

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



Serving the people. Securing the land.

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01 May 2016

Sunday

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

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The Manila Times

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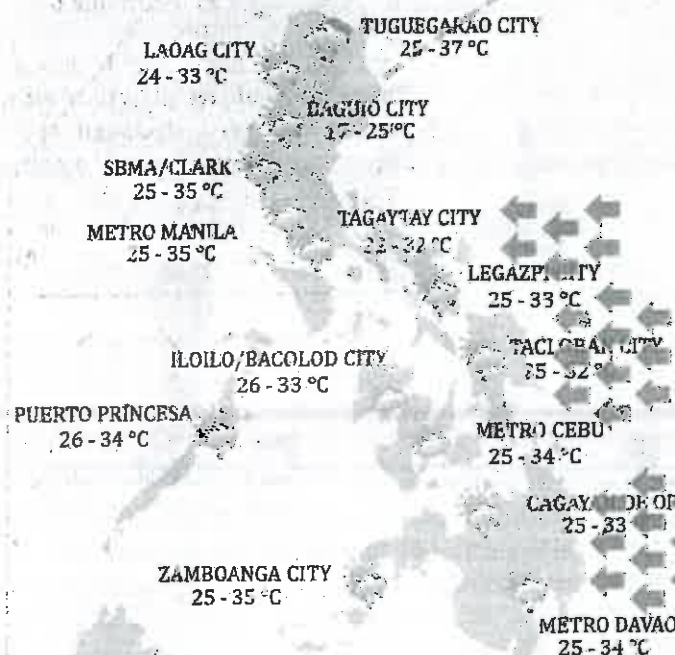
The Manila Times

TODAY'S WEATHER FORECAST

MAY 1, 2016 | SUNDAY

TAIL-END OF A COLD FRONT
AFFECTING NORTHERN LUZON

EASTERLIES
AFFECTING EASTERN SECTION OF
SOUTHERN LUZON, VISAYAS
AND MINDANAO
(APRIL 30, 5:00 AM)



SUNRISE SUNSET

5:33 AM 6:13 PM

MOONRISE MOONSET

12:51 AM 12:49 AM

FULL MOON LAST QUARTER

APR 22 1:24 PM APR 30 11:29 AM

LOW TIDE HIGH TIDE

11:56 PM 1:54 PM

0.03 Meter 0.86 Meter

Partly cloudy skies

Fairly cloudy to mainly cloudy with

moderate to heavy showers

showers with moderate to heavy rain

and/or thunderstorms

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
METRO MANILA	25 - 35 °C	25 - 35 °C	25 - 35 °C	16 - 26 °C	16 - 26 °C	17 - 26 °C
METRO CEBU	26 - 34 °C	25 - 34 °C	25 - 34 °C	26 - 34 °C	26 - 34 °C	26 - 34 °C
METRO DAVAO	25 - 35 °C	26 - 35 °C	25 - 35 °C	25 - 35 °C	25 - 36 °C	26 - 35 °C
BAGUIO						
PUERTO PRINCESA						
BORACAY						

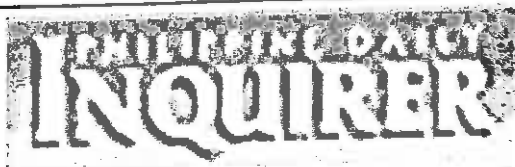
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SABOTAGE, PANDA HUNT

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So sue us—Sara Duterte

By Leo Udtohan
Inquirer Visayas

TAGBILARAN CITY, Bohol—Sara Duterte, daughter of presidential race front-runner Rodrigo Duterte, on Friday dared Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV to take her and her father to court to prove his allegations that they have undeclared wealth.

Campaigning for her father, the trash-talking mayor of Davao City, Sara Duterte dismissed as black propaganda Trillanes' claim that they have P227 million in a joint account at the Bank of the Philippine Is-

lands (BPI) branch on Julia Vargas Avenue in Pasig City.

The BPI Julia Vargas account is only one of 17 accounts, including accounts in BPI Greenhills in Mandaluyong and in

SO SUE/A19

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anco de Oro (BDO) Unibank in Davao City, that, according to documents provided by Trillanes, have seen transactions amounting to P2.4 billion over a period of nine years.

Trillanes, a vice presidential candidate in next month's national elections, disclosed the accounts last week, charging that Mayor Duterte did not declare them in his statement of assets, liabilities and net worth (SALN).

But Sara Duterte, in an interview with the INQUIRER, dared Trillanes to bring a case against her and her father if he had a "legitimate complaint" against them.

"If he has a legitimate complaint, he should file it in court so we can answer properly," she said.

But she neither confirmed nor denied that he and her father had joint bank accounts.

Father's admission

Mayor Duterte admitted to reporters during a news conference in Pasay City on Friday that he had an account at BPI Julia Vargas and that it contained "less than P200 million" in deposits.

He gave flippant answers to reporters' questions about the P2.4 billion in transactions claimed by Trillanes, saying at one point that he could not remember exactly how much was in the bank accounts "because of the zeroes."

Asked why he did not declare the bank accounts in his SALN, he replied: "I already spent it."

In a text message to the INQUIRER on Saturday, Trillanes said he felt "vindicated" by Duterte's admission.

"But most important, it's time to shatter Duterte's fraudulent image as simple, honest and incorruptible," Trillanes said.

With the discovery of Duterte's hidden bank accounts, he said, the Davao mayor has turned out to be no different from Vice President Jejomar Binay, who has been investigated by the Senate over allegations that he pocketed millions of pesos in overpriced infrastructure contracts when he was mayor of Makati City.

"He is actually as corrupt as the Binays. Worse, he is a psychopath and a confessed

murderer," Trillanes said, referring to Duterte's claim of killing criminals in Davao City outside the judicial system.

'Only two accounts'

Partido Demokratikong Pilipino-Laban ng Bayan (PDP-Laban), Duterte's party, on Saturday insisted that the Davao mayor have only two accounts at BPI Julia Vargas with P17,000 and P27,000 in deposits, not "less than P200 million" as Duterte told reporters on Friday.

"The BPI official statement belies the claim of Senator Trillanes that Mayor Duterte has a big deposit at BPI," PDP-Laban spokesperson Paola Alvarez said, referring to a statement issued by BPI on Friday denying the bank's confidentiality system had been breached.

"I don't know where Senator Trillanes got his information, but the graphic posted by the (Philippine Daily Inquirer) showing alleged credits, that is not a BPI document," Jose Teodoro Limcaoco, managing director and chief financial officer of Ayala Corp., which owns BPI, said in the statement.

"The deposit slip shown by Mar (Liberal Party presidential standard-bearer Mar Roxas) or the INQUIRER is not a unique thing," Limcaoco said, referring to the deposit slip for \$10 that Roxas showed to reporters on Friday after his staff made the deposit in Duterte's account at BPI Julia Vargas to prove the existence of the account, discovering in the process that it was a dollar account. (See story on this page.)

"All banks will show the name of the depositor on a deposit slip. We are committed to protecting client trust and preserving the trust bestowed on us by our clients all these years," Limcaoco said.

Alvarez said that in using false information in claiming that Duterte had undeclared wealth, Trillanes "peddled a big, fat lie for which he should apologize to the Filipino people because he has absolutely no credibility."

But Trillanes, who has dared Duterte to sign a waiver for the disclosure of his bank accounts, said on Thursday that he would resign from the Senate and withdraw from the vice presidential race if he could not prove his accusations against the Davao mayor.

He said that if Duterte refused to sign a waiver and got elected President, he would use the documents supporting his allegations for Duterte's impeachment.

Duterte said he would stop a move for his impeachment by closing down Congress.

"If they try to impeach me, I'll shut down Congress. No more impeachment," he said at a campaign rally in Bataan province.

'Soldier of fortune'

Campaigning in Naga City on Saturday, Duterte said Trillanes' charges were "black propaganda."

He described Trillanes as "a soldier of fortune."

"I already requested my lawyer Salvador Panelo to face him and open my bank account on Monday," he said, referring to a meeting set by Trillanes at BPI Julia Vargas for the signing of a waiver that would allow the disclosure of the mayor's accounts there.

"My account has only P17,000 and they can dig it up. My lawyer said I had no unexplained wealth, only unexplained poverty," Duterte said.

The mayor has dared Trillanes to put his allegations and name his source of information in an affidavit, but the senator has refused, saying an affidavit is not necessary.

"He's just looking for a way out. Why does he want to know who my source is? Will he have the [Davao Death Squad] go after the source?" Trillanes said on Friday.

What is important, he said, is the undeclared amounts in Duterte's bank accounts.

No undeclared properties

In Tagbilaran on Friday, Sara Duterte denied that she and her siblings had undeclared real estate properties.

Based on Land Registration Authority records, the Duterte children have 35 properties, 11 of which are registered as Sara Duterte's and four as her husband's.

Sara Duterte said she declared all of her properties in her SALN. She served as Davao City mayor from 2010 to 2013.

She said most of her properties came from her parents after they separated. *With reports from Leila B. Salaverria, Niña Calleja in Manila and Inquirer Research*

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Duterte threatens jail time for Trillanes

By ROBERTZON RAMIREZ
and EDITH REGALADO

If he wins the presidency, Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte will make sure Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV is put behind bars if information on the latter's exposé would turn out to be false or illegally obtained.

Duterte made the threat on Friday when asked for his next move if Trillanes' claim of more than P200 million in the mayor's account is debunked tomorrow, when the account is opened in response to the senator's challenge.

The camp of Duterte has promised to bare the mayor's account with the Bank of the Philippine Islands on Julia Vargas Ave. tomorrow to disprove Trillanes' accusation. Duterte's pronouncement came shortly after his meeting with outgoing Cavite Gov. Jonvic Remulla in Pasay City.

Trillanes said Duterte did not declare his joint account with his daughter Sara that allegedly contained P211 million in his 2014 statement of assets liabilities and net worth (SALN).

The senator also accused Duterte of having P2.4 billion in his three accounts in Pasig, San Juan and Davao City. He also said the mayor has 40 properties, belying the latter's claim that he is of modest means.

But Duterte said Trillanes was only trying to get back at him after he refused to have the senator as his runningmate.

He said he expects to draw more and fiercer black propaganda as his ratings in surveys continue to rise.

The mayor also called Trillanes shameless and crazy for using government funds to destroy his political opponents.

Duterte on Friday accepted

Turn to Page 8

From Page 1

Trillanes' challenge to open his bank accounts and dared the senator to be present tomorrow morning at the BPI Julia Vargas branch so that the people would know who between them is telling the truth.

He said he has authorized his counsel Salvador Panelo to open his accounts in front of Trillanes, but stressed the senator - if he ever shows up - should have a sworn affidavit with him outlining his accusation against the presidential candidate.

He also challenged Trillanes to disclose his real intention for making the accusations.

Duterte said he would send Trillanes back to the Philippine

Military Academy (PMA) if the latter becomes his vice president. He called the senator - a leader of a failed coup - a "mercenary frustrated soldier."

Duterte also took a swipe at Liberal Party standard bearer Manuel Roxas II for challenging him to reveal his dollar accounts.

He pointed out Roxas should have chosen Trillanes and not Leni Robredo as his runningmate, saying the administration standard bearer has the same mindset as the senator.

He also lashed out at Roxas for being ungrateful, citing his generosity to the LP candidate

"The Aquino administration is bent on thwarting a victory by Duterte. It is desperately trying to save the candidacy of Liberal Party standard bearer Mar Roxas and is poised to employ all means, including massive cheating, to maintain the status quo," Evasco said.

He said the latest attacks on Duterte were part of a last ditch effort by the administration to destroy the credibility of the Davao City mayor, who is leading in popularity surveys of presidential candidates.

"They made the election a very dirty political exercise. They want it confined among the elite. They cannot stomach an outsider, one who has captivated the imagination of the people but does not come from their ranks," Evasco, a former rebel priest, added.

He said they expect more black propaganda against Duterte as his ratings in surveys continue to rise just days before the elections on May 9.

On Friday, Pulse Asia released the result of its April 19-24 survey on voter prefer-

ence, with Duterte enjoying voter preference of 33 percent, or 11 percentage points ahead of closest rival Sen. Grace Poe who got 22 percent. Roxas was third with 20 percent.

The mayor said Roxas had never paid a single centavo for his favorite food in Davao City.

"Now he is accusing me of being a thief. When we were not yet political rivals, you accepted my offer of food, but now you're accusing me of being a thief," he said in Filipino.

"You never offered me food. But I gave you something to eat. You're shameless," he said of Roxas.

Duterte said he felt offended being compared by Roxas to the late chief justice Renato Corona who was impeached because of his failure to declare certain assets in his SALN.

"You're running for presi-

dent and you brazenly tell us lies. *Ang sinungaling ay kapatid ng magnanakaw* (A liar is brother to a thief). And maybe, they're children of murderers," Roxas said earlier, addressing Duterte.

But the mayor said it was "a statement of desperation" from Roxas.

Pawn

In Davao City, Duterte's campaign manager said the latest exposés against the presidential candidate are the handiwork of the Aquino administration, which is just using Trillanes as "pawn."

"The brain behind is Malacañang," Duterte campaign manager and Marbojoc, Bohol Mayor Leoncio Evasco Jr. said yesterday.

ence, with Duterte enjoying voter preference of 33 percent, or 11 percentage points ahead of closest rival Sen. Grace Poe who got 22 percent. Roxas was third with 20 percent.

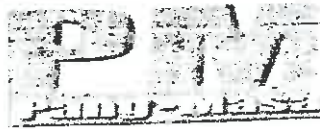
"Aquino and Roxas both belong to the landed elite who only have contempt against the majority of Filipinos clamoring for genuine and real change," Evasco said.

"During the watch of P-Noy and Roxas, we saw how they remorselessly sacrificed the lives of our gallant police officers in Mamasapano," he said.

"When hungry farmers demanded rice because the severe drought is killing their children, they answered back by firing at the protesters and in the process killing three and wounding scores of others. It was an exercise of brutal state euthanasia," he added.

"For the first time, people have rallied behind a man - a leader - who is giving them hope," he said. This, he added, is bringing "fear into the senses of the Aquino government and their minions."

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Pahina. 2

Arms cache ng Abu Sayyaf ni-raid

Sari-saring mga armas at bala ang nasamsam ng tropa ng militar makaraang salakayin ang dalawang isla na nagsisilbing arms cache at staging point ng grupo ng mga bandidong Abu Sayyaf na sangkot sa kidnapping for ransom sa isinagawang operasyon sa Tawi-Tawi nitong Biyernes.

Ayon kay Major Filemon Tan, Spokesman ng AFP-Western Mindanao Command, bandang alas-5:50 ng umaga ng lusubin ng composite units ng Joint Task Force Tawi Tawi ang Siluag Island at Mamanuk Island sa

lalawigan.

Sinabi ni Tan na ang operasyon ay bahagi ng law enforcement operations upang pilayin ang puwersa ng mga bandidong Abu Sayyaf sa gitna na rin ng serye ng kidnapping for ransom.

Ang grupo ng mga bandido ay dumarayo pa ng pangingidnap sa Malaysia at nangha-harang ng mga dayuhang bangka sa karagatan sa hangganan ng Pilipinas at Malaysia.

Nasamsam sa operasyon ang sari-saring mga armas na kinabibilangan ng apat na M16A1

rifle, isang US carbine, isang cal. 38 revolver, isang 357 revolver, isang M16 A1 M203, isang cal 60 machine gun, isang cal 50 BMG at iba pa.

Nakuha rin sa operasyon ang bulto ng mga bala at magazines at ang jungkong speedboat na pinaniniwalaang gamit ng mga bandido sa kanilang illegal na operasyon.

"The operation was conducted as part of the focused military operations to prevent lawlessness in the area, "pahayag ni Tan - Joy Cantos -

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Twin explosions rock Basilan

COTABATO CITY – Two successive blasts rocked Lamitan City, Basilan Friday night, the Office of Civil Defense of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao here said yesterday.

An OCD-ARMM statement said the first explosion of a suspected improvised explosive device occurred at 7:53 p.m. followed by another four minutes later.

The first IED went off in front of Alliance Church on Flores St. while the second occurred in the vicinity of the barangay hall of Barangay Mabini.

Nobody was reported killed or injured by the OCD-ARMM. ARMM Gov. Mujiv Hataman has ordered the police and other concerned agencies to

investigate the blast.

Meanwhile, government security forces pursuing the Abu Sayyaf Group have recovered an arms cache and a speedboat belonging to the brigands during operations in Siluag and Mamanuk Islands, Tawi-Tawi, Friday.

Armed Forces Western Mindanao Command spokesman Major Filemon Tan said troops from Joint Task Force Tawi-Tawi carried out the operations that took place at about 5:50 a.m.

Recovered were four M-16AI automatic rifles, one M-79 grenade launcher, a US carbine, one .38 caliber revolver, one .357 Magnum revolver, an M-16AI with an M-203 grenade

launcher, a caliber 60 machine gun, and a .50 caliber Browning machine gun.

Also seized were assorted ammunition and a "jungkong" speedboat believed to be used by the ASG in their illegal activities.

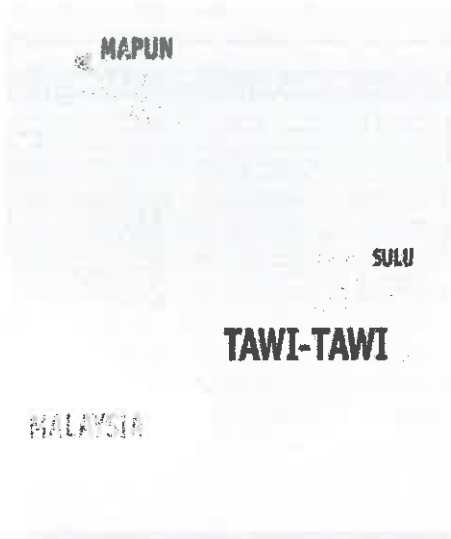
"This operation was conducted as part of the focused military operations to prevent lawless activities in the area," Tan said.

No group has claimed responsibility for the explosions but the ASG is known to operate in Basilan. The ASG had beheaded a Canadian captive and seized Malaysian fishermen recently. **(Ali G. Macabalang and PNA)**

<http://dwdd.com.ph/>

FOCUSED MILITARY OPERATIONS II ASG arms cache, speedboat recovered in Tawi- Tawi operations

Lui



MANILA — Government security forces pursuing Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) bandits have recovered an arms cache and a speedboat belonging to the brigands during operations at Siluag and Mamanuk Islands, Tawi-Tawi, Friday early morning.

This was disclosed by Western Mindanao Command spokesman Major Filemon Tan.

Tan said troops from Joint Task Force Tawi-Tawi carried out the operations which took place 5:50 a.m.

Recovered were four M-16AI automatic rifles, one M-79 grenade launcher, a US carbine, one .38 caliber revolver, one .357 Magnum revolver, an M-16AI with an M-203 grenade launcher, a caliber 60 machine gun, and a .50 caliber Browning machine gun.

Also seized were assorted ammunition and a "jungkong" speedboat believed to be used by the ASG in their illegal activities.

"This operation was conducted as part of the focused military operations to prevent lawless activities in the area," Tan said.

<http://retiredanalyst.blogspot.com/>

Gov't gives NPAs chance to return to folds of law

"The government is actually giving the members of the NPA a chance to return to their families and live normal lives in their community."

This was the central message of Major General Rafael Valencia, commander of 10th Infantry (Agila) Division to the media here Thursday afternoon in the midst of the increasing numbers of New People's Army (NPA) rebels who recently decided to return to their homes and communities and start to live peacefully.

Valencia also hoped that the remaining NPA rebels in the hinterlands of Davao region and in the areas of region 12 will soon realize the futility of the armed struggle being waged by their organization, which is regarded as one of the lawless armed groups (LAGs) in the country.

He further urged the remaining NPA rebels to "emulate what their former companions did," as it is high time that "soldiers, rebels and ordinary citizens alike should all work towards peace and development without violence and armed struggle."

Valencia's call came after 10 NPA rebels operating in different areas in Davao region and Region 12 surrendered to government forces in March and April of this year.

The series of surrenders came in the midst of the massive military offensives that the 10th ID has launched since January and the number of armed confrontations that took place between government forces and said LAGs for the period.

In the same statement to the media on Thursday, 10th ID chief information officer Captain Rhyen Batchar said three NPA members yielded to various line units of the command in two different occasions last April 24 and 28.

They brought with them during their surrender a Garand rifle and two M-16 Armalite rifles, Batchar added.

On Thursday alias Jef and alias Noel, both members of guerrilla front 53, of the Southern Mindanao Regional Committee (SMRC) of the NPA operating in the province of North Cotabato, yielded to the elements of 2nd Scout Ranger Battalion in Barangay Batobato, President Roxas town.

The other NPA rebel who surrendered last April 24 was Alias Roy, 38 years of age and a member of guerrilla front 27 also of SMRC of the NPA operating in the province of Compostela Valley province. Alias Roy submitted himself to the elements of 71st Infantry Battalion in Barangay New Visayas, Mawab, Compostela Valley.

Batchar said the real names of the former rebels are being withheld for their personal security while they are still being interviewed by their custodial units.

Last Tuesday, April 26, a member of the special operations unit of guerrilla front 53 of the NPA-SMRC operating in Davao del Norte province also surrendered to the troopers of 68th Infantry Battalion.

Alias Kid, 34 years old, also surrendered a .45 caliber pistol when he presented himself to authorities in Sitio Milyong, Barangay Sto. Niño, Talaingod town.

During interview, Alias Kid told the army that he was only 17 years old when he was recruited to join the NPA on May 1999 in Talaingod, Davao del Norte. He is currently undergoing interview and processing at the headquarters of 68IB.

But the biggest number of surrenders came in two separate occasions last March 23 and April 14, Captain Batchar pointed out to reporters when a total of six NPAs, two of them were minors, turned themselves in to the elements of 73rd Infantry Battalion and Task Force Gensan of the 1002nd Brigade in General Santos City.

The six were all members of guerrilla front 71 of the Far South Mindanao Regional Committee (FSMRC) operating in the areas of Sarangani province, General Santos City and parts of South Cotabato.

Batchar identified the former rebels through their aliases as Jomar, Rex, Anghel, Dondon and Daniel. Both Dondon and Daniel are 17 years of age.

They also presented to authorities upon their surrender a remote controlled landmine which they claimed the NPA rebels use during ambushes that had damaged the lives and properties of soldiers and civilians in the area.

a

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

They also told authorities during their interview that hardships and trauma, especially to the minor members forced them to abandon the NPA movement.

They added that they were deceived by the rebels when they were recruited to join the armed movement by promising them to receive Php 2,000 monthly salary, which they said did not materialize.

<http://retiredanalyst.blogspot.com/>

3 more NPA rebels yield

THREE NPA members brought along their firearms as they surrendered to different units of the 10th Infantry Division in Compostela Valley and Cotabato on Thursday.

Capt. Rhyan Batchar, spokesperson of 10th ID, said alias Roy, 38, a member of Guerilla Front 27 of the Southern Mindanao Regional Committee (SMRC) surrendered to 71st Infantry Battalion with a Garand rifle at Barangay New Visayas, Mawab, Compostela Valley on Sunday.

Alias Jef and Noel, who are both members of Guerilla Front 53, SMRC brought two Armalite rifles to the troops of the 2nd Scout Ranger Battalion in Barangay Batobato, President Roxas, Cotabato province on Thursday.

The former rebels brought along with them a caliber .30 M1 Garand rifle and two M16 Armalite rifles.

Their real names are being withheld for their personal security.

Maj. Gen. Rafael Valencia, the division commander, commended the troops of 71st Infantry Battalion and 2nd Scout Ranger Battalion for their accomplishments.

"We hope that other NPA members will soon realize how futile the armed struggle is and that Filipinos ought to live in a democracy, free of violence," he said.

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AFP hoists Phl flag in unoccupied Batanes islet

By JAIME LAUDE

ITBAYAT, Batanes – The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) yesterday hoisted the Philippine flag in one of the five unoccupied islets here to support the local government's call for help to transform the islet into a resting place and shelter area for Filipino fishermen.

The AFP's Northern Luzon Command (Nolcom) hoisted the flag during a flag raising ceremony at Y'ami Island's

Hill 200, capping a three-day maritime domain awareness activity.

The maritime awareness activities were held amidst growing tensions caused by China's excessive claims in the disputed areas in the South China Sea and west Philippine Sea, including Philippine territory.

Nolcom and civil society organization volunteers

launched the biggest medical and dental mission for thousands of residents, including school children and the elderly in the secluded island town.

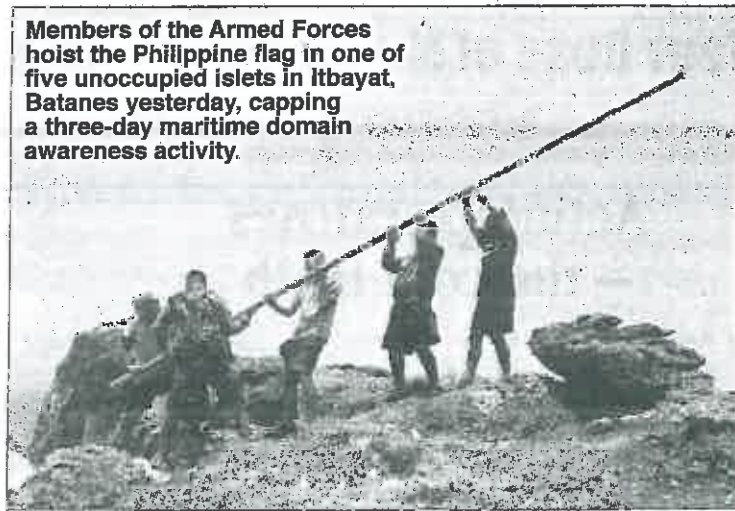
Y'ami Island is also known as Mavulis. Itbayat Island is one of the six municipalities of Batanes with a population of almost 3,000 in five barangays.

"We organized this event as part of our patriotic duty. We are here to help our most dis-

advantaged fellow Filipinos in this particular place. We want them to know that they're not alone," said Mon Corpuz, overall volunteer coordinator.

The patriotic activity of Nolcom with stakeholders from the organizations Go Share and Black Pencil is one of the AFP's programs to promote peace and order and the solidarity of the Filipino people for national maritime security. – With Aurea Calica

Members of the Armed Forces hoist the Philippine flag in one of five unoccupied islets in Itbayat, Batanes yesterday, capping a three-day maritime domain awareness activity.



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New WesCom chief named

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

age of 56.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines Western Command (AFP-WesCom) has a new commander in Brigadier General Elvin Hermogino of the Philippine Marines, following the retirement of Vice Admiral Alexander Lopez.

Lt. Gen. Glorioso Miranda, AFP Chief of Staff, led the change of command ceremony held in Puerto Princesa, Palawan last Friday.

Hermogino, the No. 2 man in WesCom, assumes the top post in acting capacity from Lopez, who retires from the military service at the

The AFP said the designation of all senior military officers assuming their posts during the election period are acting in nature in observance of the constitutional ban on appointments. This shall stay in effect until the Election period appointment ban is lifted and when the new appointing authority can designate a more permanent replacement.

During his speech, Miranda stated that it is clear to everyone in the service that there is no change in the mission of the AFP even if key leadership posts change hands.

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'P1.5-B intel fund must be tapped to crush Abu Sayyaf'

By MARIO B. CASAYURAN

Senate President Pro Tempore Ralph G. Recto said yesterday the government should use P1.5 billion in intelligence and confidential funds to crush the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) which abducted and beheaded its kidnapped victims, including foreigners, whose families failed to pay ransom.

Of the P1.5 billion, the executive branch should direct a major portion of its P833 million intelligence fund allocation this year in finding Abu Sayyaf leaders and lairs and in stopping their recruitment efforts and expansion of areas of operation, Recto said.

Another P702 million allocation for "confidential expenses" in this year's national budget could also be tapped in monitoring the terrorist group's activities, he added.

Recto said this budget has to be used to finance intelligence-gathering activities on the bandits' status and intentions.

Majority of this year's intelligence fund, he ex-

plained, is shared among three major recipients: The Department of National Defense (DND) with P246 million, the Philippine National Police (PNP) with P306 million and the Office of the President (OP) P250 million.

The DND's allocation is in turn distributed among the major armed services, while that of the OP could be used to fund intelligence-gathering projects on national security threats, Recto said.

"In the arsenal of weapons against terror, the intelligence fund is very important. It can also be lethal," Recto, a said.

Recto said the ASG, due to its recent beheading of a Canadian citizen it had kidnapped for ransom, "is clearly a national security threat", not only because

of the barbarity of its crimes, "but also because of their potential to bring their war to urban areas."

"They are the most violent criminal syndicate in the country today. Their barbarity actually lands them among Asia's most brutal. We have a regional obligation to stamp them out and wipe clean this blot on our national image," Recto said.

Recto said the next president should hit the ground running after this notorious group "and the present one must see to it that it is a degraded force before he steps down on June 30."

He said if the President Aquino's successor would be drawing up a list of criminals who must be neutralized, then without doubt Abu Sayyaf occupies the number one spot, Recto said.

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PH acquires US naval research ship

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

The United States Naval Ship (USNS) Melville (T-AGOR-14), a research vessel, was formally turned over to the Philippines through christening and commissioning ceremonies held in San Diego, California, last Tuesday.

Navy Captain Lued L. Lincuna, director of the Naval Public Affairs Office, said the US Navy vessel was named Barko ng Republika ng Pilipinas (BRP) Gregorio Velasquez (AGR-702).

He said the Philippine Navy (PN) contingent for the turnover rites was headed by Commodore Narciso A. Vingson Jr., deputy commander of the Philippine Fleet, and

Department of National Defense (DND) Undersecretary Jesus C. Millan.

Lincuna said the Auxiliary General Research (AGR) 702, the Philippine Navy's (PN's) first oceanographic research vessel, departed from San Diego, California on Friday (PH time), for its voyage to the Philippines.

A crew composed of about 50 navy personnel underwent preparatory training for familiarization and orientation on the operation and maintenance of various equipment on the vessel since March this year.

BRP Gregorio Velasquez is one of the two ships pledged by US President Barack H. Obama to be donated to the Philippines during his visit for the APEC Leaders'

Summit last November.

"The research vessel will not only provide us capability for hydrographic survey, it will also become a platform for interagency collaboration for partners in the academe and thus improve awareness of our sub-surface environment," Lincuna said.

"Aside from its primary mission, AGR-702 would also be a valuable platform in reviewing our Anti-submarine Warfare Capability," he added.

The acquisition of the ship also aims to address the issues in terms of marine scientific researches/surveys and to gather marine scientific data beneficial to naval operations.

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The Manila Times

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Troops raid island near Sabah border

BY AL JACINTO
REPORTER

ZAMBOANGA CITY: Marines who swooped down on an island off the southern Philippine province of Tawi-Tawi near the Sabah border on Friday recovered an arms cache and rescued 10 people who were victims of human trafficking, a military spokesman said.

Captain Roy Trinidad, of the anti-terror Joint Task Group Tawi-Tawi, said the operation involved Fleet Marine units of the Naval Forces Western Mindanao.

"This is part of the ongoing 'Operation Pagbabaybay' targeting kidnap for ransom gangs operat-

ing in the area," Trinidad said.

Troops also detained a man linked to human trafficking. The victims were all from Pagadian City, Trinidad told *The Manila Times*.

He said the raid led troops to the island called Siluwag where security forces seized two machine

guns, 5 automatic rifles, two handguns and grenade launchers.

Also on Friday, government forces in hot pursuit of members of the Al-Qaeda linked Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) recovered an arms cache and a speedboat belonging to the brigands during an operation in Silug and Mamauk Islands in Tawi-Tawi.

Troops led by Rear Adm. Jorge Amba raided the suspected staging points of the ASG in Tawi-Tawi.

Recovered were four M-16A1 automatic rifles, one M-79 grenade launcher, a US carbine, a .38 caliber revolver, a .357 Magnum revolver, an M-16A1 with an M-203 grenade launcher, a caliber .60 machine gun, and a .50 caliber Browning machine gun.

Also seized were assorted ammunition and a "jungkong" speedboat believed to be used by the ASG in their illegal activities.

The military operations coincided with Malaysian proposals for joint maritime patrols and aerial surveillance with the Philippines and Indonesia in the Sulu Sea at the border of Sabah.

Defense Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein earlier said that Malaysia would tackle the piracy and kidnapping problems in the Sulu Sea with his Filipino counterpart Voltaire Gazmin and Ryamizard Ryacudu of Indonesia.

The Philippines signed border patrol agreements with both Malaysia and Indonesia in the 1990s. The country - through the

Western Mindanao Command and Eastern Mindanao Command - regularly holds separate naval war games every year with Malaysia and Indonesia.

This agreement however, has not deterred the Abu Sayyaf rebels from kidnapping Malaysian and Indonesian nationals in Sabah and in the waters off Tawi-Tawi.

In 2000, the Abu Sayyaf intruded into Sabah and kidnapped almost two dozen mostly European hostages in the posh Sipadan resort and ransomed off the victims to Malaysia and Libya.

On March 26, Abu Sayyaf rebels kidnapped 10 Indonesian crew members of the tugboat Brahma 12 off Tawi-Tawi, and then four more Malaysian crew

men of the tugboat MasFive 6 were kidnapped in Sabah's Semporna district. And recently, four Indonesian crew of tugboat Henry were also kidnapped off Tawi-Tawi near the border.

The Abu Sayyaf has beheaded a Canadian hostage, John Ridsdel, on April 25 after his family and government failed to pay P300 million ransom. The jihadist group is still holding Dutchman Ewold Horn, who was kidnapped in Tawi-Tawi; Canadian Robert Hall and Norwegian Kjartan Sekkingstad, who were both seized from the posh resort of Samal Island in Davao del Norte province; and Japanese treasure hunter Toshio Ito also known as Amir Katayama Mamaito.

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INQUIRER

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A soldier's biggest battle yet

By Jocelyn R. Uy

HIS DETRACTORS may call it "hubris" or "shameless audacity," but the austere and hard-nosed persona that Sen. Antonio "Sonny" Trillanes IV maintains in public hearings, media interviews and even spontaneous photo ops reflects what this polit-

A SOLDIER'S/A8

From page A1

ical gadfly has always believed in: His job as lawmaker is no laughing matter.

"Not a day passes without his staff telling him to smile more often. But he really takes his job seriously," explained wife, Arlene, a retired military officer and former professor at the Philippine Military Academy (PMA). "I have always wondered why people see him as arrogant when he says something, but do not portray his colleagues as such when they do the talking," she added.

Trillanes first stepped into the political fray when he led more than 300 junior officers and enlisted men in the short-lived Oakwood mutiny in July 2003 to protest alleged corruption in the military under then President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Jailed on charges of rebellion, he ran a campaign behind bars and won as senator in 2007 with an impressive 11.13 million votes. Three years after President Aquino granted him amnesty, he was reelected senator in the 2013 midterm elections with 14.13 million votes.

But the latest prepoll surveys that show Trillanes at the bottom seem to indicate that Filipino voters are not as keen on the senator's vice presidential bid.

In fact, critics have described as a hatchet job meant to boost his poor ratings Trillanes' corruption exposé against presidential candidate Vice President Jejomar Binay and his recent disclosures on the alleged undeclared millions of presidential contender and Davao City Mayor

Rodrigo Duterte.

Wife Arlene believes otherwise. "He is really a fatalist. He says that if he wins, it is his destiny. But if he does not, so be it." In fact, she added, she had pleaded with the senator to forgo his bid for a higher position so he could get some peace and quiet and focus on their two teenage kids.

"His response was that he won't be able to live with the fact that people are suffering while our family may be doing fine," she said.

Trillanes' chief of staff, Rolando Averilla, also pointed to a likely source of support for the senator's VP bid: The Samahang Magdalo which, Averilla said, has evolved from being a band of rebels into an organization of 506,000 card-carrying members in over 500 chapters across the country.

Politics was never in Trillanes' mind in his younger years. A late bloomer, he entered the PMA when he was almost 20, just a few months before finishing his Bachelor of Science degree in Electronics Engineering at De La Salle University in 1991.

"He was bright but did not stand out in class or draw attention to himself," recalled Melba Balicanta-Talabis, his former English teacher at An-

gelicum School in Quezon City, where he attended high school. She described her former student as relentless, who had the confidence to engage teachers in a discussion whenever he had misgivings about a certain topic or lesson in class.

"I always saw him in the library doing research. He was not the type to just say 'yes' to whatever his teachers said," Talabis added.

He excelled in his Math subjects, said Francis Caoili, his Math professor at the PMA, although he would occasionally get called out for falling asleep in class following a tedious field training. "He was competitive but serious and quiet. It's hard to get exempted from an exam here (at the PMA), but he would get exempted often," recalled the 62-year-old instructor.

Close friends and kin said the senator's gruff exterior had been largely shaped by his late father, retired Navy Capt. Antonio Trillanes Sr. of PMA Class 1959, whose roots are from Ligao City in Albay. While it was the elder Trillanes' desire that his son take up engineering because of his aptitude in math, the youngest in his brood of five displayed apparent interest in things military from childhood.

He would play with his toy soldiers when not hanging out with the neighborhood kids in Caloocan City or serving as altar boy in their local parish, said elder brother Tony. "But we didn't see anything during Sonny's childhood that could have predicted his role in the Oakwood mutiny or his entry into politics. He was very private and shy. It must have been his PMA training that developed in him those ideals and principles he's now standing up for."

Cum laude

Averilla, also Trillanes' best friend, remembered how, as high schoolers, they would hang out at a nearby bookstore after a quick bite at McDonald's on Quezon Avenue, so the senator could devour the hardbound military books he could not afford. "He was interested about the military but it manifested a bit late," he added.



TRILLANES

At the PMA, Trillanes was chair of the academy's honor committee and graduated cum laude from the Marilag Class of 1995. As a Navy officer, he earned a five-year sea duty experience equivalent to more than 35,300 nautical miles, mostly spent going after smugglers, illegal loggers, poachers, human smugglers and illegal fishermen.

Trillanes also helped in the rescue of 32 passengers when the ill-fated MV Princess of the Orient sank at the height of a typhoon in 1998.

The senator's official website noted that prior to his Oakwood caper, Trillanes cleaned up the Naval Education and Training Command's procurement system as a procurement officer, and helped the government save more than P4 million in public funds.

Clear direction

His achievements were in sharp contrast to the young Trillanes' early laid-back lifestyle that saw him regularly playing billiards, going to discos and meeting girls with best friend Averilla. In fact, this devil-may-care attitude initially prompted their father to steer him away from a military career, said Tony. "But when he saw (Sonny's determination), he eventually gave way and even supervised his training and preparation for his PMA entry," the brother recalled.

Trillanes' wife once said that he pursued a military career to finally give his life a clear direction. "He felt that if he continued with his old ways, he would end up as nothing," Arlene said.

To his supporters, Trillanes' best achievements would be the 1,077 bills and resolutions he filed in the Senate, 52 of which were passed into law, and the uprisings he led to bring attention to alleged crooks in government.

But to wife Arlene, whom he met at the PMA when they were still both cadets, his being a good father trumps everything else. "I see how the kids really love him. They would always ask for their Papa whenever he was away," she said, adding that underneath his tough shell lurks an affectionate man who wrote her tons of love letters when they were still a young couple.

He is also a doting father, who tends to spoil their teenaged children, Thea and Seth, as if to make up for lost time, she said. They were just 4 and 6, respectively, when the Oakwood mutiny happened. "The kids are really looking forward to life after politics. They pretend to be aloof to what is happening but social media can be harsh, and they get hurt by what people say about their Papa," their mother said.

For Averilla, Trillanes can be serious to a fault, a burden that he would likely carry all his life. "He had set the bar high for himself and anywhere he goes, even if he exits politics, that will be his greatest challenge."

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The Manila Times

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editorial

In condemnation of the terrorist Abu Sayyaf

At a time when the nation is preparing for the exercise of its sovereign prerogative—the election of the officials who will lead the nation in the next six years—a terrorist group in our society, the Abu Sayyaf, brutally kills an innocent foreigner for failure to meet its criminal demands. The foreigner, Canadian John Ridsdel, 65, was one of four persons kidnapped by the terrorist group late last year and held for ransom. The other three—consisting of another Canadian, a Norwegian and a Filipina—remain in the hands of the bandits to this day.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who apparently learned of the crime ahead of almost everybody else, immediately condemned the outrageous act. Similar denunciations came from high officials of the Philippines who called for the apprehension and punishment of the perpetrators.

Yet, even as we join our leaders and the officials of Canada in demanding that the perpetrators be brought to justice, we are skeptical that this will happen any time soon. We are afraid the Abu Sayyaf and other criminal groups will continue their merry way, kidnapping and killing innocent people, Filipinos and non-Filipinos alike, “till kingdom come.”

Till kingdom come? Yes, because the Philippine justice system just cannot be counted upon to speedily and successfully capture the criminals and mete out to them their just deserts. The system is so inefficient, when it is not so rotten, that the criminals are more likely to die from a lightning strike than from any punishment dished out to them by the law.

We have become familiar with the script. The President will give the order to go after the criminals and bring them to justice. Politicians will express repugnance at the brutal act.

The Philippine National Police and other law-enforcement agencies will dutifully vow to capture the terrorists. Citizens will remain revolted, awaiting results. But nothing happens until the next kidnapping takes place.

Are we doomed to have the Abu Sayyaf rampaging in our midst forever? Are we under sentence to endure criminal groups for the rest of our lives, given that the communist insurgency, for instance, has been with us in the last 60 years—the longest-running antigovernment movement in Asia, perhaps in the world?

The answer has to be an emphatic no. We protest against any insinuation that our justice system will remain broken forever. This piece has nothing to do with Rodrigo R. Duterte, or with politics at all. But is Duterte's surge to leadership in the presidential contest an indication of the beginning of a national resolve to clear our country of criminals, from petty street-level thieves to plunderers in their *barongs* and western jackets, from isolated individuals to groups of well-coordinated operators? If it is, it is exactly what we need.

Let's repair our justice system if not for the sake of innocent people like Ridsdel, but for the sake of our own self-respect as decent human beings.

OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF

Army

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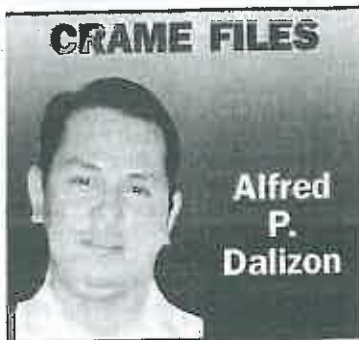
Pray our brave cops, soldiers will get real killers of Ridsdel

EIGHT days before we elect our new President and other national and local leaders, I wish that the entire country also pray for our brave soldiers and policemen who are out there in the jungles of Sulu going after around 400 Abu Sayyaf bandits who beheaded Canadian John Ridsdel and are holding on to 20 other foreign captives.

I also hope and pray that the military will get the real culprits and not innocent civilians in their mission to get the terrorists. I heard that over a dozen bandits have been killed in air strikes in Patikul four days after the beheading of Ridsdel. What I fear here is that the air and artillery strikes could kill even innocent men, women and children and we will not know.

On Thursday, I read a report that one of the Malaysian hostages has managed to talk with his father and told him they were always on the run due to the military bombardments. If the report is true, then there will always be the possibility that any of the hostages could also be killed by government bombs. To be exact, the military is using its MG 520 attack helicopters, Huey choppers and OV-10 Bronco light aircrafts as well as 105mm howitzers in the all-out offensive ordered by President Aquino.

While the Armed Forces is claiming that 14 bandits have been killed so far although no bodies have been discovered, there is still no report on



the exact location of the hostages which include another Canadian, a Norwegian, 18 Indonesian and Malaysian sailors, a Dutch birdwatcher and a Filipino woman.

HOW DID ABU SAYYAF MANAGE TO DUMP RIDSDDEL'S HEAD IN HEAVILY-SECURED JOLO PROPER?

I'm asking this question since it appears that the Abu Sayyaf managed to easily dump Ridsdel's head in Jolo proper which is supposed to be heavily-saturated with soldiers and policemen in the wake of the ongoing offensive against the extremists and the confirmed beheading of the Canadian national.

If security forces in Jolo City were indeed on full alert, they could have easily accosted the motorcycle-riding persons who dumped the Canadian's head and grilled them on the incident. But no, they didn't.

Supposed to be, soldiers and policemen should have ringed the entire Jolo City and the rest of the island-province days before the beheading since the Abu Sayyaf have aired their final 3 p.m. April 25 deadline for payment of P300 million or US\$6.5 million for each of the three Westerners-Ridsdel, fellow Canadian Robert Hall and Norwegian Kjartan Sekkingstad whom they seized in Samal Island in Davao del Norte last September 21 along with our countryman Marites Flor.

Unknown to the public, President Aquino even motored to the AFP general headquarters in Camp Aguinaldo last Monday afternoon where he ordered PNP chief, General Ric Marquez and AFP acting chief of staff, Lieutenant General Glorioso Miranda to mount a full-scale offensive against the extremists. Security was very tight in Camp Aguinaldo that afternoon due to the presence of the President.

President Aquino did not talk with the press that afternoon and instead sent PNP spokesman, Chief Superintendent Wilben Mayor and his AFP counterpart and mistah from PMA Class 1985, Brigadier General Resty Padilla to do the talking with the media. Many informed sources told me that the President was informed of the beheading of Ridsdel barely a few hours after he issued the order to the PNP-AFP.

To be continued

ONLINE NEWS

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DVIDS: Sea Dragons Go Ballistic at Balikatan'16



Filipino soldiers from the 1st Air Defense Artillery Battery, Philippine army Artillery Regiment take notes during classroom training at the Philippine army Artillery Regiment Headquarters, Fort Magsaysay, Philippines during Exercise Balikatan 2016. The 94th Army Air and Missile Defense Command participated in Balikatan for the first time by sending a team of five Soldiers to teach the fundamentals of air defense to the Philippine army at Fort Magsaysay, Philippines from March 31 - April 15. (U.S. Army photo by Chief Warrant Officer 3, Heather A. Sheltroun, 94th AAMDC)

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM, Hawaii –The 94th Army Air and Missile Defense Command participated in Balikatan for the first time by sending a team of five Soldiers to teach the fundamentals of air defense to the Philippine army at Fort Magsaysay, Philippines from March 31 - April 15.

Even though the 94th AAMDC is participating in Balikatan for the first time, it will not be the first time some of the Soldiers are visiting the Philippines.

Maj. Robert Deleon, intelligence (G-2) operations officer, 94th AAMDC, is from Legazpi City, Bicol, Philippines and his assistant instructor, Staff Sgt. Paul Buo, intelligence (G-2) analyst, 94th AAMDC, is from Makati, Philippines.

"It was an honor and privilege to be able to return to my native country and help train and mentor the Philippine army with the knowledge and experience I have gained while serving in the US Army," shared Deleon.

The 94th AAMDC mobile training team consisted of Deleon; Capt. Jefferey Cashion, operations (G-3) air defense artillery fire control officer (ADAFCO); Chief Warrant Officer 4 Garry Rocker, operations (G-3) ADAFCO; Chief Warrant Officer 3 Heather Sheltroun, communications (G-6) command and control systems integrator; and Buo. The MTT provided instruction in air defense and air intelligence preparation of the battlespace, basic air defense operations, and air defense data links.

"This training was critical to providing the Philippine army with a basic level of knowledge and understanding of the vast array of U.S. air defense weapon systems and how they are employed for

layered defense in different scenarios such as regional and homeland defense," explained Sheltroun, who is from Cleveland, Ohio. "We worked with them on how to properly select a good defense site while ensuring communications and interoperability are achievable."

The Philippine army activated the 1st Air Defense Artillery Battery during a ceremony at Fort Magsaysay on April 4. The newly formed battery provided 25 Filipino soldiers for the air defense training.

"Since this is the first battery within the Philippine army for air defense, we tried to forge a partnership and brotherhood with them to show that despite the different country's uniforms we wear, we are all artillerymen and we are all brothers fighting for the common good," said Sheltroun.

The leadership of the new artillery battery was also very excited about this unique opportunity to get training not normally taught in the Philippine army.

"We are very fortunate to have received the air defense training from the best of the 94th AAMDC," said Philippine army Capt. Jeffrey Ferrer, commander, 1st ADA Battery, Philippine army Artillery Regiment.

"My soldiers and I look forward to sustained and continuous training in the months and years to come."

"This is the first time that we are getting external inputs to our training and now we feel that they are progressing up as soldiers," continued Philippine army Capt. Samuel Madaging, executive officer, 1st ADA Battery. "The Philippine military has long been an expert in internal security operations like counter insurgency and basic infantry maneuvering. But now with the air defense training, the Philippine army soldiers are learning, and now operating, on a national level."

The Sea Dragons enjoyed the camaraderie with the students and immersed themselves in the Filipino culture. They participated in physical training, lived in the barracks and shared meals with their Philippine army counterparts.

"My favorite part about living with the Philippine army was the Filipino culture and the authentic Filipino food," said Buo. "Those things reminded me of my childhood days having fun, enjoying the culture that I grew up with and, of course, eating multiple meals of Filipino dishes in a day."

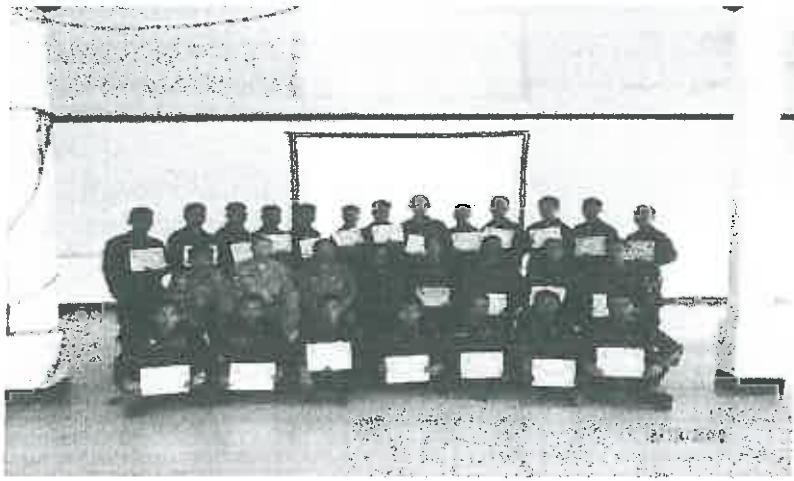
On April 11, an unexpected opportunity became available to the 94th AAMDC MTT when the Philippine presidential security group (PSG) requested the basic air defense operations training. The PSG is equivalent to the U.S. Secret Service and one of their mission requirements is to provide basic air defense for the Malacanang Palace (Philippine White House) building, grounds and facilities.

"The PSG students were very dedicated and motivated in their mission to protect the president of the Philippines," said Deleon. "They were very attentive to everything we taught them."

At the end of the exercise, the 94th AAMDC MTT met with Col. Erwin De Asis, commander, Philippine army Artillery Regiment, to provide an out brief. He expressed his gratitude for the training that was provided to his soldiers and presented the 94th Balikatan MTT with a plaque and certificate honoring and thanking the 94th AAMDC.

"Our soldiers were excited to be the first to receive basic air defense training from the experts of the 94th AAMDC," said De Asis. "We look forward to a sustained and continuous engagement by the 94th AAMDC in the training and development of the Philippine army's first ADA Battery and succeeding batteries that will come online."

"We will continue to work shoulder-to-shoulder with the 94th AAMDC during the next Balikatan Exercise and in the future."



Filipino soldiers from the 1st Air Defense Artillery Battery, Philippine army Artillery Regiment display their training certificates for successful completion of the Air Defense Artillery Trainers Training Class provided by the 94th Army Air and Missile Defense Command Balikatan mobile training team at the Philippine army Artillery Regiment Headquarters, Fort Magsaysay, Philippines April 13, during Exercise Balikatan 2016. (Philippine army Public Affairs courtesy photo)



Maj. Robert Deleon, intelligence (G-2) operations officer and Balikatan mobile training team officer-in-charge, 94th Army Air and Missile Defense Command provides an overview on the air defense training conducted during Balikatan 2016 to Col. Erwin De Asis, commander, Philippine army Artillery Regiment at the Philippine army Artillery Regiment Headquarters, Fort Magsaysay, Philippines, April 4, 2016. The 94th AAMDC MTT provided instruction in air defense and air intelligence preparation of the battlespace, basic air defense operations, and air defense data links to Filipino soldiers from the 1st Air Defense Artillery Battery, Philippine army Artillery Regiment during the Balikatan Exercise 2016. (Philippine army Public Affairs courtesy photo)



Capt. Jefferey Cashon, operations (G-3) air defense artillery fire control officer (ADAFCO), 94th Army Air and Missile Defense Command confers with Capt. Jeffrey Ferrer, commander, 1st Air Defense Artillery Battery, Philippine army Artillery Regiment during a classroom session on the basics of air defense battery management and organization at the Philippine army Artillery Regiment Headquarters, Fort Magsaysay, Philippines during Exercise Balikatan 2016. The 94th Army Air and Missile Defense Command participated in Balikatan for the first time by sending a team of five Soldiers to teach the fundamentals of air defense to the Philippine army at Fort Magsaysay, Philippines from March 31 - April 15. (U.S. Army photo by Chief Warrant Officer 3, Heather A. Sheltroun, 94th AAMDC)



Maj. Robert Deleon, intelligence (G-2) operations officer, 94th Army Air and Missile Defense Command (left); Capt. Jefferey Cashon, operations (G-3) air defense artillery fire control officer (ADAFCO), 94th AAMDC (middle left); Capt. Jeffrey Ferrer, commander, 1st Air Defense Artillery Battery, Philippine army Artillery Regiment (middle right); and Chief Warrant Officer 4 Garry Rocker, operations (G-3) ADAFCO, 94th AAMDC (right) enjoy a Filipino tradition of a communal meal on banana leaves at the Philippine army Artillery Regiment Headquarters, Fort Magsaysay, Philippines during Exercise Balikatan 2016. The 94th Army Air and Missile Defense Command participated in Balikatan for the first time by sending a team of five Soldiers to teach the fundamentals of air defense to the Philippine army at Fort Magsaysay, Philippines from March 31 - April 15. (U.S. Army photo by Chief Warrant Officer 3, Heather A. Sheltroun, 94th AAMDC)

<http://retiredanalyst.blogspot.com/>

ISIS 'may set up caliphate in Southeast Asia'



INQUIRER MINDANAO FILE PHOTO / GEOFFREY MAITEM

As the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) loses its grip on territories in the Middle East, the militant group is expected to look towards Southeast Asia to perpetuate its claims to a caliphate. Counter-terrorism analysts say the region's long history of militancy and rising number of extremist groups adopting ISIS ideology make it attractive to the Sunni extremist network.

Possible targets include Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore, where the Jemaah Islamiah (JI) and Jemaah Anshar Khilafah terror networks, as well as the Abu Sayyaf, operate.

"These are existing sanctuaries that the Islamic State would love to plug in," said Mr Patrick Skinner from New York-based security consultancy The Soufan Group (TSG).

"There is no such thing as a clandestine caliphate, they need sanctuary, they need a place for these people to go to, where they can say: This is where our flag is," he added.

The former case officer with the Central Intelligence Agency was testifying on Wednesday before the US House Committee on Homeland Security about the terrorism threat in the region.

He wrote in a report released by TSG on the same day that while ISIS has yet to establish a South-east Asian wiliyah, or state, "it is likely that it will do so this year, as its grip on Syria and Iraq weakens". ISIS, he added, is also finding Libya "a difficult place to remain (in) and expand, and it is very possible that places like southern Philippines will be its next priority".

READ: Analysts: ISIS a real threat to PH

His latest analysis comes after ISIS lost a series of territories as local militias, backed by coalition forces, managed to retake cities from the group in the new year. The last of ISIS' major battlefield victories, for instance, was when it seized Ramadi in Iraq almost a year ago.

"Long-held assumptions about South-east Asia not being fertile ground for violent extremist groups such as Al-Qaeda and the so-called Islamic State tend to downplay the previous several decades of terrorism in the region," he wrote. "Now, concern is building among... the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore that the Islamic State has the region in its cross hairs."

Analysts from the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) confirmed that ISIS has started a campaign to establish an Islamic caliphate across Asia.

Mr Jasinder Singh and Mr Muhammad Haziq Jani said in a report that to fulfil the vision of a caliphate, ISIS founder Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi affiliated militant groups in South-east Asia with his group's doctrines, "turning them into a unified force".

While terrorism – whether perpetrated by ISIS or JI—will not be eradicated any time soon, Dr Joseph Liow said in a report yesterday that the threat remains "at a low level".

"One possible factor that could prompt a change is a deliberate shift of attention of ISIS central to South-east Asia," said the RSIS dean, who also spoke before the committee in Washington. "This, however, seems unlikely for now as ISIS is preoccupied with its immediate priority of holding ground in Iraq and Syria, and expanding its fight to Libya and Europe."

Dr Liow said while governments in the region today are better prepared to deal with terrorism compared with 15 years ago, "capacity can... be further improved with cooperation among themselves, and with some help from the United States".

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Philippine troops raid island near Sabah border, rescue 10 people; seized arms cache

Marines swooped down on an island off the southern Philippine province of Tawi-Tawi near the Sabah border on Friday and recovered an arms cache and also rescued 10 people who were victims of human trafficking, a military spokesman said.

Captain Roy Trinidad, of the anti-terror Joint Task Group Tawi-Tawi, said the operations involved Fleet Marine units of the Naval Forces Western Mindanao, and is part of the ongoing "Operation Pagbabaybay" targeting kidnap for ransom gangs.

Trinidad said troops also detained a man linked to human trafficking. "The victims of human trafficking were all from Pagadian City," he told the regional newspaper Mindanao Examiner.

He said the operations led troops to the island called Siluwag where security forces seized two machine guns, 5 automatic rifles, two hand guns and grenade launchers. "This is part of the ongoing Operation Pagbabaybay by Joint Task Group Tawi-Tawitargeting kidnap for ransom gang personalities operating in the area," Trinidad said.

The military operations coincided with Malaysian proposals for a joint maritime patrols and aerial surveillance with the Philippines and Indonesia in the Sulu Sea at the border of Sabah.

Defense Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein earlier said that Malaysia would tackle the piracy and kidnapping problems in the Sulu Sea with his Filipino counterpart Voltaire Gazmin and Ryamizard Ryacudu, of Indonesia.

The Philippines signed border patrol agreements with both Malaysia and Indonesia in the 1990s. The country – through the Western Mindanao Command and Eastern Mindanao Command – regularly holds separate naval war games every year with Malaysia and Indonesia.

But despite this, Abu Sayyaf rebels have kidnapped Malaysian and Indonesian nationals in Sabah and in the waters of Tawi-Tawi. And since 2000, the Abu Sayyaf intruded into Sabah and kidnapped dozen 21 mostly European hostages in the posh Sipadan resort and ransomed off the victims to Malaysia and Libya.

On March 26, Abu Sayyaf rebels kidnapped 10 Indonesian crew of the tugboat Brahma 12 off Tawi-Tawi and then four more Malaysian crew men of the tugboat MasFive 6 were kidnapped in Sabah's Semporna district. And recently, four Indonesian crew of tugboat Henry were also kidnapped off Tawi-Tawi near the border.

The Abu Sayyaf has beheaded a Canadian hostage John Ridsdel on April 25 after his family and government failed to pay P300 million ransom. The jihadist group is still holding Dutchman Ewold Horn, who was kidnapped in Tawi-Tawi; Canadian Robert Hall, Norwegian Kjartan Sekkingstad – who were all seized from the posh resort of Samal Island in Davao del Norte province; and Japanese treasure hunter Toshio Ito also known as Katayama Mamaito.

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