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

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NEWS CLIPPINGS

04 March 2018

Sunday

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

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

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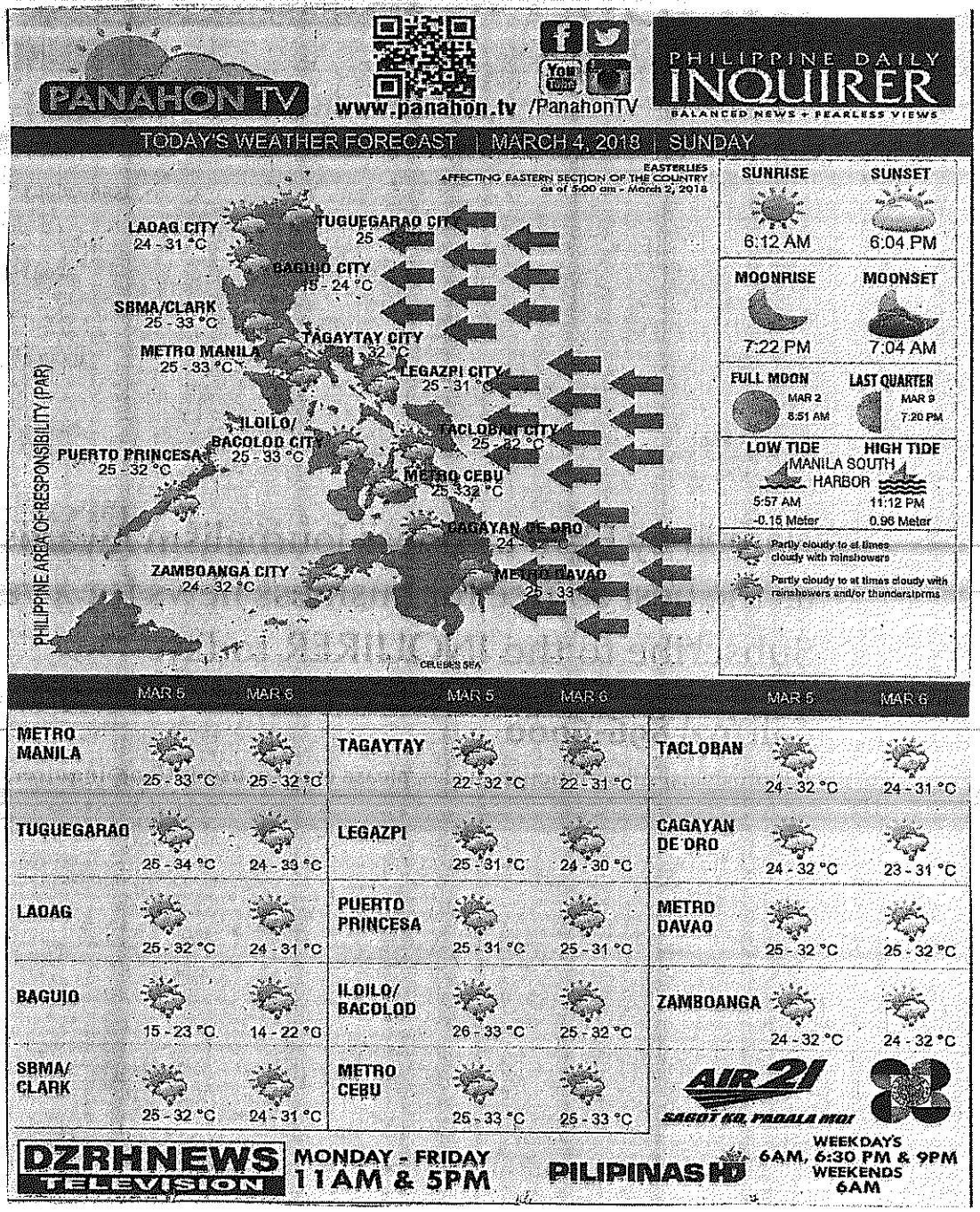

04 March 2018 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER Page: A1

RISK SEEN IN JOINT SEA EXPLORATION

STORY BY REDEMPTO ANDA

China's offer to jointly explore an undisputed Philippine territory some 50 kilometers west of Busuanga, Palawan, and President Duterte's remark that he is open to granting Beijing "co-ownership" of the enterprise and the energy deposits found there, may set a precedent that would allow Beijing to venture into other Philippine waters, a maritime expert warns.

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By Redempto Anda
@demptoandaINQ

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—A maritime expert has questioned Malacañang's pronouncement that it is considering a "joint exploration" with China for potential energy deposits in an undisputed Philippine territory some 50 kilometers off Busuanga town in Palawan province, identified as Service Contract (SC) 57.

Lawyer Jay Batongbacal, director of the University of the Philippines Institute for Maritime Affairs and Law of the Sea, said in a social media post that the government's plan to include the area in a deal offer made by China to jointly explore the Reed Bank area in the West Philippine Sea (WPS) was "giving too much, too soon" to the country's favored neighbor.

Batongbacal was referring to an announcement made by President Duterte last week in Marawi City, and later clarified by Malacañang spokesperson Harry Roque, that the administration was considering China's offer to explore both SC 57 and Reed Bank (SC 72).

'Co-ownership'

Mr. Duterte described the planned deal as similar to "co-ownership."

"Now their [Beijing] offer is joint exploration, which is like co-ownership. It's like the two of us would be the owners. I think that's better than fighting [over contested areas]," the President said.

SC 57 is a contract area awarded by the Department of Energy to the Philippine National Oil Co. (PNOC) in 2006. PNOC has since formed an exploration consortium with two foreign entities that included China National Offshore Oil Corp. (CNOOC) and Malaysian company Mitra Energy Ltd.

Roque, in a statement, explained that while the area covered by SC 57 was undisputed Philippine territory, the Duterte administration would be allowing China to jointly explore it for energy deposits with the Philippines.

"Service Contract 57 is not affected by any dispute. There

can be joint exploration there because there is no dispute, so we are just allowing it," Roque said on Wednesday.

Batongbacal warned that the deal would "elevate" the status of CNOOC from a mere subcontractor to PNOC to a "co-owner" of SC 57.

"By classifying SC 57 as 'joint exploration,' government leaders seem to be elevating the status of CNOOC from mere subcontractor-consortium partner to possibly a 'co-owner,' as [Duterte] describes it, not only of EEZ/CS (exclusive economic zone/continental shelf) areas but also territorial sea and archipelagic waters," Batongbacal stated.

The West Philippine Sea is part of the South China Sea within the country's 370-kilometer EEZ.

The Reed Bank area covered by SC 72 was awarded to Forum Energy.

In 2011, the administration of former President Benigno Aquino III stopped Forum Energy's exploratory drilling operations in the area after two Chinese vessels harassed and threatened to ram a Philippine government-owned survey vessel.

Joint exploration

Batongbacal said the government's willingness to jointly explore Reed Bank with China would compromise SC 57 and set a precedent allowing China to venture into other undisputed Philippine territories.

"The government would be implicitly downgrading its position on SC 57 for the sake of dealing with SC 72 [Reed Bank]. So, instead of addressing the issue of how to go into joint exploration in SC 72, it will undermine its own position in, and creating a problem with, SC 57 and all other similar Philippine waters," he said.

Supreme Court acting Chief Justice Antonio Carpio echoed Batongbacal's position on the proposed joint venture, saying the government's offer to China was akin to conceding half of the WPS area to the Chinese.

In a visit to Bacolod City on Friday, Carpio said "there is absolutely no way under the Constitution" that the Philippine government could give away half of the EEZ and make China its co-owner.

"If China's national offshore companies will secure a contract with the Philippine government under Philippine law, there is no problem," he said, citing the Malampaya area, where a foreign company, Shell, extracts gas under Philippine law.

"The problem is if it's with the Chinese government and we concede that half of the area belongs to them. That cannot be done because that is our exclusive economic zone. We cannot concede our sovereign rights," Carpio added. "Even the President cannot concede our sovereign rights in the EEZ."

Carpio pointed out that an international tribunal had already ruled that the country's EEZ west of Palawan belonged to the Philippines and "we have exclusive sovereign right to get all the oil, gas, other mineral resources and fisheries there." INQ

04 March 2018

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

Page: 1

PCG plane keeps watch over Phl Rise

By EVELYN MACAIRAN

The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) now has "eyes" patrolling the Philippine Rise with its Islander plane.

PCG spokesman Captain Armand Balilo yesterday said the plane would be deployed along with multi-role response vessel *BRP Suluan* to patrol the area.

"The ship and the Islander would serve as the 'eyes' in the area as part of our maritime patrol," Balilo said.

Balilo added Coast Guard commandant Rear Admiral Elson Hermogino received

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instructions from President Duterte to deploy assets in the Philippine Rise for patrol.

The *BRP Suluan* was tasked to conduct a weeklong tour of the formerly named Benham Rise until after another PCG ship takes over.

Balilo said the Philippine Rise is a known route for international vessels since it is considered part of international seas. Most likely ships would still be seen passing through the area.

"They would be allowed to pass but they would not be allowed to conduct any illegal activities in the area," he said.

The presence of the PCG at the Philippine Rise comes at a time when a Chinese research ship was reportedly spotted in the area, and that in 2004 China managed to name five features of the underwater plateau after an unauthorized research trip.

President Duterte then ordered all foreigners intending to conduct research at Philippine Rise to first secure approval from the National Security Adviser (NSA).

The Philippine Rise has generated much interest because scientific surveys indicate the presence of minerals and natural gas in the area.

Duterte, on the other hand, wanted China for a joint exploration of the country's territorial maritime claims in the West Philippine Sea.

Duterte said China has offered joint exploration in some of the disputed islets and features in the West Philippine Sea.

It's like co-ownership and it's better than fighting the Chinese, he said.

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque however explained the President only wanted a joint exploration with China without giving up the country's territorial and sovereign rights.

Roque added Duterte sees joint exploration as a "practical solution" that would allow Filipinos to utilize natural resources in the area without having to deal with the "contentious, conflicting" claims to the territory.

Roque also cited a Supreme Court ruling where joint explorations with foreign entities are allowed, as long as they comply with the Constitution and are pursuant to a written agreement signed by the President and submit-

ted to Congress.

Roque stressed a joint exploration is legitimate under the Supreme Court as long as there is an agreement between two parties.

Dangerous precedent

A maritime expert, however, pointed out that a joint exploration with China would set a dangerous precedent.

Jay Batongbacal, director of the UP Institute for Maritime Affairs and Law of the Sea, said one of the areas being considered for "joint exploration" is one that has never been claimed by China.

"Service Contract (SC) 57 is definitely not within the area of the nine-dash line," Batongbacal said in a Facebook post, referring to the imaginary line that China used to set its claim in almost the entire South China Sea.

"It is completely located in the Philippine extended economic zone/continental shelf that China never previously laid claim to, and even extends into a portion of the Philippine territorial sea and archipelagic waters under our full sovereignty (not mere sovereign rights)," he added.

SC 57 was one of the two areas that Malacañang said it is considering for joint exploration with China. The other, SC 72, is further west and within China's territorial claim.

Batongbacal said SC 57 should not be under a joint exploration, as it would downgrade the Philippine position.

"It also implies that any and all areas, even uncontested Philippine waters, are open to joint exploration with China, even though China has never asked for this and historically has promoted joint exploration only for the area within the nine-dash line," Batongbacal said.

"The government appears to be offering all of Philippine waters to joint exploration with China, not just the West Philippine Sea. It seems to be 'downgrading' the status of SC 57, i.e. the area 50 kilometers northwest of Busuanga, as being equivalent to an area also disputed by China," he added.

The UP professor said exploration on SC 57 should be unilateral, and that the China National Offshore Oil Co. (CNOOC) – which has the majority stake in the contract to explore it – should remain a sub-contractor of the Philippine government.

"Exploration under SC 57 is unilateral by the Philippines, not joint, and CNOOC is clearly a sub-contractor of the Philippines under the service contract. As a consortium partner with PNOC (Philippine National Oil Co.) and Mitra (Energy), CNOOC is only acting on behalf of the Philippines," he said.

Batongbacal also criticized Roque for saying that there can be joint exploration in SC 57 with China.

"This is carelessly incorrect and misleading. SC 57 is not a disputed area, therefore, this is not a case of joint exploration, but rather unilateral exploration by the Philippines carried out by a sub-contractor, one of whom happens to be CNOOC," he said.

"The Philippines is allowing it because CNOOC has been contracted to do it together with PNOC and Mitra, and therefore acting fully under Philippines control, not because there is no dispute," he added.

Batongbacal said allowing a joint exploration at SC 57 would elevate the status of CNOOC from being a sub-contractor to a "co-owner" as implied by President Duterte.

"If government leaders cannot even distinguish unilateral from joint exploration, how can it properly protect Philippine rights and jurisdictions?" he asked.

"Unlike SC 72 which is inside the area that China continues to claim (albeit illegitimately from the Philippine standpoint), SC 57 is undisputed and even China implicitly recognizes that it is completely under Philippine sovereignty and jurisdiction," added the UP professor.

– **With Christina Mendez, Janvic Mateo**

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04 March 2018

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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Student, 5 other NPA rebels captured in Negros Oriental

By MARTIN A. SADONGDONG, TARA YAP, LESLEY CAMINADE VESTIL

Six suspected New People's Army (NPA) rebels, including a Mass Communication student at the University of the Philippines (UP)-Cebu, were captured by the military after a gun battle in Barangay Luyang, Mabinay, Negros Oriental before dawn yesterday.

Lt. Darrell Banez, commanding officer of the 62nd Infantry (Unifier) Battalion, 3rd Infantry (Spearhead) Division of the Philippine Army (PA), said that prior to the incident, residents of Mabinay and Manjuyod towns reported the extortion and harrassment activities of the suspected rebels.

Banez said that soldiers sent to Mabinay for security patrols were fired upon by some 20 suspected NPA rebels at around 2a.m.

The troops and their enemies figured in a 45-minute gun battle which led to the arrest of the six suspects, including the female student and two minors.

"Among the six terrorists captured are two armed minors who were recruited as NPA terrorists from Negros Oriental and Negros Occidental," Banez said.

The arrested suspects, however, were not identified as pursuit operations against other suspected members of the rebel group are ongoing.

The military recovered high powered firearms from the captured suspects, including one M16A1, one M16A1 attached with M203 grenade launcher, two M4 rifles, one VLTOR (M16), one AG 43 (M16), rifle grenades, explosives, other weapons, food, and documents.

Meanwhile, 303rd Brigade commander Brig. Gen. Elizer Losanes said, the capture of the six NPA suspects is "a clear manifestation that the people themselves are tired of these armed NPA terrorists conducting extortion, harrassment and recruitment of minors as terrorists."

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THE PHILIPPINE STAR

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ACROSS THE COUNTRY

6 NPA rebels nabbed in Negros

BACOLOD CITY – Six suspected New People's Army rebels were arrested following an encounter with soldiers of the 62nd Infantry Battalion (IB) in Mabinay, Negros Oriental yesterday.

The soldiers were responding to reports that communist guerrillas were extorting money from residents of Sitio Tumonon in Barangay Luyang when the clash occurred, Lt. Col. Darrel Banes, 62nd IB commanding officer, said.

Banes said among those arrested was a woman and two minors.

Two M4 and four M16 rifles with grenade launchers, assorted war materiel, explosives, food items and subversive documents were among those recovered fom the rebels.

Capt. Eduardo Precioso, 3rd Infantry Division spokesman, said two rebel camps were found abandoned in Barangay Samac also in Mabinay and Barangay Panciao in Manjuyod town last week.

– Gilbert Bayoran, Jaime Laude

04 March 2018 The Manila Times Page: A7

6 NPA rebels nabbed in Negros firefight

BACOLOD CITY: Six suspected New People's Army (NPA) rebels including two minors and a Mass Communication student of the University of the Philippines – Cebu were arrested by government troops after nearly an hour of firefight early Saturday morning in a hinterland village in Barangay Luyang, Mabinay, Negros Oriental.

Reports said troops of the Philippine Army's 62nd Infantry (Unifier) Battalion, 3rd Infantry (Spearhead) Division encountered 20 fully armed NPA members after receiving complaints from civilians in the hinterland areas of Mabinay and Manjuyod that the rebels were conducting harassment and extortion activities.

Armed men fired on security forces patrolling at Sitio Tumonon of Barangay Luyang, prompting the troops to retaliate, Lt. Col Darrel Bañez, 62nd commanding officer said.

Among the six rebel members captured were two armed minors that were recruited as rebels from Negros Oriental and Negros Occidental.

The names of the captured rebels were not made available as of this writing.

Recovered were six high powered firearms as follows: one M16A1, one M16A1 attached with M203 Grenade launcher, two M4 Rifles, one VLTOR (M16), one AG 43 (M16), rifle grenades, explosives, other war fighting materials, food stuffs and subversive documents.

Bañez said that prior to the encounter, government troops also discovered the rebels' encampments at Barangay Samac, Mabinay and Barangay Panciao of Manjuyod.

EUGENE Y. ADIONG

04 March 2018

THE DAILY tribune

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Six NPA rebels captured in Negros Oriental

DUMAGUETE CITY, Negros Oriental – Members of the 62nd Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army and the Philippine National Police arrested six suspected members, including one female and two minors, of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA) in Barangay Luyang, Mabinay town in Negros Oriental early yesterday.

Initial reports said government troops encountered about 20 armed men believed to be members of the Regional Security Force of the Komiteng Rehiyon Negros (RSF-KRN) of the CPP-NPA in Sitio Tumunon at 2:45 a.m.

The firefight lasted for about 45 minutes but no one got hurt on both sides.

The female suspect is a 21-year-old Mass Communication graduate of the University of the Philippines in Cebu, said Brig. Gen. Eliezer Losañes, commander of the 303rd Infantry Brigade of the Philippine Army in Negros Island.

The two apprehended minors were reportedly recruited from Negros Oriental and Negros Occidental.

The names of those arrested are being withheld pending investigation.

The six suspected NPA members were already presented to the Mabinay prosecutor's office for inquest.

Recovered from the suspects were high-powered firearms, among them one M16A1, one M16A1 attached with M203 Grenade launcher, two M4 Rifles, one VLTOR (M16), one AG 43 (M16), rifle grenades, explosives, other war materiel, foodstuff, and alleged subversive documents.

The encounter took place after months of reported sightings of armed men in the hinterlands of Bindoy, Ayungon, Mabinay and nearby areas.

The civilians reported about armed men allegedly asking food and other provisions while others had reportedly fled their villages out of fear.

Losañes, in an interview, said that sometime in the middle of last year, "we had already monitored the movement of the Regional Security Force of the Komiteng Rehiyong Negros, shifting from the 6th district of Negros Occidental to the areas of BATMAN," referring to the acronym for the towns of Bindoy, Ayungon, Tayasan, and Manjuyod in Negros Oriental.

This is their expansion area, and what the Army calls the "guerilla zone preparation", and so they are going to expand, "hoping that they can create another front", he added.

The 62nd IB also reported that before Saturday's encounter, troops on regular security patrol discovered alleged NPA encampments in Samac, Mabinay and Panciao, Manjuyod.

The suspects are under the custody of the Philippine Army for further disposition, although according to Senior Supt. Edwin Portento, the police will take over and secure their detention.

He, however, did not disclose where they would be detained.

Charges stemming from the illegal possession of firearms and ammunition and explosives will be filed against them, Portento said. **PNA**

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Manila Standard

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ARMY TROOPS NAB SIX NPA MEMBERS

DUMAGUETE CITY, Negros Oriental — Members of the 62nd Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army and the Philippine National Police arrested six suspected members, including one female and two minors, of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army in Barangay Luyang, Mabinay town in Negros Oriental early Saturday.

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04 March 2018

NGAYON

Diyaryong disente ng masang Intelihente

Pahina. 06

30 bomba ng NPA nasamsam

Nasamsam ng tropa ng militar ang nasa 30 Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) at iba pang mga kagamitan at materyales sa paggawa ng pampasabog ng mga teroristang NPA sa isinagawang operasyon sa Brgy. Lumbo, Valencia City, Bukidnon nitong Biyernes.

Ayon kay Brig. Gen. Eric Vinoya, Commander ng Army's 403rd Infantry Brigade (IB), dakong alas -11:55 ng umaga nang makumpiska ang bulto ng mga eksplosibo at mga sangkap sa paggawa ng bomba sa nasabing lugar.

Kabilang sa mga nakumpiska ay 21 piraso ng improvised hand grenades, limang improvised anti-personnel landmines, at apat na dinamita.

Nabatid na dalawang hindi nakilalang lalaki ang nakita sa bisinidad ng lugar na may dalang limang sako kung saan nang akmang sisitahin ng security forces ay nagpanakbuhan ang mga ito at inabandona ang kanilang mga dala.

Nang inspeksyunin ng mga sundalo at pulis ang laman ng mga sakong dala ng mga suspek na hinihinalang kasapi ng NPA terrorists ay natuklasang mga pampasabog at sangkap sa paggawa ng bomba ang laman ng mga ito. ***Joy Cantos***

04 March 2018 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER Page: A8

Gov't ship, plane now patrolling PH Rise

By Julie M. Aurelio
@JMAurelioINQ

The Philippine Coast Guard has deployed a ship and a plane to patrol the Philippine Rise, a resource-rich part of Philippine territory that some experts feared was also being encroached by China.

The Coast Guard, according to spokesperson Capt. Armand Balilo, on Saturday sent an Islander aircraft, a propeller-driven plane, and the BRP Suluan, a multi-role response vessel, to Philippine Rise (formerly Benham Rise) to conduct patrols in the area in tandem.

'Eyes'

Balilo said the ship and plane left Legazpi City in Albay province for the vast underwater plateau that is part of Philippine territory off the coast of Aurora province.

The Coast Guard vessels, said Balilo, "would serve as our 'eyes' in the area as part of our maritime patrols."

The deployment came after Coast Guard chief, Rear Admiral Elson Hernogino, received instructions from President Duterte for the Coast Guard to activate patrols in Philippine Rise, which is believed to be teeming with natural gas, oil and other marine resources.

Passage allowed

The BRP Suluan would embark on a two-week tour of duty and would be replaced by another Coast Guard vessel.

As the Philippine Rise was known as an international navigation route, civilian ships from other countries would be allowed to pass through the area.

"They would be allowed to pass but they would not be allowed to conduct any illegal activities in the area," Balilo said.

Mr. Duterte had threatened to go to war with any country that would encroach into Philippine Rise to either explore or occupy the area. Former human rights lawyer Harry Roque, presidential spokesperson, later clarified that Mr. Duterte's rant was not aimed at China.

In Davao City on Thursday, the President repeated his rant against foreign entities that would intrude into Philippine Rise.

"You start to f*ck with the area there I'll go to war," he said. He told soldiers to be steadfast in defending Philippine territory. "Don't be afraid, I'll join you," the President said. —WITH REPORTS FROM ALLAN NAWAL AND FRINSTON LIM INQ

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THE PHILIPPINE STAR

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Militant slain in Sabah not Sayyaf leader

By NOEL PAREÑO

ZAMBOANGA CITY – The military has denied reports that Abu Sayyaf leader Nurhassan Jamiri was killed in a military operation in Sabah on Tuesday.

Jamiri is alive and being pursued by government troopers, Lt. Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr., Western Mindanao Command chief, said on Friday.

"He is not NJ," Galvez said in a text message, referring to Jamiri when asked to comment on the report of Sabah authorities.

Galvez declined to give details so as not to jeopardize manhunt operations for Jamiri.

In a report, Datuk Hazani Ghazli, chief of the Eastern Sabah Security Command, said three militants, one of them believed to be Jamiri, were killed in a shootout with authorities in a plantation in Tawau.

Jamiri, who is wanted for a series of kidnappings, is based in Basilan.

Galvez assured the public that there is no letup in operations to neutralize the bandits and rescue their remaining hostages.

Guns custodian surrenders

Meanwhile, an Abu Sayyaf bandit surrendered in Sulu on Friday while three others were arrested in this city on Thursday.

Ronnie Jamaari, 50, alias Apo Eting, 50, escaped last week after Marines seized a cache of firearms that he was guarding in Barangay Pitogo, Kalingalan Caluang town in Sulu last week. He is a follower of slain Abu Sayyaf leader Alhabsy Misaya.

Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, Joint Task Force Sulu commander, said Jamaari turned over a Garand rifle to the Marine Battalion Landing Team 1 led by Lt. Col. Stephen Cabanlet.

Daud Bulan Sabdani, with aliases of Julhasin Hanwari and Nur; Hood Salvador Abdulla, alias Jiking, and a certain Kim were collared along Tetuan highway.

The arrests were based on warrants issued by local courts.

Sabdani is facing charges in connection with the kidnapping of Golden Harvest plantation workers in Barangay Tairan, Lantawan, Basilan on June 11, 2001.

Abdulla and Kim were tagged in the kidnapping of six members of the Jehovah's Witness in Patikul, Sulu on Aug. 20, 2002.

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Manila Standard

Page: A3

AFP open to torture probe

BY ROY NARRA

THE Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) is open to investigation of soldiers from the Eastern Mindanao Command (EastMinCom) who have been accused of torturing two farmers from Compostela Valley last year.

Maj. Ezra Balagtey, spokesman for the EastMinCom, over the weekend said they do not condone any misbehavior of their soldiers and assured they will sanction and punish those who commit human rights violations.

"We welcome any investigation by any legitimate investigating agency and further cooperate as this will provide opportunity for our unit and personnel to answer the allegations squarely and bring closure to this issue the soonest possible time," he said in a statement.

Capt. Jerry Lamosao, spokesman for the Philippine Army's 10th Infantry Division, said they will also cooperate with concerned authorities regarding the farmers' allegations.

He said they had expected such accusations even before they started their campaign against the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA).

Lamosao added that they remain steadfast in respecting human rights and adhering to rules of engagement, international human law and rule of law.

The two farmers, Janry Mensis and "Jerry," on Friday filed complaints before the Commission on Human Rights, saying they were abducted, illegally detained and tortured by soldiers from November 28 to December 6, 2017.

According to human rights group Karapatan, Mensis and Jerry were kidnapped by the military and the police in Tagum City, Davao del Norte, on November 28 after they were falsely accused as thieves.

After they were cleared by the police, they were turned over to the Philippine Army and said they they were tortured for days after they were accused as members of the NPA.

Mensis and Jerry were brought on December 6, 2017 to a mountainous area in Compostela Valley and were thrown in a pit where the solders tried to burn them alive.

The victims escaped but Mensis suffered from third-degree burns and Jerry sustained several wounds in the body.

They were able to go back to their families on December 12, 2017.

"Despite the enactment of the Anti-Torture Law in 2009 and the government's ratification of the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, such practices still prevail. These stem from the military's dangerous and insidious mindset that they can get away with anything, owing to the climate of impunity in the country," Karapatan deputy secretary general Roneo Clamor said.

Based on documents from Karapatan, there have been 87 persons tortured by military and police authorities.

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2 more Reds surrender

By JOSEPH JUBELAG

COLUMBIO, Sultan Kudarat – Two alleged members of the Communist New People's Army (NPA) surrendered Thursday to police authorities here.

Sultan Kudarat police director Raul Supiter said Betong Dalumatam, 45 and Guiälodin Dalumatan, 41, who are members of the NPA Guerilla Front 72 operating in the provinces of Sultan Kudarat and South Cotabato, returned to the fold of the law following a series of negotiations made by village officials.

He said the rebel surrenderers yielded one M-14 automatic rifle, a Garand rifle and two .357 revolvers.

Chief Supt. Marcelo Morales, Police Regional Office 12 director, said the two NPA surrenderers opted to surrender due to brewing demoralization in the ranks of the NPA underground movement following the surrender of ranking rebel leaders in the past months.

04 March 2018

Remate
Ang Diario ng Masa

2 susundo ng susukong NPA itinumba

DALAWANG kawani ng Palawan Provincial Government ang napatay makaraang pagbabarilin ng hindi nakilalang mga suspek sa bayan ng Sofronio Española sa Palawan, kamakalawa.

Dead-on-the-spot sina Bobby Llamazares, 40, residente ng Puerto Princesa City, at Lory Gastor Sr., 61, ng Sofronio Española.

Kapwa nagtamo ng maraming tama ng bala ng baril sa katawan ang mga biktima na naging sanhi ng kanilang agarang pagkamatay.

Batay sa paunang impormasyon mula sa Palawan Provincial Police Office, nagsilbing mga police asset ang dalawang biktima.

Pasado alas-kuwatro ng madaling araw nang magtungo ang dalawa sa Sitio Maribong, Barangay Pulot Interior para makipag-usap sa umano'y miyembro ng New People's Army (NPA) na handa na umanong sumuko.

Gayunman, habang patungo sa lugar ay hinarang sila ng mga suspek na nakamotorsiklo at pinagbabaril.

Nakuha sa lugar ng krimen ang tinatayang 12 basyo ng hindi pa tukoy na kalibre ng baril, apat na bala ng kalibre .45, isang bala at 24 basyo ng M14 rifle. **JEFF GALLOS**

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Troops arrest crime syndicate member

From the Philippine News Agency (Mar 3): **Troops arrest crime syndicate member**

Government security forces arrested a member of a crime syndicate in the province of Lanao del Norte, the military reported Saturday.

Brig. Gen. Roseller Murillo, the Army's 1st Infantry Division commander, identified the suspect as Roger Sagarino, a hired killer and dealer of illegal drugs.

Murillo said Sagarino, who was arrested in Barangay Raw-an, Lala, Lanao del Norte at about 11:45 a.m. Thursday, was also involved in numerous robbery cases.

He said Sagarino and his brother, Charly, are associated with the Kuratong Baleleng gang of Ozamiz City, a syndicate involved in robbery, smuggling, kidnapping, murder, extortion, drugs, illegal gambling and other illicit activities.

Murillo said Charly is currently detained at the municipal jail of Dumingag, Zamboanga del Sur.

He said Sagarino is also associated with the Labang group, particularly Mariano Labang, who was slain in a police operation; Tatong Labang, who is at large for being the principal suspect in the killing of Edgar Paculaba, barangay councilor of Lipawan, Dumingag; and Boboy Labang, who is also at large after being implicated in cases of killings.

He said Sagarino was taken to Lala Municipal Police Station for documentation.

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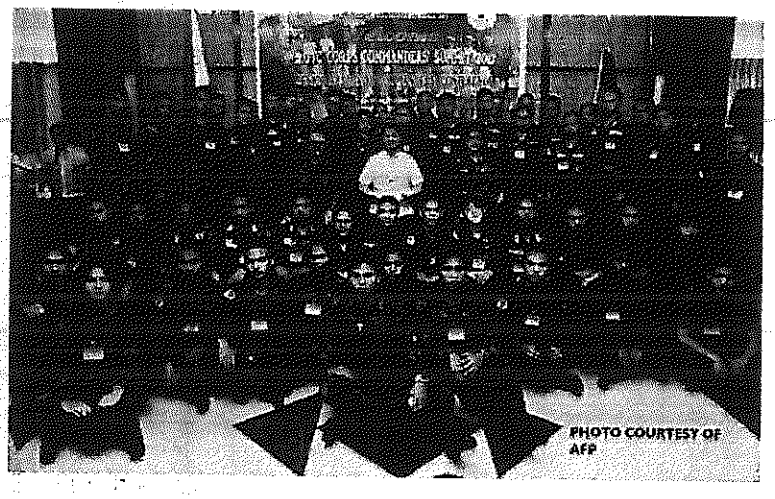
Fully equipped reserve units valuable to country: Lorenzana

From the Philippine News Agency (Mar 3): **Fully equipped reserve units valuable to country: Lorenzana**



Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana has said that while it would take time and resources to deploy fully trained and equipped reserve units, their value to the nation is incalculable in times of crisis or disasters.

"Our concept will need resources for buildings and equipment but the payback would be great. We will have ready reserves who are on call anytime," Lorenzana said in a text message to reporters Thursday.

And while the concept is still on the drawing board, he said his department is trying to reorganize reserve units in the country for re-equipping.

The defense chief, however, acknowledged that the bulk of the personnel of these units are "aging retirees from the Armed Forces of the Philippines".

"We have not had any significant infusion of young blood ever since mandatory Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) was abolished in 2002," Lorenzana said.

Earlier, he said there is nothing new with President Rodrigo R. Duterte's announcement that he is willing to arm ROTC graduates and other reservists should terrorism take a turn for the worse in the Philippines.

"Other countries do it, like Switzerland, Israel. They have a small standing armed force backed by a huge reserve force that continually trains with the active force," he said.

Lorenzana noted that they are looking at the possibility of each region having a reserve unit, consisting of retired military officers and ROTC graduates with a core group of active duty officers and enlisted personnel.

"Their cadres (officers and enlisted personnel) will be active military. They will have their Regional HQ with armories where they will keep their individual firearms. They can use these firearms during training," he said.

Should these formations be used in combat, peacekeeping and disaster response missions "will have official orders calling them for limited active duty, like we did with the Lanao del Norte Reserve Battalion during the Marawi Siege," Lorenzana said.