laboratory in Manila last Thursday turned into a puzzling situation when the Marine officer claimed that he was conducting intelligence operations for the government.

Marcelino, former head of the PDEA Special Enforcement Service, was arrested by combined elements of PDEA and the AIDG alongside former PDEA interpreter Yan Yi Shou, alias Randy.

The police team seized 76

kilos of shabu worth P383 million and a Toyota Camry.

"His claims that he is on an intelligence operation may be true, or may be false. A certification from a government agency, that is to be held confidential until events like this occurs, should be made in order to avoid compromising the mission," Pagdilao said.

He called on the Congressional Oversight Committee on Dangerous Drugs to investigate the incident, and to determine the need for operations similar to what Marcelino claims to be cleared by a single government agency.

The Senate tackled yesterday the possibility of authorizing PDEA and other agencies involved in the fight against illegal drugs to wiretap calls of suspected drug lords.

PDEA director general Ar-

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turo Cacdac admitted before the Senate committee on public order and dangerous drugs that authorities are having a hard time pinning down big-time drug lords who would conduct transactions by phone and the Internet.

The drug lords are careful about being caught red-handed with the drugs, which was why the illicit trade proliferates despite efforts by anti-drug operatives, Cacdac said.

Cacdac also reiterated that the PDEA conducted a legitimate operation when its operatives swooped down on a clandestine drug laboratory last week in Manila, which also resulted in the arrest of Marcelino and his alleged Chinese cohort.

Cacdac later told the committee chaired by Sen. Grace Poe that he was standing by his men and the integrity of their

recent operations.

He lamented that some are imputing malice to the raid.

"I've been professional all my life. I will not do it to a brother-officer," Cacdac told Poe.

Marcelino insisted that he was on a special mission targeting drug syndicates, even asserting he was with the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (ISAFP) – a claim debunked by both Interior Secretary Mel Senen Sarmiento and Armed Forces chief Gen. Hernando Iriberrri.

Good service record

The AFP said Marcelino has maintained a good service reputation and his work ethic in the military has been unquestionable until his arrest by agents of the PDEA in Sta. Cruz, Manila last week.

"We cannot judge as of

this time. There are many operations occurring that have deeper origins and basis so in our case, we leave it to the investigating authorities to determine that, but we are sure that in the end the truth behind this will come out and the colonel's reputation will come out strong," Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla, AFP spokesman said.

Multiple military and PDEA sources, meanwhile, corrected various reports that Marcelino was nabbed red-handed inside the clandestine shabu laboratory.

They said that PDEA agents initially chanced upon him while on shadow sleuthing outside.

While Marcelino and a tipster were inside, PDEA chief Cacdac arrived and ordered his men to put handcuffs on the Marine officer. – **With Christina Mendez, Jaime Laude**

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26 January 2016

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

Page: 1

AFP reserves judgement of Marcelino

By **ELENA L. ABEN** and **PNA**

"With very credible service reputation and unquestionable work ethic." This is how the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) spokesman described Lt. Col. Ferdinand Marcelino, who was arrested last week in a P320-million drug bust in Sta. Cruz, Manila.

"From the military side, his service reputation is very credible, his work ethic based on whom he has worked with is unquestionable, as well as, his dedication to duty," said Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla.

When asked if he was surprised that Marcelino is now being linked to the illegal drug trade, Padilla replied, "We cannot judge as of this time... there are many operations occurring that have deeper origins and basis so in our case, we leave it to the investigating authorities to determine that."

Meantime, the Philippine Navy (PN) is determining whether or not the case against Marine Lt. Col. Ferdinand Marcelino is service-related and if he is eligible for Legal Assistance Attorney (LAA).

Col. Edgard Arevalo, PN spokesman, said only cases incurred by Navy personnel in the performance of their duties are entitled to LAA and so the PN cannot yet afford to extend the LAA to Marcelino.

20 January 2016

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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P-Noy went to Zambo to check blast—Palace

By Nikko Dizon

PRESIDENT Aquino was infuriated: Terrorists belonging to the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) had detonated a car bomb in the heart of Zamboanga City on Jan. 23, 2015, and had managed to smuggle firearms into the city jail.

"The President was really pissed off that time," a ranking Malacañang official told the INQUIRER last week, adding that

he wanted to go to the city to check for himself the security situation there.

Mr. Aquino's whereabouts in Zamboanga City have been questioned in light of renewed calls in the Senate to look into his role in the Special Action Force (SAF) operation to get wanted Malaysian terrorist Zulkifli bin Hir, alias Marwan, in Mamasapano, Maguindanao province, which resulted in the

P-NOY/A11

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death of 44 police commandos.

From another Palace official and military sources, the INQUIRER separately learned that on Jan. 24, 2015, Mr. Aquino was to fly to Zamboanga the next day, Jan. 25, the birthday of his late mother, former President Corazon Aquino.

One military official emphasized the gravity of the security situation in the city: The ASG planned to spring out of jail Benzar Indama, who is the brother of Abu Sayyaf leader Puruji Indama, and 56 other members.

It had been only less than two years since the Zamboanga siege, where a faction of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) led by Nur Misuari, tried to take over the city, triggering the first urban combat in the country in years. The 2013 battle claimed the lives of nine civilians, 18 soldiers, five policemen and some 100 MNLF fighters.

The INQUIRER was told that the President would stay in Zamboanga only after lunch and head back to Manila, presumably to visit the grave of his mother at Manila Memorial Park in Parañaque City.

Day of car bombing

The Jan. 23 car bombing killed two persons and injured more than 50. That day, two government assets had already been monitoring the movements of at least two suspected ASG members, according to the Palace official, and had even followed them to an alley near a car wash station in Barangay Guiwan, not knowing that a homemade bomb (IED or improvised explosive device) had been planted inside the car parked in front of a bus terminal.

Black smoke rose from the vehicle for several minutes. People thought it was only on fire. Then the deadly explosion.

In his speech during graduation day at the Philippine National Police Academy (PNPA) on March 26 last year, Mr. Aquino, already reeling from the Mamasapano debacle, said he was indeed aware of the counterterrorism operations in Mamasapano on Jan. 25 before he left for Zamboanga City.

But the President said that he went ahead with his plans to go to Zamboanga City because "there was no urgency in the text messages" sent to him, without mentioning that these came from then suspended PNP Director General Alan Purisima.

'Hardened site'

Mr. Aquino explained why the security situation in Zamboanga City was also critical to him: After the 2013 siege, he had ordered that the city be considered a "hardened site," meaning it should be doubly secured and monitored.

"When I arrived there, I was shown pictures of a car that was used for the bombing, together with the house from which the

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suspects came. There were surveillance operations even in the places in which the bomb was set off. Here, I asked: If these policies and operations were followed, why was the attack not prevented?" the President had said.

"Over the next days, it was explained to me that there were no overt acts—as our intelligence operatives call it—observed, acts which would have served as probable cause to accuse those inside the car," he had said.

"Apart from this, almost two years have passed since the Zamboanga siege, and yet, local issues hindered the full completion of what needed to be fixed. This was why I also wanted to take the opportunity to have a thorough discussion with Mayor Beng (Maria Isabelle) Climaco (Salazar), in order to hasten the rehabilitation of affected communities."

Maguindanao operations

On Jan. 25, President Aquino left Bahay Pangarap in Malacanan at 8:30 a.m. for Villamor Air Base in Pasay City. Before boarding his chartered aircraft, accompanied by Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin and then Interior Secretary Mar Roxas, he left instructions with the Air Force chief, Lt. Gen. Jeffrey Delgado, about "the operations in Maguindanao."

This caught Delgado by surprise. After the President's chartered plane took off at 9 a.m., Delgado checked what operations the Commander in Chief was talking about.

When the plane arrived at Edwin Andrews Air Base (EAAB) in Zamboanga City at 10:25 a.m., President Aquino was accorded the usual arrival honors and was welcomed by Mayor Salazar and military and police officials.

The President and his entourage proceeded to the conference room at EAAB usually used by the Air Force for pre-flight debriefings. It was there where he stayed practically the entire Jan. 25, except for the times that he went out of the facility with a huge entourage to visit the blast site, the injured victims in the hospital, the funeral parlor for the wake of the two fatalities and the city jail.

It was also in this room where Mr. Aquino received briefing on the ASG bombing and the housing assistance for residents who were displaced during the 2013 siege in the morning and the unplanned briefing on the Mamasapano debacle late in the afternoon.

With the President at the morning briefing were Gazmin, Roxas, Social Welfare Secretary Corazon Soliman, Budget Secretary Florencio Abad, National Housing Authority Chair Chito Cruz, then AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Gregorio Pio Catapang Jr., then Western Mindanao Command chief Lt. Gen. Rustico Guerrero, police officials, military intelligence officials and Salazar.

The staff of the officials stayed at the EAAB lobby, ready with data or other materials

needed by their bosses. They engaged in casual talk.

Gun smuggling in jail

As the meeting inside the conference room progressed, Mr. Aquino was getting irritated at the failure of the Bureau of Jail and Management and Penology officials to explain how the firearms were smuggled in the city jail.

He was also displeased by contrasting figures between the national government and city government pertaining to the rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts, particularly the housing projects for the thousands of displaced families.

Over two hours into the meeting, frazzled staff began looking for a white board. They found it inside a smaller room across the conference room. Minutes later, those at the lobby were asked to make way.

The President, with Soliman, Cruz and Salazar, stepped out and walked to the smaller room. They stayed there for an hour, their attention on the white board while someone scribbled on it. (Later in the day, the INQUIRER saw a breakdown of figures on the housing project written on the white board).

It was already past noon. The Zamboanga briefing took nearly four hours. Most of the people had not had lunch, making do with biscuits, bottled water and Beng Beng chocolates.

Inspection trips

Before 2 p.m., everybody was told to board their respective vehicles for the President's blast site inspection and visits to the hospital, the wake and the jail where Indama and the other ASG members were detained.

Just as everybody had settled in their vehicles, they were made to wait for over half an hour. The President was still inside EAAB. He squeezed in a late lunch of crab and corn soup, and chips.

It was around 2:30 p.m. when the President got inside his white SUV. Gazmin, Roxas, Soliman and other Cabinet members rode a coaster that followed the SUV in the convoy.

First stop was the blast site in Barangay Guiwan. Mr. Aquino stayed there for nearly 10 minutes. He appeared to ask questions and talked with the mayor and his security officials. He looked around the area with ripped signages and twisted metal.

From 3 p.m. to 3:30 p.m., the President and his entourage visited the injured at Zamboanga Peninsula Medical Center, Western Mindanao Medical Center and Zamboanga City Doctors Hospital.

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At 3:40 p.m., he went to La Merced Funeral Homes and spent some 15 minutes condoling with the families of the victims. Then he proceeded to Ciudad Medical Center.

It was around 4 p.m. that Mr. Aquino and his entourage reached Zamboanga City Medical Center.

It was not a leisurely visit to

the hospitals and the funeral parlor. Everybody, including the Cabinet members, walked or ran as they followed the President, making sure they were inside their vehicles, ready for the next destination, before he got into his SUV and moved.

The President and his men arrived at the city jail past 4 p.m. and spent some 20 minutes there. His convoy left at 4:40 p.m. and headed back to EAAB.

Tensions

If the mood at the base earlier that day was light, it was tense when the President's entourage arrived at 4:45 p.m. Mr. Aquino and his security officials went straight to the conference room where the briefing on the Mamasapano incident began.

At the lobby, a military official told the INQUIRER that 35 SAF commandos were dead in Maguindanao. The official said the reports were sketchy and the Western Mindanao Command (Wesmincom) was trying to find out exactly what had happened.

Suddenly, there was a pre-dominance of military and police officials at EAAB.

Initial reports said the SAF encountered Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) and then ventured into a Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) camp, triggering another battle.

From the lobby and through a

glass window, the President showed a grim expression as he watched, with his top security officials, what appeared to be aerial shots of a terrain.

When the meeting ended, Roxas and Gazmin proceeded to meet with businessmen at Camp Navarro to discuss the city's rehabilitation efforts.

Flight plans

The INQUIRER learned that the President had wanted to fly to Maguindanao that same night but was prevailed upon by Gazmin and the pilots not to do so because the Awang airport in Cotabato City was not equipped for night landing.

The President then thought of staying the night at Western Mindanao Command's Camp Navarro so that he could fly to Maguindanao the next day. He instead decided to fly back to Manila.

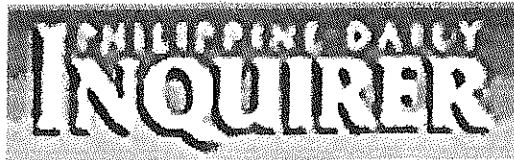
It was almost 8 p.m. when the President's plane took off. He arrived in Manila at around 9:30 p.m. and proceeded to a restaurant to continue his meeting on the Mamasapano encounter with Gazmin, Roxas and other officials. The President had his first full meal that day at 10:30 p.m.

Mr. Aquino no longer went to Maguindanao the next day. It was Roxas, Gazmin, then PNP officer in charge Deputy Director General Leonardo Espina, presidential spokesperson Edwin Lacierda and Guerrero who arrived at Camp Siongco, headquarters of the Army 6th Infantry Division.

By then, 44 SAF commandos, 17 MILF fighters and three civilians, including an 8-year-old girl, were dead.

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The spoiled SAF 44 families

ONE YEAR after the debacle at Mamasapano, Maguindanao province, where 44 police elite troops were slaughtered in a bungling commando raid, President Noynoy has not taken full responsibility for the fiasco.

To appease the families of the slain commandos, the President flooded them with benefits to partially alleviate their sorrows.

Just like a father who mistakenly whips his child, realizes his fault later, and then showers the toddler with tons of candies, making his other children jealous.

Is it hard for the President to say, "I'm sorry" or "I'm responsible?"

Remember the massacre of eight Hong Kong tourists at the Luneta on Aug. 23, 2010, at the hands of their hostage-taker, a dismissed cop, and their clumsy rescuers?

Up to now, P-Noy hasn't apologized to the Hong Kong government for the bungled police rescue which was managed on the ground by his friend, then Interior Undersecretary Rico Puno.

It was Manila Mayor Erap who apologized for the Philippine government, even if the city mayor then was Alfredo Lim.

The mark of a good leader is his ability to own up to his mistake.

Definitely, P-Noy is not one.

What is most unfortunate is that

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo



the citizenry hasn't seen through the President's irresponsible ways and continues to give him high popularity ratings.

Daang matuwid (straight path and narrow path), my eye!

Daang matagtag (bumpy road), yes.

But most Filipinos seem to be enjoying the bumpy ride.

Hasn't it occurred to P-Noy that he has left out other policemen, soldiers and Marines who were killed in Mindanao during his watch and whose relatives deserve the same kind of benefits given to the SAF 44 families?

The President makes one mistake—sending elite troops into a lion's lair, as Davao City Mayor Rody Duterte puts it—and then makes another by spoiling the families of the slain commandos.

One of the SAF widows was given P300,000 to bankroll her Internet café business in addition to a bucket of other benefits from the Philippine National Po-

lice, National Police Commission, Senate, House of Representatives, Department of Social Welfare and Development, President's Social Fund, National Housing Authority, Department of Education, Commission on Higher Education, Department of Health, Philippine Health Insurance Corp. (PhilHealth), etc., ad nauseam.

The mother of one of the dead SAF commandos asked for—and was granted—the concreting of a feeder road in a far-flung village that cost the P20 million.

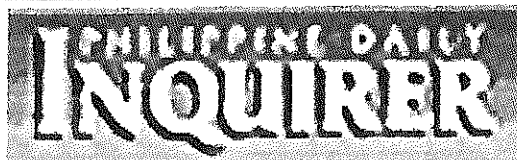
Sobra naman 'yan! (That's too much!)

Did the widows or relatives of the other policemen and soldiers who were killed by Moro rebels or communist insurgents get the same benefits?

Now that the heroism of the slain 44 SAF commandos has been extolled, the surviving SAF troopers who were sent to Mamasapano on the same mission should be investigated for possible cowardice.

While their comrades were being massacred on a cornfield, the other commandos—there were 392 SAF troops deployed to Mamasapano—were just sitting or lying on a highway when Army reinforcements arrived.

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Why return to Mamasapano?

I SHARE the view that the resumption of the Senate inquiry into the Mamasapano tragedy is politically motivated, but not the view that this turn of events was unexpected.

Mamasapano, not "Yolanda," is the Achilles heel of a still-popular President. A dispassionate reading of President Aquino's political fortunes will show that the great controversy over the fate of Tacloban City in November 2013 did not in fact seriously affect his approval or satisfaction ratings.

His handling of the Mamasapano crisis, however, had an almost immediate impact on his popularity.

This is how I understand the Social Weather Stations survey data. In December 2013, Mr. Aquino had an overall satisfaction rating of plus-49 percent, with plus-50 percent or more in Luzon outside Metro Manila, in Mindanao, and in the Visayas which was still reeling from the super typhoon. (Metro Manila, traditionally unforgiving of incumbents, came in at 22 percent.)

If we consider lag time as a factor, then the next SWS survey would have brought bad news. But in March 2014, the President was still at plus-45, with Visayas holding statistically steady at plus-49. (The bad news, survey-wise, came in in the next survey.)

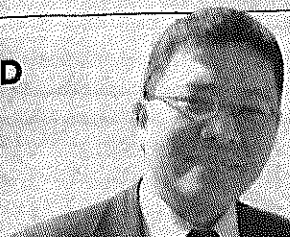
But the impact of Mamasapano (the encounter happened on Jan. 25 a year ago, and the news trickled out the following day and then turned into a flood by the time the President decided to attend a factory inauguration rather than meet the coffins of the slain Special Action Force troopers) was clear and obvious in the same quarter. The March 2015 survey gave the President his lowest satisfaction rating ever, of plus-11—with Luzon outside Metro Manila at an astounding negative-3.

Mr. Aquino has since recovered, as far as survey ratings are concerned, but Mamasapano remains his point of greatest vulnerability.

In "What is Aquino accountable for?" published

NEWSSTAND

John Nery



about a week after the incident, I argued that the President was accountable for three failures:

First: "As more information emerges, it is becoming clearer that Oplan Wolverine [as the operation was then labeled, even by the President] was not designed to succeed. It is this failure that President Aquino and his subordinates who planned and approved the operation should be held accountable for..."

Second: "For this decision not to coordinate with the MILF (and, until it was too late, with the Philippine Army), and therefore raising the risks of the entire operation, President Aquino and his subordinates who planned and approved the operation should also be held accountable."

And third: "it is his failure to ensure that the necessary exercise of violence that he had approved or encouraged or welcomed came with the equally necessary support."

The following week, in "Patterns of sin in Aquino admin," I tried to read the President's third nationwide address on the Mamasapano tragedy, the one where he announced that he had accepted the resignation of suspended Philippine National Police chief Alan Purisima, as a series of clues into his administration's "systematic shortcomings." I wrote then: "One reading: a deadly combination of legal-staff sloth and self-justifying pride."

I do not think these shortcomings rise to the level of an impeachable offense. There are no guarantees in war—except perhaps that people end up

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dead. The decision itself to commit considerable force to pursue the Malaysian terrorist known as Marwan cannot be faulted; I cannot imagine any court, even a quasi-court like an impeachment Senate, holding that the decision to pursue a known terrorist should not have been made.

But it is likely that the failures we and others have already identified will be the crux of the hearings tomorrow. There should be no underestimating Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile; he will come to tomorrow's hearings well-prepared, and even if he cannot prove that the President committed an impeachable offense, he can do immense damage to the President's reputation—and by extension to the President's election clout.

The old question from the US Senate hearings on Watergate, the one asked by Howard Baker, will be the recurring question tomorrow: What did the President know, and when did he know it?

On the issue of a plan designed to fail (something that the brave officers in the PNP's Board of Inquiry suggested in their report), the President (through his Cabinet secretaries) will likely be asked repeatedly about his decision to place Purisima in charge, even though his old friend had already been ordered suspended, and on the role of Executive Secretary Paquito Ochoa.

On the issue of the deliberate decision not to coordinate with either the MILF in contravention of existing agreements, or the Philippine Army, the President's role will likely be probed. Whose decision was it to keep the Army in the dark? Did the President know, or did he in fact make the call?

On the issue of inadequate support (which, of course, is related to the lack of coordination with the Army), the President's decision-making will be scrutinized. What happened, or did not happen, in Zamboanga City?

It will be a long day in Malacañang tomorrow.

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PAGTANAW AT PANANAW

ILLEGAL DRUGS

Bert De Guzman

TALAGANG mahirap sugpuin ang paglaganap ng ilegal na droga sa ating bansa kung misinong mga militar at pulis ay sangkot sa gawaing ito. Noong isang araw, sinalakay ng mga tauhan ng Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) ang isang suspected shabu laboratory sa Maynila, dakong 1:00 ng madaling araw. Nagulat sila dahil natagpuan nila sa lugar ang dati nilang hepe

Ito ay si Marine Lt. Col Ferdinand Marcelino na nangunguna pa noon sa mga pagsalakay sa high-profile operations nang siya ang pinuno ng PDEA special enforcement service (SES). Sinabi niya sa raiding team na siya ang nagsasagawa ng intelligence operations sa Felix Huertas, Sta. Cruz, Maynila. Sa kabila nito, dinakip pa rin siya ng mga miyembro ng PNP-Anti-Illegal Drugs Group (AIDG) kasama ang Chinese national na si Yan Shi Shuo, alyas Randy. Ang nakumpiskang 77 na kilong shabu ay nagkakahalaga ng P383 milyon. Inaalam pa kung siya ay sangkot o hindi sa ilegal na gawain.

Nagdududa si Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte kung ang mga imbestigasyon sa pagkamatay ng SAF 44 ay makasasagot sa mga katanungan upang lumabas ang katotohanan. Sa Enero 27, muling bubuksan ang imbestigasyon sa kahilingan ni Senate Minority Leader Juan Ponce Enrile. May bago raw siyang ebidensiya upang patotohanan na may direktang kaugnayan si PNoy sa trahedya. Nakatakdang dumalo sina Press Sec. Herminio Coloma, Executive Sec. Paquito Ochoa, DND Sec. Voltaire Gazmin, National Security Adviser Cesar Garcia, ex-DILG Sec. Mar Roxas, at PNP OIC Deputy Director General Leonardo Espina. Inimbitahan din si ex-SAF director Getulio Napeñas at matataas na opisyal ng militar na hiningan umano ng tulong noon, pero hindi nagpadala ng reinforcement habang binabari na parang "sitting ducks" ang SAF 44.

Makakasama pa rin sa listahan ng mga kandidato sa pagkapangulo sina Sen. Grace Poe at Duterte sa kabila ng kinakaharap nilang disqualification cases. Bukod sa kanila, ang kasama sa listahan ng presidentiables ay sina VP Jojo Binay ng UNA, Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago ng People's Reform Party, Mar Roxas ng Liberal Party, Mel Mendoza ng Pwersa ng Masang Pilipino, Rep. Roy Señeres ng Partido Manggagawa at Magsasaka Workers and Peasants (WPPMM), at

Dante Valencia, Independent

Sa inyong lahat, sana ay manalo kayo (isa lang ang winner), at maging tunay na leader ng ating bansa na hanggang ngayon ay nagdurusa at naghihirap!

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Pagsugpo sa droga dapat talakayin ng mga presidentiable

'WAG KUKURAP!



NI BEBOT A. VILLAR JR.

NAIPIT ngayon si Lt. Col. Ferdinand Marcelino dahil sa pagkahuli sa kanya at isang Chinese national matapos silang madatnan ng PDEA sa loob ng isang clandestine shabu laboratory sa Manila noong nakaraang Huwebes. Nasabat din ng ating PDEA law enforcers ang 76 kilos ng shabu na nagkahalagang humigit kumulang P383 milyon.

Bagaman hindi natin naabutan si Lt. Col. Marcelino nang siya ay maitalaga sa PDEA, kilala natin siya bilang mabuting asset ng ahensya, dahil sa kanyang mga nabalitang accomplishment kontra drug syndicates. Subalit lahat ay naguguluhan ngayon kung bakit siya ay nasa loob ng isang laboratoryo ng shabu nang ito ay nilusob ng PDEA, na siyang naging dahilan upang siya ay kasuhan ng "conspiracy to manufacture and possession of illegal drugs" ayon sa Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002.

Ayon kay Lt. Col. Marcelino, mayroon siyang "mission order" mula sa Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) upang magsagawa ng "intelligence gathering" patungkol sa isyu na may mga tauhan ng AFP na sangkot sa ilegal na droga. Sinabi naman ng kanyang abogado na si

Atty. Dennis Manalo na ang pangyayari ay isang "misencounter" lamang ng grupo ng PDEA at m Lt. Col. Marcelino.

Base sa mga pahayag ng kampo ni Lt. Col. Marcelino, ang aking pagkakaintindi ay nagsasagawa sila ng kanilang operasyon subalit hindi nagkaroon ng "coordination" sa PDEA. Subalit, nasaan ang "mission order" na magpapatunay na may lehitimong operasyon na isinasagawa si Lt. Col. Marcelino?

Sa aking opinyon, dapat maipakita ni Lt. Col. Marcelino ang kanyang mission order sa imbestigasyong isinasagawa ng Department of Justice para mabigyan ng legal na basehan ang kanyang presensya sa nasabing shabu laboratory.

Huwag sana kalimutan ng ating mga presidentiable na isama nila sa kanilang plataporma ang pagsugpo ng ilegal na droga sa ating bansa!

Naiintindihan natin na may mga mahahaling isyu sa ating bansa na siyang laging napapaguspahan gaya ng kahirapan, paglikha ng mga trabaho, agrikultura, modernisasyon ng hukbong sandatahan, at iba pa. Pero huwag natin isawalang-bahala ang problema sa ilegal na droga, dahil maraming buhay at pamilya ang nasasira ng salot na ito!

Sa mga presidentiable ngayon, sa tingin ko ay si Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte lamang ang may maliwanag na plataporma sa pagsugpo ng ilegal na droga. Tama ang kanyang obserbasyon na karamihan sa krimen na nangyayari sa ating bansa, lalo na sa mga malalaking siyudad, ay nag-ugat sa ilegal na droga.

Sana ay tularan siya ng ibang presidentiables at isama ang kanilang posisyon ukol sa pagsugpo ng ilegal na droga sa kani-kanilang plataporma! Sinisigurado ko sa ating presidentiables na maraming tao ang ma-

kikinig sa kanila kapag nagsalita sila kontra ilegal na droga!

Iyon lamang may mga nagsabi sa akin na mayroon silang pagdududa sa citizenship ng minamahal na alkalde ng lungsod ng Davao! Sabi nila, dahil sa mahilig magmura si Mayor ay pinaghihinalaan nila na siya ay isang Hapones, at ang kanyang tunay na apelyido raw ay "Nakamura!"

Biro lang po!

Laman ngayon sa balita ang isyu ng "junking" ng mga local official sa ilang national candidates, at sila ay kumakampi sa mga kandidato sa kabilang partido, lalo na sa mga posisyon ng pagka-pangulo at pangalawang pangulo. Nangyayari ito dahil gusto nilang sumanib sa mga kandidatong liyamado o malaki ang tsansa na manalo dahil mahina ang kanilang mga kandidato sa partido.

Kahit kampi na sila sa kandidato ng kabilang partido, hindi pa rin sila umaalis sa kanilang partido na hindi naman nila suportado ang mga kandidato! Nabanggit nga natin dati na tila sinasakyan ng mga opisyal na ito ang lahat ng mga partido at sinasamahan ang lahat ng mga presidentiable!

Kinakampihan na ng mga politikong ito ang lahat ng presidentiables at partido imbes na suportahan ang kandidato na sa palagay nila ay may kakayahan na pamunuan ang bansa, para maseguro lang na nasa poder pa rin sila at makakakuha ng malaking pabor mula sa susunod na administrasyon! Kung talagang tiwala sila sa mga kandidato na suportado nila na nasa kabilang partido naman, bakit hindi pa sila lumipat ng partido?

Iwasan natin ang mga ganitong lider na walang mga paninindigan! Ang kanilang layunin ay bulok, dahil inuuna nila ang pansariling interes kesa sa interes ng bayan!

26 January 2016



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ON THE BEAT



**By RYAN PONCE
PACPACO**

PRESIDENT Benigno “P-Noy” Aquino III has scolded Defense Sec. Voltaire Gazmin for causing the stalemate in the proposed Salary Standardization Law-4 (SSL-4).

A source pointed to Gazmin as the one who lobbied for the inclusion of police and military retirees in the Salary Standardization Law-4 (SSL-4). Now the House of Representatives and the Senate will attempt to break the impasse tomorrow during the bicameral conference committee meeting.

Aquino scolds Gazmin

A source privy to the incident claimed President Aquino was very much displeased and got mad at Gazmin for not consulting him on the matter that could cost an additional P20 billion for the government.

The SSL-4 will modify the compensation and position classification system of civilian government personnel and the base pay schedule of military and uniformed personnel.

The measure will increase the salary of all government workers and would grant them a 14th month pay in the form of mid-year bonus.

The Senate was about to adopt the version of the House of Representatives by approving the P226 billion four-year Salary Standardization Law-4 (SSL-4) until Gazmin apparently pressured by retired police and military personnel, informed the Senate about the clamor for the inclusion of the group in SSL-4, thus creating the stale-

mate on the proposed law that would stand to benefit 1.53 million state workers.

This prompted Senate Minority Leader Juan Ponce Enrile to introduce a number of amendments on the Senate's SSL-4 version that was sent back to the plenary for refinements last December.

Enrile pushed for the indexation of the pension of AFP and PNP by including them in the SSL-4.

With the Senate-approved version containing retirees of AFP and PNP, the SSL-4 has become more complicated as other retirees in the government like teachers may also ask for inclusion of the proposed law, further jeopardizing approval of SSL-4.

Another matter raised was the complaint of about 5,000 science and technology (S&T) workers led by Ramon Agustin, president of the 900-strong Philippine Weathermen Employ-

ees Association (PWEA), that they stand to lose than gain from SSL-4 as its present version scraps their benefits provided under Republic Act (RA) No. 8439 or the Magna Carta for S&T personnel in government.

Lawmakers should look into their concern of losing big than the salary increases they would get, adding only the top officials will benefit from SSL-4.

They stressed that the law or the Magna Carta grants them additional monthly benefits which include hazard allowance, subsistence allowance and longevity pay to discourage them from seeking greener pastures abroad.

I think the senators will agree to a compromise by adopting the House version because they would not want to earn the ire of 1.53 million state workers for causing the non-passage of the SSL.

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AQUINO... From Page 4

Some of the reelectionist senators include Senate President Franklin Drilon, Senate President Pro Tempore Ralph Recto, and Vicente Sotto III, Sergio Osmeña III and Teofisto Guingona III while Sen. Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos is running for vice president.

Senatorial candidate and Leyte Rep. Martin Romualdez was right in strongly urging his fellow lawmakers to come up with a “win-win” solution to salvage the approval of the pay hike measure as a show of “malasakit” to state workers and officials.

“We should not let many Filipino families suffer a double whammy as a result of the non-passage of the SSL-4 and vetoed Social Security System (SSS) bill on pensions hike. I believe that mem-

bers of the House (of Representatives) and the Senate will do its best to extend compassion to our state workers,” Romualdez, a lawyer and president of the Philippine Constitution (Philconsa), had pointed out.

Romualdez, head of the House Independent Bloc, is a shared senatorial candidate of Vice President Jejomar “Jojo” Binay and Davao City Mayor Rodrigo “Digong” Duterte who are both running for president. He has been endorsed by the 40-man Party-list Coalition Foundation Inc (PCF).

The SSL-4 is funded under the newly-signed P3.002-trillion General Appropriations Act (GAA) 2016.

The pay hike would cost taxpayers P226 billion over four years: P57.906 billion in 2016, P54.393 billion in 2017, P65.976 billion in 2018 and P47.544 billion in 2019.

ONLINE NEWS

26 JANUARY 2016

www.pna.gov.ph

AFP urges public not to pre-judge beleaguered Marine official

By Priam F. Nepomuceno

MANILA, Jan. 25 (PNA) — The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) on Monday appealed to the public not to judge Marine Lt. Col. Ferdinand Marcelino, who is now being investigated in connection with a Php320-million drug-bust in Sta. Cruz, Manila last week.

"IAW (in accordance with) our justice system, Lt. Col. Marcelino is presumed innocent until proven otherwise and as such is entitled to legal assistance if so requested," AFP spokesperson Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla said in a message to the PNA.

"So far no request for this has been made. We understand and will respect his choice of counsel," he added.

In line with this, the AFP spokesperson also urged the public to give Marcelino due process and allow the case to take its due course.

Padilla also stressed that the beleaguered Marine officer's service reputation is very credible.

"His work ethic based on whom he has worked with is unquestionable as well as his dedication to duty," he added.

And when asked on whether he was surprised on Marcelino's drug-bust arrest, Padilla replied:

"We cannot judge as of this time, there are many operations occurring that have deeper origins and basis so in our case, we leave it to the investigating authorities to determine that but we are sure that in the end the truth behind this will come out and the colonel's reputation, service reputation will come out strong."

Marcelino and 33-year-old Chinese national Yan Yi Shou were arrested by Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency agents at Felix Huertas corner Batangas Streets in Sta. Cruz, Manila last Jan. 21.

Around 64 kilograms of "shabu" worth Php320 million were seized. (PNA)

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Navy yet to ascertain whether Marcelino entitled to LAA

By Priam F. Nepomuceno

MANILA, Jan. 25 (PNA) ---- The Philippine Navy (PN) is determining on whether the case against Marine Lt. Col. Ferdinand Marcelino, who was arrested in Sta. Cruz, Manila in the wake of the Php320 million drug-bust last week, is service-related.

This is to determine on whether the accused officer is eligible for Legal Assistance Attorney (LAA), said PN spokesperson Col. Edgard Arevalo Monday.

"PN SOP Number 2 dated Feb. 1, 2013 contains policy on Providing Legal Assistance to Navy Personnel who are entitled to LAA. Only cases incurred by Navy personnel in the performance of their duties are entitled to LAA. Cases not directly service-caused but has a reasonable connection with service-related activities of military personnel are also entitled to LAA," he added.

And pending the determination by proper authorities as to the nature of Marcelino's case, the PN cannot afford to give the latter LAA yet.

"In the event that it will later show that he is entitled to LAA, he has to ask for it. Under the Bill of Rights, the right to 'competent and independent counsel' is a matter of choice by the accused," the PN spokesperson stressed.

Arevalo said the Navy is hoping Marcelino can present his authority or the source thereof so he can eventually clear his name, preserve his good reputation, and continue his military service.

Marcelino and 33-year-old Chinese national Yan Yi Shou were arrested by Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency agents at Felix Huertas corner Batangas Streets in Sta. Cruz, Manila last Jan. 21.

Around 64 kilograms of "shabu" worth Php320 million were seized.

As this develops, Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) spokesperson Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla said the beleaguered Marine officer has a very credible service reputation.

"His service reputation is very credible, his work ethic based on whom he has worked with is unquestionable as well as his dedication to duty," he added.

And when asked on whether he was surprised on Marcelino's drug-bust arrest, Padilla replied:

"We cannot judge as of this time, there are many operations occurring that have deeper origins and basis so in our case, we leave it to the investigating authorities to determine that but we are sure that in the end the truth behind this will come out and the colonel's reputation, service reputation will come out strong."

Padilla also urged the public to give Marcelino due process and allow the case to take its due course.

"(In our justice system), Lt. Col. Marcelino is presumed innocent until proven otherwise and as such, is entitled to legal assistance if so requested. So far, no request for this has been made. We understand and will respect his choice of counsel," he added. (PNA)

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www.inquirer.net/

AFP: Marcelino entitled to legal assistance, due process

By: Frances Mangosing

@FMangosingINQ

INQUIRER.net

06:27 PM January 25th, 2016



Former PDEA official Lt. Col. Ferdinand Marcelino. INQUIRER PHOTO

Former anti-narcotics agent Lt. Col. Ferdinand Marcelino may avail himself of legal assistance from the military should he ask for it, a spokesman said on Monday.

"In accordance with our justice system, Lt. Col. Marcelino is presumed innocent until proven otherwise and such is entitled to legal assistance if so requested," Armed Forces spokesperson Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla said.

No request has been made so far. Marcelino's legal counsel is Dennis Manalo.

"We understand and will respect his choice of counsel," Padilla said.

Marcelino, a known drug buster of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency in mid-2000s, was arrested by operatives in a drug raid in a townhouse in Manila — a surprise to the drug enforcement community. Drugs worth over P300 million were seized by operatives in the operation.

Marcelino is currently a Marine officer and belongs to the Philippine Military Academy Class of 1994. Padilla also appealed to authorities and the public to accord Marcelino due process.

"Let's allow this to take its due course before we judge the person," he said.

In the military, Padilla said that Marcelino has a "very credible reputation" according to the people he worked with.

"We cannot judge as of this time. There are many operations occurring that have deeper origins and basis so in our case, we leave it to the investigating authorities to determine that but we are sure that in the end the truth behind this will come out," Padilla said. **ASU**

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Sailing crew, officers of SSV now formed, ready for deployment

MANILA, Jan. 25 (PNA) — The sailing crew of the country's first strategic sealift vessel (SSV) has already been formed and will be deployed to Indonesia to pick up the ship this coming March.

The SSV's sailing crew is composed of 98 enlisted personnel and 17 officers, including the ship's captain.

This was disclosed by Philippine Navy (PN) spokesperson Col. Edgard Arevalo Sunday.

He added that the commanding officer of the first SSV, also known by the designation of "LD-601," has already been selected by a PN committee.

Arevalo did not name disclose the name of this pioneering commanding officer as this is still subject for confirmation.

The SSV's trials are scheduled to start in March.

This is to determine on whether all the ship's systems are operational for the voyage to the Philippines.

"It's akin to a car doing road test. The facilities and other navigational instruments are being tested to ensure seaworthiness especially before its embarks on its voyage to the Philippines," Arevalo added.

The first SSV was launched at the PT PAL (Persero) shipyard in Surabaya, Indonesia last Jan. 17.

The Philippines has a two-SSV order with PT PAL (Persero) for PHP3.87 million which is sourced from the AFP Modernization Fund.

The SSV acquisition project for the PN was initiated upon the approval of Acquisition Decision Memorandum Number 2012-060 by Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin last October 30, 2013.

The Department of National Defense declared Persero as the Single Calculated Responsive Bidder with a bidding price of PHP3.87 million on November 18, 2014.

The SSVs are programmed to be the PN's floating command center carrying out their main purpose as military sealift and transport vessels and also for humanitarian assistance and disaster response.

The ships are estimated to weigh around 7,300 gross register tons.

Further, these vessels are critical assets for civil-military operations due to their capability of transporting large number of soldiers, logistics, and supplies.

Moreover, each SSV has the capacity to house three helicopters. The Navy's Augusta Westland-109s are programmed to be on-board components of these vessels.

These forthcoming landing platform dock strategic sealift vessels will improve the transport capability of the PN and boost the defense capabilities of the country. (PNA)

BNB/PFN

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2 cops to face drug charges in Sultan Kudarat

By John Unson (philstar.com) | Updated January 25, 2016 - 11:08am

SULTAN KUDARAT, Philippines - Authorities will file today, ~~January 25~~, criminal charges against two policemen and a member of the Philippine Marine Corps arrested on Saturday while in the act of selling shabu to plainclothes anti-narcotics operatives.

Drug peddlers PO1 Hamed Karon, PO3 Benny Uy and Marine Sgt. Sherwin Aregado, were nabbed in a dragnet in Sultan Kudarat's seaside Lebak town, staged by the local police and members of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG).

Also arrested in the operation were their cohorts, Michael John Besana, Ronaldo Hierro and Akmad Kabagani.

CIDG investigators said Aregado belong to one of the battalions under the Lebak-based 1st Marine Brigade, which has jurisdiction over the municipality and other coastal towns in Sultan Kudarat and in west of Maguindanao province.

The officer-in-charge of CIDG for Region 12, Chief Inspector Elmer Guevarra, said agents recovered from the arrested suspects 17 sachets of shabu (methamphetamine hydrochloride), drug-sniffing paraphernalia and cash.

The CIDG learned of the illegal activities of the suspects from barangay folks and local officials.

Guevarra said the suspects are now clamped down in a CIDG detention facility in Gen. Santos City, awaiting prosecution.

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8th ID commander appoints 2 new battalion commanders

MANILA, Jan. 25 (PNA) -- Major Gen. Jet B. Velarmino, 8th Infantry Division commander, appointed two new commanders of the 14th and 20th Infantry Battalions during short ceremonies at the 8th ID Multi-Purpose Hall in Catbalogan City, Samar.

In a statement forwarded Sunday by Capt. Ian Andres Fabellon, 8th Infantry Division spokesperon, the newly-appointed officers were identified as Lt. Col. Ronie T. Ebarita and Lt. Col. Hilarion Palma, respectively of the 14th and 20th Battalions.

Ebarita replaced Lt. Col. Peter Burgonio who was appointed to the 8th Infantry Division staff.

Ebarita was previously assigned in Camp Lapu Lapu in Cebu City and is known for numerous peace-building efforts in the Central Visayas.

Ebarita earned his Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education in Tanjay, Negros Occidental and Master of Public Management in Development Academy of the Philippines in Ortigas Center, Pasig City as well

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as Command and General Staff Course in Armed Forces of the Philippines, Command and General Staff College in Fort Andres Bonifacio, Taguig City.

Palma replaced Lt. Col. Miguel E. Ceballos who was also appointed to the division staff.

He was previously assigned in General Headquarters Support Command Armed Forces of the Philippines in the National Capital Region. He is a service oriented and dynamic military officer which led numerous developmental initiatives in Luzon.

Palma earned his Bachelor of Science in Philippine Military Academy in Baguio City and Master's Degree in Public Management Program Major in Development and Security in Development Academy of the Philippines in Ortigas Center, Pasig City.

Both newly installed commanders earned numerous significant awards from civilian and government sectors, as well as decorations for their excellent achievements that contributed much to the attainment of our vision of a World Class Army that is a source of National Pride by 2028. (PNA)
FPV/PFN

www.inquirer.net

Suspect in killings of lumad leaders seen with soldiers in Agusan Sur – NDF

By: [Chris V. Panganiban](#)
[@inquirerdotnet](#)
[Inquirer Mindanao](#)

07:56 PM January 25th, 2016

SAN FRANCISCO, Agusan del Sur, Philippines – One of the suspects in the Sept. 1 killing of a school director and two lumad leaders in Lianga, Surigao del Sur, was recently seen in the company of government troops, the National Democratic Front (NDF), the political arm of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army, said.

Ka Maria Malaya, spokesperson of the NDF-Northeastern Mindanao, in a press statement said the suspect, a leader of the paramilitary Magahat-Bagani, was seen accompanying the Philippine Army's 3rd Special Forces Battalion during clashes with New People's Army rebels in a remote village in Prosperidad town last week.

But Col. Alexander Macario, commander of the 401st Army Brigade, said the NDF's claim was plain propaganda.

"No sensible soldier would ever sit beside wanted persons," Macario told local mediamen in an interview. Macario said no military official in his right mind would ever allow his career to be tainted by coddling criminals.

Malaya said that seen during the encounter was Bobby Tejero, one of the suspects in the killings of Emerito Samarca, the director of the Alternative Learning Center for Agriculture and Livelihood Development (Alcadev) school, and tribal leaders Dionel Campus and Datu Jovello Sinzo.

Tejero, his brother Loloy and Garito Layno have been tagged as leaders in the Sept. 1 killings. Warrants for their arrest have been issued by a local court, but they have remained at large.

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Aside from Bobby Tejero, Anit Belandres, brother of Marcial Belandres, the suspect in the killing of lumad leader Henry Alameda in October 2014, was also spotted in the same encounter.

"Definitely, they are not here with us," Macario said in a chance interview on Saturday.

The provincial government of Surigao del Sur has been supporting close to 3,000 lumad evacuees who have been staying at the sports complex in Tandag City for more than four months now. The evacuees come from different towns where the para-military group Magahat-Bagani has been operating.

Most of the evacuees are from Lianga, Surigao del Sur. They fled their homes after members of the Magahat-Bagani swooped down on Sitio Han-ayan in Barangay Diatagon and killed Samarca, Campos and Sinzo. Pimentel earlier said the Magahat-Bagani was created, trained, armed and funded by the military, an allegation that the Armed Forces of the Philippines denied.

Pimentel said members of the paramilitary group were freely roaming the towns of Surigao del Sur, and yet the military failed to arrest them.

Maj. Gen. Rey Reynaldo Guerrero, chief of the military's Eastern Mindanao Command, admitted that they received intelligence reports about the Magahat-Bagani's locations and sightings, "But our efforts to arrest them have yet to yield positive results." Guerrero said intelligence reports they received about Magahat's movements were usually late, so their responses would already be "after the fact."

Last week, troops belonging to the 16th Infantry Battalion, which was based in Oriental Mindoro, arrived in Surigao del Sur.

But Pimentel said the 16th IB was deployed for counter-insurgency operations, not to go after the Magahat-Bagani.

The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), in a recent circular, announced the putting up of a P3.6-million bounty or P1.2 million each for the arrest of the Tejero brothers and Layno.

Malaya earlier claimed that eight soldiers were killed and seven were wounded while only one NPA rebel was slightly wounded in three separate clashes between government troops and communist guerillas in Barangay (village) Mabuhay on January 15 and 16.

Macario, however, refuted this, saying no Army soldier was even hurt in the encounters and instead they seized an NPA encampment where they discovered a huge arms cache and volumes of subversive documents.

The animosity between the Army and the NPA came in the wake of the surrender of Datu Calpet Egua, the highest ranking leader of the Magahat-Bagani tribal warriors who immediately posted P80,000 in bail for the robbery charges he faced at the local court in Lianga last year.

A militant tribal group, Kahugpungan sa Lumadnong Organisasyon-Caraga (Kasalo-Caraga), said Egua's surrender was only meant to pacify the clamor for justice for those killed in the atrocities done by the paramilitary Magahat-Bagani.

"Robbery is a bailable offense. It is easy for an arrested person who controls gold mining and falcatta plantations in Manhulayan in the boundaries of Prosperidad town and Bayugan City to post bail so he can avoid imprisonment and continue leading the bandit Magahat-Bagani in committing crimes," Kasalo said in a statement. **SFM**

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Army reservists conduct 'Oplan Bayanihan' in Calamba City

By Zen Trinidad

CALAMBA CITY, Laguna, Jan. 25 (PNA) -- The 1701st Ready Reserve Infantry (Tagasagip) Brigade, 4th Regional Community Defense Group, Army Reserve Command (ARESCOM) stationed at Camp Eldrige, Lalakay Village in Los Baños town, conducted a "3 in 1" project or "Oplan Bayanihan" on Sunday (Jan. 24) at Villa Palao Subdivision Banlic Village in this city.

The Philippine Army (PA) Reserve group conducted simultaneous cleaning of the perimeter of the covered court, trimming of trees along the roads of the subdivision that cover electric wires and disrupt the way of large vehicles as part of their "clean and green" program; training of the village Quick Response Team (QRT) on disaster rescue and first aid; and feeding program to village children and mothers in cooperation with the Knights of Rizal (KOR) Calamba City Chapter.

"Our group (Reservist) focuses on environment and disaster concerns based on requests from community leaders," Lt. Col. Evenizer M. De Ramos (Res) PA Executive Officer, said.

"Activities like this today is part of the 'bayanihan' program of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to win the hearts and minds of the people in communities," De Ramos added.

The initiative, according to Captain Rodolfo Barboza (Res) PA, operation and training officer, came from Rafael Feria, president, Villa Palao Homeowners Association Inc. (VPHAI) who requested for the Reservist to trim 34 trees that pose potential hazards and disruption to the flow of vehicles.

"We also welcome organizations who are involved in disaster and rescue activities to be trained by our members, with a request," Barboza said.

Meanwhile, Edo Junio, chapter commander, KOR Calamba City Chapter, said that the "feeding program has been adopted by the organization as part of community service at the same time a chance to spread the teachings of Dr. Jose Rizal to the children."

"This is the second project we had with the Reservist, the first was tree planting at Casili Village in Cabuyao City," Junio added, "as some of the members of KOR are also active reservists."

During the feeding, Junio conducted a question and answer game about Rizal and realized how little their knowledge were about the national hero, prompting him to comment that the same activity shall be done on a monthly basis to get more involvement with the children relative to Rizal's life and works. (PNA)
LAP/ZEN TRINIDAD/EBP

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