

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

13 March 2016

Sunday

Army Core Purpose: Serving the people. Securing the land

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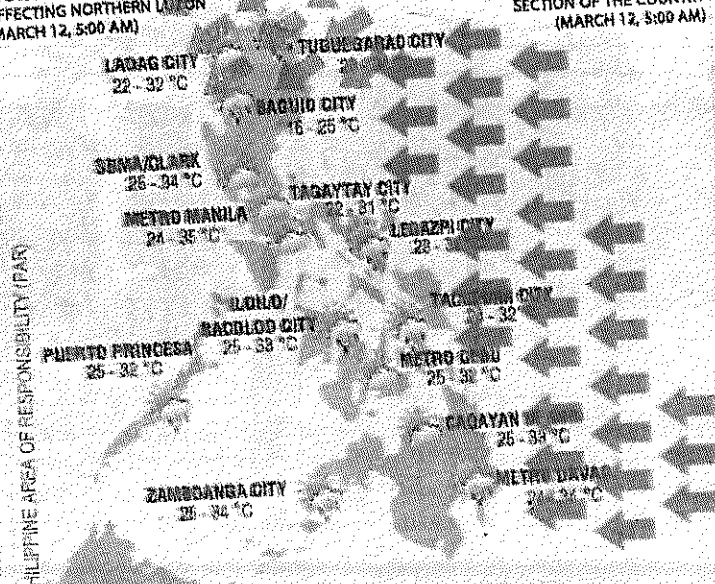
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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

TODAY'S WEATHER FORECAST | MARCH 13, 2016 | SUNDAY

NORTHEAST MONSOON
AFFECTING NORTHERN LUNION
(MARCH 12, 5:00 AM)



PHILIPPINE AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY (PAR)


EASTERLIES
AFFECTING THE EASTERN
SECTION OF THE COUNTRY
(MARCH 12, 5:00 AM)

SUNRISE	SUNSET
6:05 AM	6:06 PM
MOONRISE	MOONSET
9:27 AM	10:24 PM
NEW MOON	FIRST QUARTER
MARCH 16 8:54 AM	MARCH 18 1:02 AM
LOW TIDE	HIGH TIDE
7:58 PM 10.01 Meter	11:11 AM 10.77 Meter

Partly cloudy skies
Partly cloudy to at times
cloudy with showers
Partly cloudy to at times cloudy with
showers and/or thunderstorms

	MARCH 13	MARCH 14	MARCH 15	MARCH 16	MARCH 17	MARCH 18
METRO MANILA	24-34°C	26-34°C	27-32°C	27-31°C	24-31°C	26-31°C
TUGUEGARAO	24-34°C	23-33°C	24-32°C	24-31°C	25-34°C	26-33°C
LAGAS	23-32°C	22-31°C	26-32°C	26-32°C	24-35°C	25-35°C
SAGUID	16-26°C	15-25°C	25-34°C	25-34°C	25-33°C	24-33°C
SBMA/CLARK	22-35°C	24-35°C	25-33°C	26-35°C		
LEGASPI						
PUEBLO PRINCESA						
ILILLO/BACLOD						
METRO CEBU						
TACLOBAN						
CAGAYAN DE ORO						
METRO DAVAO						
ZAMBOANGA						

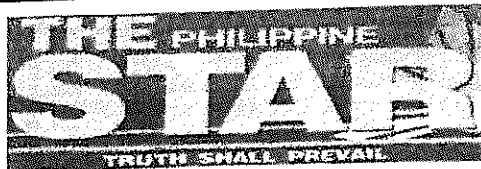
Watch PANAHON TV everyday at 5:00 AM on PTV (Channel 4).



AIR 21

SAGOT KO, PADALA MO!

March 2016



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Offloaded bank exec readies raps

By MIKE FRIALDE

Maia Santos-Deguito, the bank manager implicated in the multibillion-peso money laundering scheme, will file charges against the Department of Justice and the Bureau of Immigration for violation of her constitutional rights, her lawyer said yesterday.



Deguito

Turn to Page 12

Offloaded From Page 1

Ferdinand Topacio said Deguito will be filing charges of anti-graft, child abuse and human rights violation against the two agencies.

In addition, Topacio said Deguito will also seek civil damages after she and her family were offloaded from a plane to Japan last Friday.

Topacio said Deguito was not planning of leaving the country to escape investigation.

Topacio condemned the offloading incident, saying it was a blatant violation of the constitutional rights of Deguito.

Deguito has been linked by Chinese-Filipino businessman William Go to a money laundering scheme amounting to \$81 million.

The money was reportedly moved from the account of the Bangladesh Bank at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York to several accounts in the Rizal

Commercial Banking Corp. (RCBC) branch along Jupiter Street in Makati City where Deguito is the manager.

Deguito allegedly confided to her that she opened fictitious dollar and peso accounts at the branch on Feb. 23, 2016. The accounts were made in the name of Go's brokerage firm Centurytex Trading.

Last Friday, Deguito, along with her son and husband, boarded flight PR431 bound for Narita, Japan.

Immigration officials, however, boarded the plane as it was

about to take off and asked the Deguitos to step off.

Officials reportedly showed a copy of a document from the Anti-Money Laundering Council (AMLC) indicating that Deguito is not allowed to leave while under investigation.

The Bureau of Immigration added Deguito was added to the list of persons that are not allowed to leave the country.

According to Topacio, he was able to talk to the immigration officers and was told that they were not aware of any basis for

preventing Deguito from leaving the country since there are no cases filed against her.

Topacio added there was no hold departure order issued against Deguito.

Topacio earlier said Deguito could have been the fall guy in the money laundering case, saying she could not have pulled it off without the knowledge of her superiors, possibly including RCBC president Lorenzo Tan.

Tan's lawyer Francis Lim, on the other hand, said Topacio should help his client explain

the fake bank accounts.

"Attorney Ferdinand Topacio should realize that his client, RCBC Jupiter Branch manager Maia Deguito, had already admitted in a radio interview that she only 'assumed' Mr. Lorenzo Tan knew about the \$81-million transaction at Ms. Deguito's branch that is now being investigated by anti-money laundering authorities and that she is not accusing Mr. Tan. This directly contradicts her previous position that Mr. Tan 'knew,'" Lim said in a statement.

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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Army to inspect ROTC units in hopes of attracting recruits for reserves

THE PHILIPPINE Army will conduct administrative and tactical inspections of 8,000 Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) cadets from colleges and universities in Metro Manila today to evaluate the program and draw more citizens to join the Philippine Army Reserve Force.

The 10th Centralized Region-

al Annual Administrative and Tactical Inspection will be held at the ROTC Hunters Guerrilla Parade Ground in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City.

Army spokesperson Col. Benjamin Hao said the activity is held every year and involves the inspection of all activated Army ROTC units nationwide.

Lt. Gen. Eduardo Año, Army commanding general, will be a guest at the day-long activity of the Army's National Capital Regional Community Defense Group.

"The inspection is part of the pre-anniversary activities for the 119th Philippine Army founding anniversary on March 22," Hao said.

The inspection intends to test the units' degree of administrative efficiency, training management, proficiency and the cadets' quality of training.

Subjects for evaluation include administrative inspection, ceremonial parade, rank inspection, operation order writing, map reading and the

assembly and disassembly of M16 rifle and .45-cal. pistols.

The cadets will be tested on company drills, method of instruction, small unit tactics as well as disaster response and rescue operations.

Hao said the inspection is also aimed at testing the operational readiness of the ROTC

units and allow the cadets to experience what being a soldier is really all about.

"It is also a tool to attract freshmen college students to enroll in the ROTC program so that more Filipino citizens will join the Philippine Army Reserve Force," the Army spokesperson said.

Julie M. Aurelio

13 March 2016

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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Soldiers care for wounded rebel after Surigao skirmish

BUTUAN CITY – A New People's Army (NPA) rebel, who was wounded in a 15-minute encounter with government troops on Friday morning, is now undergoing medical treatment at a hospital in Surigao del Sur. First Lt. Karl Jan S. Devaras, 41st Civil Military Operations (CMO) "Magkahiusa" Company commander yesterday said.

He said the wounded NPA insurgent, whose identity was withheld for security reasons, was already in stable condition after soldiers of the Second Special Forces Battalion (2nd SFB) found him wounded and abandoned by his comrades after a skirmish at 10:45 a.m. Friday.

The wounded rebel was positively identified by former comrades, who have already surrendered to government authorities, and was said to belong to Guerrilla-Front Committee 21 of the CPP-NPA Northeastern Mindanao Regional Committee (NEMRC).

"After the said gun battle, our troops immediately cleared the encounter area and discovered several blood stains that prompt-

ed our operating troops to get backup K9 tracker. They found the wounded NPA rebel abandoned by his running comrades-in-arms along their escape route of withdrawal," Devaras reported.

The soldiers applied first aid on the rebel before bringing him to the Tandag City Hospital for further medical treatment, the 41st CMO Company commander of the 4th CMO Battalion added.

Meanwhile, Lt. Col. Gaspar Panopio, commanding officer of the 2nd SFB (Airborne) based in San Miguel, Surigao del Sur encouraged the remaining running NPAs to surrender, especially wounded rebels for proper medical treatment.

"I encourage the remaining lawless bandits to surrender and avail the government's peace and development program like what was given to their former comrades who have already surrendered and availed the benefits from the government's comprehensive local integration program," Panopio said. (Mike U. Crismundo)

13 March 2016

The Manila Times

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TORTURE OF DAVAO TRIBESMEN

Army officer faces court martial

BY ANTHONY VARGAS CORRESPONDENT

AN Army corporal and four government militiamen face a court-martial for allegedly torturing some members of the Tagkulo tribe in a remote village in Malita town in Davao Occidental last month.

Captain Rhyan Batchar, information officer of Philippine Army's 10th Infantry Division (ID), said in a statement that pursuant to Articles of War 70, Army corporal Sandy Batolbatol and four militiamen were placed under arrest for the conduct of court-martial proceedings.

Batchar said that Batolbatol and the militiamen were ordered arrested

and placed under restrictive custody of the commander of the 72nd Infantry Battalion (IB) at their headquarters in Camp General Manuel Yan Sr., in Barangay Tuboran, Mawab town in Compostela Valley.

"They shall be restricted to barracks to insure their appearance while the investigation is ongoing," Batchar said in the statement.

Batchar added that the names of the four militiamen are being withheld until the investigations have clearly established their involvement in the said incident.

"Due process of law shall be strictly observed in the investigation, and when evidence warrants they will be prosecuted with the full force of military justice, in-

cluding trial by courts-martial. The soldier and the CAAs are subject to military laws," Batchar said.

The army official added that the 10th ID command further reiterates that the investigation will not prejudice any investigation that may be conducted by other agencies and shall make available the soldier and the militias for such a procedure.

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Noy to lead PMA graduation rites today

By AUREA CALICA

BAGUIO CITY – President Aquino will lead this year's Philippine Military Academy (PMA) graduation ceremonies for the last time before he steps down from office in June.

The commencement exercises for the Gabay Laya (Gin-

tong Anak ng Bayan, Alay ay Buhay) Class of 2016 today is also expected to be attended by presidential candidate Vice President Jejomar Binay.

President Aquino will hand the diplomas to the graduates and present the presidential

saber to Cadet 1st Class Kristian Daeve Gelacio Abiqui, 23, who bested 62 others to be the class valedictorian.

A son of a government employee and a housewife, Abiqui is set to join the Philippine Navy.

Binay will present the vice presidential saber to the salutatorian, Cadet 1st Class Christine Mae Naungayan Calima, 21, from Bolinao, Pangasinan.

The two government officials were also together at

the Philippine National Police Academy's graduation rites in Silang, Cavite last Thursday.

Last year, the President spoke before the PMA graduates after the Philippine National Police-Board of Inquiry released its report on the

Jan. 25 Mamasapano incident and found him responsible for breaking the chain of command in approving the operation to neutralize two international terrorists through then suspended PNP chief Alan Purisima.

– With Janvic Mateo

13 March 2016

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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Keep your integrity: PMA grads told

By Vincent Cabreza
Inquirer Northern Luzon

FORT DEL PILAR, Baguio City—Before they were ceremonially “dunked” into the pool by their underclassmen, graduating members of Philippine Military Academy (PMA) “Gabay Laya” Class of 2016 were given this piece of advice by Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin: “Keep your integrity.”

“You must hold on to your integrity as this will define your character,” said Gazmin as he handed out special awards and recognition to top performers of the class at Borromeo Field here yesterday.

The Gabay Laya members will be commissioned as junior officers in the Army, Navy and Air Force by President

Aquino at their graduation today.

Addressing the graduating class, Gazmin said that heeding the virtues of integrity, courage and loyalty as espoused at the PMA would help steer their careers through the “realities of the service.”

“It is not the medals you will wear that is important,” he told the graduates, but their adherence to morality and ethics and for maintaining “absolute respect for yourselves and the people you serve.”

“You must hold on to courage even if it seems to fail... [and] you must hold on to loyalty for it will help you stand on uncompromising morals [and to be] steadfast in your commitment to the ideals,” he said.

“Time and again the Department of National Defense and the Armed

Forces of the Philippines had risen to face moments of change,” he said, so the Gabay Laya members must “be ready to confront the evolving dynamics of your profession and your duties.”

Gazmin, a member of Class of 1968, said that “coming home” to the PMA always gave him a sense of gratification.

His visit also showcased how much the PMA has changed. Fort Del Pilar has accommodated more tourists in the last few years, having become a major tourist attraction in the city.

Academy officials have relaxed some of the restrictions and have even allowed visitors to promenade in flip-flops, which used to be against the rules, according to a PMA staff member.



GRADUATING cadets are thrown into the pool by underclassmen in the traditional “passing of the guard” rite.

RICHARD BALONGLONG

13 March 2016



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Palace maintains no ransom policy for Sayyaf hostages

By AUREA CALICA and JAIME LAUDE

Malacañang yesterday maintained no ransom would be paid for the release of the four hostages of the Abu Sayyaf in Sulu.

This developed as several groups helping to secure the release of the hostages have reportedly lost interest in negotiating with the Abu Sayyaf due to the unreasonable ransom demand.

Sources said the main reason why back door negotiations is going nowhere is the P1-billion ransom demand by the bandit group for each of their four hostages – Canadian nationals John Ridsel, Robert Hall, Norwegian Kjartan Sekkinstad and Filipina Maritess Flor.

"There were reports that some groups, acting as middlemen, have been trying to reach out to negotiate with the Abu Sayyaf, but because of the huge ransom demand in the amount of P4 billion, they begged off from continuing with their back door talks," one official said.

Presidential Communications Development and Strategic Planning Office Undersecretary Manuel Quezon III said he could not give information on the military and police operations to rescue the hostages from the Abu Sayyaf.

Quezon said the Department of Foreign Affairs was in close contact with the Canadian and Norwegian governments.

Quezon said most countries have a no-ransom policy for kidnapping incidents perpetrated by terrorists.

"You cannot really deal with or pay ransom because that means (allowing) them to get what they want and sow terror further because of financial rewards for their criminality," Quezon said.

He said the demands of criminals should not be dignified.

"Let us remain committed to our confidence in our Armed Forces and police to handle the situation; to our DFA to properly coordinate and inform foreign governments and the families of those involved. And let us all say a silent prayer that these visitors to our country remain safe and that they will be rescued at the soonest possible time," Quezon said.

The Abu Sayyaf posted a video on Tuesday showing the four captives sur-

rounded by gunmen threatening to execute them in a month if the demands for ransom were not met.

This was the third time the bandits posted a video of the hostages. Last October, a post on social media demanded a halt to the military operations against the kidnappers while in November, they asked for P1 billion in ransom for each of the captives.

The military said it was checking the veracity of the latest video and was continuing with the operations to rescue the hostages safely.

While government forces have launched operations to rescue the hostages, private groups, through middlemen, are working in the background to negotiate with the hostage takers.

Middlemen are usually tapped by the families of the kidnapping victims in dealing with the Sulu-based bandits to secure their safe release. These middlemen are local folk known to and have the trust of the bandit group.

An official from Sulu described the Abu Sayyaf demand of P1 billion for each of their four hostages as despicable if not totally irrational.

The official warned any payment of the huge ransom to the Abu Sayyaf will further complicate the already shaky security landscape in Sulu and other key areas of Mindanao.

The Abu Sayyaf have issued a month-long ultimatum, up to April 8, for the families and governments of the hostages to come up with their demand, threatening to execute their captives.

The four were forcibly taken from the island resort of Samal in Davao del Norte in September last year and ended up in the hands of the Abu Sayyaf in Sulu.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) have pointed out the no-ransom policy stays despite the Abu Sayyaf threat.

"The policy stays. That's a government policy. Nothing has changed in so far as we are concerned," AFP spokesman, Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla said.

Padilla said the government will never negotiate with terrorists.

13 March 2016

The Manila Times

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WWII veteran in Bataan passes away

SAMAL, Bataan: A leader of the few remaining World War II veterans in Bataan was laid to rest following his death at the age of 92.

Luis Siasat was president of 370 living WWII veterans in District I of Bataan. He was a member of the Philippine Scouts before and during the war years.

Rep. Herminia Roman, chair of the House committee on Veterans Affairs, and Mayor Gene de la Fuente led the *Luk-sang Parangal* given by the municipal government to Siasat on Friday.

Siasat's widow Aida said her husband planned to join this year's *Araw ng Kagitingan* rites, which they regularly attended every April 9.

Like other Filipino pensioners, Siasat receives a monthly pension of P6,700 from the Philippine Veterans Affairs Office. In addition, he gets US\$125 monthly for his services with the then-United States Army. He fought in Bataan



■ Luis Siasat

with other members of the United States Armed Forces of the Philippines in 1942 and joined the guerilla resistance movement after Bataan fell to the Japanese Imperial Army on April 9, 1942.

After the war, Luis went into farming and raising cattle. In 1998, he was elected municipal councilor of Samal and served until 2001. He also served as village head of Barangay Ibaba, this town.

ERNIE B. ESCONDE

ONLINE NEWS

13 MARCH 2016

www.pna.gov.ph

8,000 ROTC cadets in NCR to undergo administrative, tactical inspections Sunday

MANILA, March 12 (PNA) --- Around 8,000 Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) cadets from the National Capital Region (NCR) will be undergoing administrative and tactical inspections this coming Sunday.

The inspection will be conducted by the National Capital Regional Community Defense Group, said Army spokesperson Col. Benjamin Hao.

It will be held at the ROTC Hunters Guerrilla Parade Ground, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City.

Hao said the activity is dubbed as the 10th Centralized Regional Annual Administrative and Tactical Inspection (RAATI) for SY 2015-2016.

It is part of the pre-anniversary activities in celebration of the 119th Philippine Army founding anniversary which falls on March 22.

Hao said Army commander Lt. Gen. Eduardo M. Año is expected in the daylong event.

RAATI is a yearly activity of the Philippine Army which entails actual inspection of all activated Army ROTC units nationwide.

It is designed to evaluate the ROTC units in the implementation of the whole ROTC program.

The inspection aims to test the units' degree of administrative efficiency, training management, proficiency, and quality of training attained by the cadets.

These includes Administrative Inspection, Ceremonial Parade, Rank Inspection, Operation Order writing, Map Reading, Assembly and Disassembly of M-16 rifle and Cal. 45 pistol, Company Drill, Method of Instructions, Small Unit Tactics and Disaster Response and Rescue Operations.

It also intends to test the operational readiness of the ROTC units and allow the students to experience the real meaning of basic soldiery.

It is also a tool to attract freshmen college students to enroll in ROTC program so that more Filipino citizens will join the Philippine Army Reserve Force.

The ROTC students and school administrators will also have educational tour at the Army facilities including the Museum, and the Philippine Army Murals around the HPA Grandstand. The Army Museum is open for tour to the public from March 13 to 22. (PNA)

JBP/PFN

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/b

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PMA nagsimula nang maghigpit dahil sa graduation; ilang pagbabawal ipinatupad

By Bombo BaguioPosted in [Latest News](#) [Saturday, 12 March 2016 14:40](#)

BAGUIO CITY - Naghigpit na ngayon sa seguridad ang Philippine Military Academy (PMA) para sa commencement exercises na gaganapin bukas araw ng Linggo.

Ayon kay Lt. Col. Reynaldo Balido Jr., spokesperson ng akademya, ipinagbawal na sa mga turista ang pagpunta sa mahahalagang pasilidad at ilang bahagi ng akademya kung saan, binabantayan ito ng mga miyembro ng Presidential Security Group (PSG).

Napag-alamang dumating na rin sa akademya ang pamilya at kamag-anak ng mga kadeteng nakatakandang magtapos.

Kagabi ay ginanap ang ring hop, kung saan, isinuot ng mga magulang ang graduation ring o bull ring sa kanilang mga anak na kadete.

Ipinaalala naman ng opisyal sa mga pupunta sa akademya na bawal ang mga naka-tsinelas, naka-sando at naka-shorts.

Si Pangulong Benigno Aquino III ang magsisilbing pangunahing bisita kung saan pagkatapos ng programa sa PMA ay inaasahang tutungo ito sa La Trinidad, Benguet para sa inagurasyon ng Benguet Agripinoy Trading Center.

<http://www.inquirer.net>

Video gives good picture of hostages, says AFP

By: [Julie M. Aurelio](#)

[@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#)

07:19 AM March 12th, 2016

A VIDEO clip that surfaced online showing the four Samal Island tourists kidnapped by militants nearly six months ago is a good indication of the captives' condition, according to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

"The video, for all it is worth, is a good indication of the kidnap victims' present condition. It also presents important information on the group that is holding them right now," said Col. Noel Detoyato, AFP public affairs office chief.

In the video, the foreigners—all emaciated, bearded and shirtless—pleaded for their lives as they called on their respective families and governments to meet the ransom being demanded by their abductors.

The video of about a minute and a half was posted on a Facebook page linked to Philippine Islamists.

The security sector said it will abide by the government's "no ransom policy" even with the Abu Sayyaf's threats to kill the hostages within a month if the ransom demands are not met.

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

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

The AFP maintained that it will continue on its focused military operations in support of the police operations to rescue the victims and pursue their kidnappers.

Detoyato said the safety of the hostages is a primary concern during combat and focused military operations to rescue the kidnap victims.

The AFP issued the statement after the release of a video that showed men claiming to be part of the Abu Sayyaf group threatening to kill the four hostages abducted in September last year.

The video in question was posted on the Facebook page Pamantasan ng Tawheed and Jihaad Filibin on Thursday.

In the video, the men gave the Canadian government a month or until April 8 to act on their P4-billion ransom demand or the hostages will be killed.

In September last year, Canadian nationals John Ridsdel and Robert Hall, Norwegian Kjartan Sekkingstad and Filipina Maritess Flor were snatched from a resort on Samal Island in Davao del Norte by armed men.

Later on, a video of the tourists surfaced in which the P4-billion ransom demand was made. Another video demanded for a halt to military operations in Sulu before the start of the negotiations for the hostages' freedom.

The embassies of the foreign captives have declined to comment on the demands being made by the kidnappers.

A spokesperson for Canada's foreign minister said the government was aware of the video but did not want to comment or provide new information in case it endangered the captives.

Calgary-based TVI Pacific, where Ridsdel was a semiretired consultant, declined to comment. According to Matt Williams, the Philippines country director for Pacific Strategies and Assessments, a risk mitigation company that tracks rebel groups, the release of a dramatic, threatening video is a common tactic of the group.

www.bomboradyo.com

Rescue operations sa Canadians, Norwegian hostages sa ASG, tuloy-tuloy'

By Bombo Reymund Tinaza Posted in Latest News Saturday, 14 March 2015 11:30

Nananatili umano ang rescue operation bilang opsyon sa pagliligtas sa dalawang Canadians at isang Norwegian na hawak bilang hostage ng teroristang grupong Abu Sayyaf.

Magugunitang nagbanta ang ASG na papatayin ang kanilang ang mga bihag kung hindi magbabayad ng ransom at naglagay pa ng video sa Facebook kung saan nagmamakaawang maligtas ang mga bihag.

Sinabi ni Presidential Communications Development and Strategic Planning Office (PCDSPO) Undersecretary Manolo Quezon III, kinakatigan nila ang posisyon ng militar na huwag makipag-negotiate o magbayad nang ransom sa mga terorista.

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

Ayon kay Quezon, tiwala sila sa kakayahan ng AFP at PNP na resolbahin ang sitwasyon habang bahala naman ang Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) sa pakikipag-ugnayan sa foreign governments at pamilya ng mga biktima.

Iginiit pa ni Quezon na huwag bigyang dignidad o pagkilala ang ganitong gawain sa pakikipag-usap sa official level sa mga teroristang bumibiktima sa mga sibilyan, Pilipino man o banyaga.

"Let us not dignify by communicating 'di ba on an official level with people who have broken the law and who are causing misery to innocent civilians whether Filipino or foreign. Let us remain committed to our confidence in our Armed Forces and police to handle the situation. We put in our DFA to properly coordinate and inform foreign governments and the families of those involved. And let us all say a silent prayer that these visitors to our country remain safe and that they will be rescued at the soonest possible time," ani Quezon.

www.news.abs-cbn.com

PH lease of planes from Japan legal - Palace

Willard Cheng, ABS-CBN News

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A Japan Maritime Self-Defense Forces' TC-90 training aircraft is seen in this undated handout photo released by the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Forces, and obtained by Reuters on August 5, 2015. *Reuters*

MANILA - Malacañang on Friday stood by the need and legality to lease planes from Japan to patrol the South China Sea.

Communications Secretary Sonny Coloma said the country has no intention to stoke tensions in the area, adding that "freedom of navigation and freedom of overflight" should prevail.

"Ayon sa ating Department of National Defense, ito ay isang legal, otorisado, at umiiral na kalakaran o practice ng mga bansang katulad natin na naghahangad na makapag-acquire ng mga kagamitan na gagamitin sa tanggulan pambansa at ito naman ay ginagawa sa legal at maayos na paraan," Coloma said.

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

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"Kaisa tayo ng maraming bansa na nagpahiwatig na ng kanilang posisyon sa kahalagahan na malaya ang paglalakbay ng lahat ng bansa sa South China Sea o West Philippine Sea, doon sa prinsipyo ng freedom of navigation at freedom of overflight dahil napakahalaga nito sa pandaigdigang komersyo at sa patuloy na pagtamo ng buong mundo ng mga biyaya ng progresong pangkabuhayan.

"Walang hangarin ang ating bansa na lumikha ng ligalig dyan dahil ang ating patakaran nga ay 'yung diplomatiko at tahimik na pagresolba ng mga usapin dyan sa lugar ng South China Sea," he added.

President Benigno Aquino III on Wednesday announced that the Philippines will lease from Japan five TC-90 training aircraft to assist the Navy in patrolling the West Philippine Sea.

The Philippines has made the modernization of its air and naval forces a priority as China deploys missiles and fighters on a number of artificial islands in the South China Sea.

China claims almost the entire South China Sea, where about \$5 trillion worth of ship-borne trade passes annually. Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam also have claims to parts of the sea.

China later expressed alarm about the Philippines-Japan agreement, stressing that Japan is not a party to the South China Sea issue.

"If the Philippines' actions are to challenge China's sovereignty and security interests, China is resolutely opposed," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei said.

"I also want to point out that Japan is not a party to the South China Sea issue and we are on high guard against its moves. We demand that Japan speak and act cautiously and not do anything to harm regional peace and stability." - **With Reuters**

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