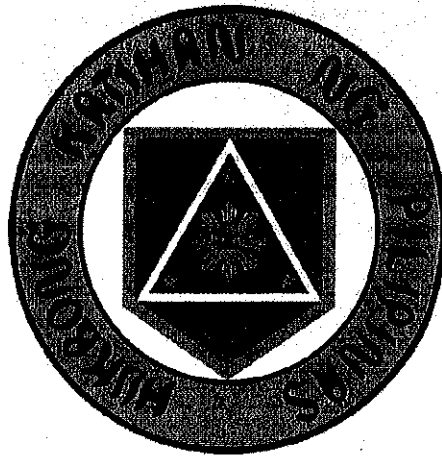


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05 April 2019

Friday

Honor. Patriotism. Duty.

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Honor. Patriotism. Duty

Revolutionary war: Rody threatens to arrest critics

By ALEXIS ROMERO and CHRISTINA MENDEZ

Saying he has enough problems, President Duterte warned critics yesterday that he would suspend the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus, order their arrest and declare a "revolutionary war" until the end of his term.

It was the President's reaction to Sen. Franklin Drilon's call for the administration to exercise "extreme caution" in reviewing government deals, saying existing and binding

night, urging them to directly report to his office corruption issues involving the bureaucracy and other concerns.

In a speech yesterday in Palawan, Duterte said, "I have

the writ of habeas corpus and I will arrest all of you."

He said he would do this "if pushed against the wall," but did not specify who would be arrested.

Void Chinese loan for Chico River project, SC asked. Story on Page 8.

contracts cannot simply be declared onerous and canceled.

Duterte met with the country's top businessmen during a call at Malacañang Wednesday

enough problems with criminality, drugs, rebellion and all, pero pag ako ang pinaabot ninyo nang sagad (if you go too far), I will declare a suspension of

"Kasama kayo sa mga rebelde, mga kriminal, pati mga durugista. Then pahtrapan mo ako (You will be at par with rebels,

Turn to Page 8.

Revolutionary From Page 1

criminals and drug addicts. If you make it hard for me, I will declare a revolutionary war until the end of my term. Then *pasensiyahan tayo* (you have to bear with this)," he added.

"Why should I be careful in reviewing contracts that are not in the interest of the people?" Duterte said. "Son of a b****, how dare you say that to me, Mr. Drilon."

In 2017, Duterte has also threatened to declare a revolutionary government if his opponents tried to oust him.

The closed-door meeting with the businessmen was held at Malacañang a few days after the President ordered the Office of the Solicitor General to review all government contracts with private groups to make sure that these contracts

were not disadvantageous to the government.

Presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said he came in late but heard the Chief Executive telling the heads of business conglomerates to call his attention personally if they become victims of red tape in government.

Duterte met with business leaders including Manuel Pangilinan, managing director and chief executive officer of Hong Kong-based First Pacific Co. Ltd.; Hans Sy of the SM Group; Robina Gokongwei-Pe, president of Robinsons Retail Holdings; Alice Eduardo, founder, president and CEO of Sta. Elena Construction and Development Corp.; and Christian Razon Gonzalez, senior vice president of the In-

ternational Container Terminal Services Inc.

Davao-based trader Dennis Uy, founder of Udena Corp., was also present at the meeting. Uy formed the Mislattel consortium, which bagged the franchise as the third telecommunications company along with Chelsea and China Telecom.

Trade Secretary Ramon Lopez, Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat, Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea, Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, presidential adviser for entrepreneurship Joey Concepcion III and Panelo were also present during the "private meeting."

Malacañang defended Duterte's directive to review all government contracts after some groups questioned the timing of the order.

Militant group Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) said the review should have

been done during the first year of his administration.

While Bayan described the order as "long overdue," it also expressed suspicion that Duterte's pronouncement may also be a means to divert attention away from issues like the allegedly anomalous deals with China.

Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon has also urged the administration to exercise "extreme caution" in reviewing all government deals, saying existing and binding contracts cannot simply be classified as onerous and cancelled. The power to review contracts must not be used to harass, the senator added.

Panelo chided critics for questioning the President's order and maintained that it was part of his duty to the people.

"The problem with critics is it's hard to understand them. If you did not do anything, they will mock you. If you do some-

thing, they will ask, 'Why only now?'" Panelo said in Filipino over radio *dzMM*.

"You cannot prevent the government from intervening. It can intervene in anything. As President, it is his duty not only to serve the country but to protect the interest of the public," he added.

Panelo said Duterte is "serious" about reviewing the government deals and has asked agencies to comply with his directive "immediately." He said Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra has formed a panel to review the contracts.

Panelo said Duterte ordered the review upon learning that the government under then former president Fidel Ramos forged a deal with water concessionaire Maynilad that prohibited it from intruding into the contract terms.

He said the provision was the reason why the government

lost an arbitration case and was ordered by a Singapore court to pay billions to Maynilad.

The case stemmed from state-run Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System's refusal to implement an upward tariff adjustment for the period of 2013 to 2017. The Singapore court ruled in favor of Maynilad and asked the government to pay the water concessionaire P3.42 billion in compensation. The ruling became final last year.

"The ruling stated that it was the government's fault because it intervened... The President became angry and said it was not acceptable," Panelo said.

Panelo previously said the ruling on the Maynilad deal is final and could no longer be rescinded but the administration can still prosecute officials who allowed the contract to proceed.

PH REBUKES CHINA OVER FISHING BOATS

STORY BY DONA Z. PAZZIBUGAN

Heeding a recommendation from the military, the Department of Foreign Affairs files a diplomatic protest and issues a statement charging that the presence of the Chinese vessels near Pag-asa Island is illegal.

A12

FROM A1

By **Dona Z. Pazzibugan**
@dpazzibugan

The government on Thursday rebuked China for sending a large number of fishing vessels near islands and islets occupied by the Philippines in the heavily disputed South China Sea, calling the presence of the boats "illegal."

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) issued the rare public rebuke of the Chinese presence on Philippine territory after the Armed Forces of the Philippines monitored more than 200 Chinese vessels from January to March in a disputed area named Sandy Cay near Philippine-occupied Pag-asa Island.

"The presence of Chinese vessels near and around Pag-asa and other maritime features ... is illegal," the DFA said in a statement.

"Such actions are a clear violation of Philippine sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdic-

tion as defined under international law," it said.

'Swarming' tactic

The DFA said the Chinese vessels had been in the area "in large numbers and for sustained and recurring period, what is commonly referred to as 'swarming' tactics, raising questions about their intent as well as concerns over their role in support of coercive objectives."

"Such actions ... when not repudiated by the Chinese government are deemed to have been adopted by it," it said.

"The presence of Chinese vessels within the Kalayaan Island Group, whether military, fishing or other vessels, will thus continue to be the subject of appropriate action by the Philippines," it added.

The DFA lodged diplomatic protests and raised concerns in meetings with Chinese officials after the Armed Forces of the Philippines reported that the Chinese vessels had been unresponsive to warnings from Philippine authorities.

Capt. Jason Ramon,



**Such actions are a clear violation
of Philippine sovereignty, sovereign
rights and jurisdiction as defined under
international law**

Department of Foreign Affairs

spokesperson for the military's Western Command (Wescom), said 275 Chinese fishing vessels had been monitored around Pag-asa, Zamora (Subi) Reef and the sandbars in the area since January.

"These are suspected maritime militia," Ramon said.

Self-restraint

"Of course, we challenge them. We warn them that they are entering Philippine territory. But almost all of them are unresponsive," he said, adding that this was the reason Wescom recommended a

diplomatic protest.

The DFA called on the Chinese government to adhere to the agreement announced by President Duterte and Chinese President Xi Jinping during the Chinese leader's visit to Manila in November last year "for both sides to exercise self-restraint with respect to activities in the South China Sea that would complicate or escalate disputes and affect peace and stability."

"We call on the Chinese government to adhere to this consensus reached at the highest levels, down to its agencies and

its military," the DFA said.

The statement came after Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. fired a rare broadside at China on Twitter.

"When a country lets its countrymen swarm into foreign territory and does nothing to drive them out, it is deemed to have endorsed and in effect adopted that aggressive act against a foreign country," Locsin tweeted on Thursday, commenting on a news report titled "China suddenly snatches new island."

Locsin ordered the DFA to heed Supreme Court Senior Associate Justice Antonio Carpio's advice to file a diplomatic protest as soon as possible over the situation on Pag-asa Island.

"OK guys at DFA, let's look into this and file ASAP if not too late. Let's see if we can undo the fuck-ups of previous administrations that sold us," Locsin said.

Cayetano DFA

Under Locsin's predecessor, Alan Peter Cayetano, the DFA would not disclose what it had done about Chinese incursions

into Philippine territory in the South China Sea.

President Duterte has pursued warmer ties with China since taking office in 2016, setting aside a UN arbitral court ruling in favor of the Philippines in a challenge to China's claim over nearly all of the South China Sea, in exchange for billions of dollars of pledged loans and investment.

Besides the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam also oppose China's sweeping claim over the strategic waterway.

Sen. Risa Hontiveros on Thursday sought a Senate inquiry into the presence of Chinese fishing vessels near Pag-asa, calling it illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

"China is not only a state sponsor to illegal fishing, it is also openly disregarding our sovereignty and marine jurisdiction. It is a deep and dangerous incursion into our territories," Hontiveros said. —WITH REPORTS FROM JEANNETTE I. ANDRADE, LEILA B. SALAVERRIA, AP AND REUTERS INQ

Phl protests 'illegal' presence of Chinese ships around Pag-asa

By **PIA LEE-BRAGO**

With hundreds of Chinese vessels swarming around Pag-asa Island, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) is calling China's attention to their "illegal" presence and "clear violation" of Philippine sovereignty.

"The presence of Chinese vessels near and around Pag-asa and other maritime features in the KIG is illegal," the DFA said in a statement. KIG stands for Kalayaan Island Group, which includes Pag-asa.

Some of the vessels are believed to be militia ships disguised as fishing boats.

"Such actions are a clear violation of Philippine sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction, as defined under international law including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)," the DFA added in a rare rebuke.

"Such actions when not repudiated by the Chinese government are deemed to have been adopted by it."

Earlier, Malacañang said the DFA is

preparing to protest the massive presence of Chinese vessels around Pag-asa, which is part of Palawan.

The DFA stressed Pag-asa Island is part of KIG, an integral part of the Philippines over which it has sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction.

"We call on concerned parties to desist from any action and activity that contravenes the ASEAN-China Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), as these generate tension, mistrust and uncertainty, and threatens regional peace and stability," the DFA said.

The Philippines is calling for a full and effective implementation of the DOC while negotiations for a Code of Conduct (COC) in the South China Sea are ongoing, the DFA said.

"We cannot emphasize enough the imperative to build and promote mutual trust and confidence, to exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities; and to avoid actions that may further complicate the situation and undermine peace, security and stability in the region," it added.

With the presence of numerous Chinese vessels around Pag-asa now confirmed, Supreme Court Senior Associate Justice Antonio Carpio said filing a diplomatic protest is the right thing to do.

"To preserve our sovereignty over our territorial sea around Pag-asa, the (Philippines) should file a diplomatic protest. Otherwise, the Philippines will be deemed to have acquiesced to China's claim that the waters around Pag-asa belong to China under its nine-dash line claim," he said in a statement.

Turn to Page 7

Phl protests From Page 4

The senior SC magistrate stressed that Chinese fishing vessels have no right to fish within the 12-nautical-mile territorial sea of the island, which is the seat of the Kalayaan municipal government.

"They can only exercise innocent passage in our territorial sea - meaning these vessels must transit in a straight, continuous and expeditious passage. These vessels cannot stop, loiter or even zigzag in our territorial sea," he explained.

The SC magistrate likewise called for the filing of diplomatic protests over Beijing's seizure of Sandy Cay and two low-tide sandbars, which he said are also within the country's territorial waters.

"Sandy Cay, a high-tide sandbar, and two nearby low-tide sandbars, are less than two nautical miles from Pag-asa. These sandbars emerged within our 12-nautical-mile territorial sea in Pag-asa. Anything that emerges within our territorial sea is also our territory. That is well-recognized under international law," he pointed out.

Carpio warned that if the country fails to file the protests, it "will be deemed to have acquiesced" to Beijing.

Presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said a diplomatic protest is being readied after the military confirmed the presence of Chinese vessels near Pag-asa Island.

Beijing's Ambassador Zhao Jianhua said those were merely fishing vessels, but Panelo said they were militia boats.

DFA chief Teodoro Locsin Jr. said he had filed a "salvo" of diplomatic notes against China before his trip to Beijing in March. He refused to disclose to the public the contents of the diplomatic notes.

Commitment to self-restraint

Despite concerns over the large presence of Chinese boats around Pag-asa, the fourth Bilateral Consultation Mechanism (BCM) on the South China Sea ended on a positive note in Manila, with both countries reaffirming their commitment to exercise self-restraint in their activities in the South China Sea to make sure disputes don't escalate and threaten peace and stability in the region.

Foreign Affairs Assistant Secretary Meynardo Montealegre of the Office of Asian and Pacific Affairs led the Philippine delegation. Chinese vice foreign minister Kong Xuanyou led the Chinese representatives to the meeting.

"In a frank yet cordial and constructive manner, both sides raised specific issues and recent developments and actions in the South China Sea which have raised concerns to either side, and proposed ways to address them in a cooperative manner," the DFA said in a statement late Wednesday afternoon.

"Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to cooperate and to continue to find ways forward to strengthen mutual trust and confidence," the DFA said.

While contentious issues in the South China Sea should not be ignored, the DFA reiterated they should not be considered the sum total of Philippines-China relations and should not stop the two countries from exploring mutually beneficial cooperation in other fields.

Both sides also reaffirmed the importance of maintaining and promoting regional peace and stability, freedom of navigation and over-flight.

They likewise reiterated their commitment to address disputes through peaceful means, without resorting to threat or use of force - specifically through friendly consultations and negotiations between sovereign states directly concerned, in accordance with universally recognized principles of international law, including the United Nations charter and the 1982 UNCLOS.

Both sides likewise agreed that their bilateral relations should serve the interests of the Filipino and Chinese peoples and contribute to peace, stability and development in the region, the DFA added.

"Both sides had a productive exchange of views on ways to enhance maritime cooperation in areas such as on recent developments in the South China Sea

carrying political and security implications, maritime search and rescue, maritime safety, marine environmental protection/marine scientific research and fisheries in relevant working group meetings under the framework of the BCM," it said.

The DFA said the two governments exchanged views on oil and gas development without prejudice to their respective positions on sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction.

They also agreed to maintain the positive momentum of negotiations for the adoption of a COC in the South China Sea, based on consensus.

The Fifth Meeting of the BCM will be held in China in the second half of this year, with the exact date and venue to be announced later.

Guerrilla warfare

Meanwhile, UP law professor and expert in maritime affairs Jay Batongbacal said China is basically launching guerrilla warfare at sea as the Department of National Defense and the Armed Forces of the Philippines watch helplessly.

"That is real dilemma now to the defense department and Armed Forces. They were not designed to confront this kind of tactics. It's basically like a guerrilla warfare at sea... and they are now confronted by this kind of possibilities," Batongbacal said in an ANC interview yesterday. Batongbacal is director of the university's Institute for Maritime Affairs and Law of the Sea.

He added this could be the reason for Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana's vigorously pushing for a review of the country's defense treaty with the United States. - With Helen Flores, Edu Punay, Jaime Laude, AP

Chinese presence near island 'illegal'

Analyst: Military has no capability to confront Beijing

BY BERNADETTE E. TAMAYO

THE Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) on Wednesday declared the presence of Chinese vessels near Pagasa (Thitu) Island in the Kalayaan Island Group "illegal."

➤ 'Illegal' A2

■ 'ILLEGAL' FROM A1

Chinese

The DFA said Pag-asa Island is part of the Kalayaan or Spratly group, "an integral part of the Philippines over which it has sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction."

Assistant Secretary Emmanuel Fernandez stressed this in a statement amid the reported huge number of Chinese vessels circling Pag-asa Island in the contested West Philippine Sea (South China Sea).

"Such actions are a clear violation of Philippine sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction, as defined under international law including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (Unclos)," Fernandez said.

"Moreover, it has been observed that Chinese vessels have been present in large numbers and for sustained and recurring periods — what is commonly referred to as "swarming" tactics — raising questions about their intent as well as concerns over their role in support of coercive objectives," he said.

Fernandez added that "such actions when not repudiated by the Chinese government are deemed to have been adopted by it."

"The presence of Chinese vessels within the [Kalayaan Island group or KIG in Palawan], whether military, fishing or other vessels, will thus continue to be the subject of appropriate action by the Philippines," he said.

He said that "for the record, the Philippines has consistently manifested its position on the Pag-asa Islands and on the KIG, and its objections or concerns over illegal, tension-raising or coercive

activities, through diplomatic actions, including notes verbales and in meetings with the Chinese side, including the Philippines-China Bilateral Consultation Mechanism (BCM)."

"We call on concerned parties to desist from any action and activity that contravenes the Asean (Association of Southeast Asian Nations)-China Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), as these generate tension, mistrust and uncertainty, and threatens regional peace and stability," he said.

Fernandez said that while negotiations for a Code of Conduct (COC) in the South China Sea were ongoing, the Philippines wanted full and effective implementation of the DOC.

He recalled that the joint statement issued by the Philippines and China in 2018 during the state visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to the Philippines included an agreement by both sides to exercise self-restraint with respect to activities in the South China Sea that would complicate or escalate disputes and affect peace and stability.

"We call on the Chinese government to adhere to this consensus reached at the highest levels, down to its agencies and its military," Fernandez said.

Panatag, too

Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon said the Philippine government must also file a diplomatic protest against China for the reported increasing number of Chinese vessels in Panatag (Scarborough) Shoal.

"I believe that we should file a protest... because the continued assertion of our rights over that territory is critical to our continuous claim over the

Panatag Shoal," he said.

"Remember that in today's diplomatic practices, the ability of a country to provide economic assistance is an effective tool of diplomacy," Drilon said in a media forum.

He added, "It's no longer you invade one territory but you extend loans. Remember that the extension of loan is part of a foreign policy."

Former Senate president Juan Ponce Enrile on Thursday sought a peaceful resolution to the reported harassment of Filipino fishermen by Chinese militia near Pag-asa Island.

"We have to deal with China this way, because we do not have any force to challenge China. This is why I'm advocating a closer relationship with China," he said at the sidelines of his campaign sortie in Bicol.

Enrile also expressed concern that, if left unresolved, "the possible intervention of Chinese vessels in the (Pag-asa) fishing grounds will deplete the supply in the area."

'Military not designed to confront China'

A maritime expert said on Thursday the Philippine defense and military establishments have no capabilities to confront China with its "tactics" in waging a "guerrilla war at sea."

Jay Batongbacal, director of the University of the Philippines' Institute for Maritime Affairs and Law of the Sea, also stressed China had been watching the Philippines in repairing the runway at Pag-asa Island.

"The message, really, is that you can only do these things because we are allowing you to do so," I think that is the overall message really, by maintaining their presence near the [islands]," Batong-

bacal said in an interview over ABS-CBN News Channel.

He cited China's tactics when pursuing territory such as what happened in the Parcel Islands with Vietnam, engaging Hanoi in warfare and taking over islands violently.

"Usually, what would happen would be that you have these militia vessels involved near the islands... [then there's a clash], a provocation [wherein] somebody fired upon somebody else and... that became a pretext to send in more lethal forces," he added.

For Batongbacal, the Department of National Defense (DND) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines were "not designed" to face the tactics being employed by Beijing.

"We have never had that situation ever and they are now confronted by this kind of possibility. I believe that this is one reason why the Defense department has also initiated this possible review of the MDT (mutual defense treaty), because the MDT is not designed for this kind of situation either," he explained.

Lorenzana, on the other hand, admitted that China had been keeping an eye on the construction of the runway at Pag-asa.

"Oh, they have been watching us for a long time, but our projects are proceeding and will continue until completed. They are not interfering," Lorenzana told reporters in a message.

Last year, he called for a review of the mutual defense treaty with Washington, pushing for the inclusion of the Philippine-occupied islands in the West Philippine Sea.

Lorenzana met with acting US Secretary of Defense Patrick Shanahan last month, hoping to discuss the treaty.

WITH DEMPSEY REYES

Void China loan deal, SC urged

THE Supreme Court (SC) was urged by a group of militant petitioners on Thursday to cancel the Philippine government's \$62-million loan agreement with China for the Chico River Irrigation Pump Project in the Cordillera region.

In a 67-page petition for certiorari and prohibition, the group of party-list legislators from the Makabayan bloc sought to nullify the loan agreement for being unconstitutional.

The group is led by Senate candidate Neri Colmenares.

Named respondents to the case were President Rodrigo Duterte, Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea, Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez 3rd, Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Ernesto Pernia, Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra and National Irrigation Administration Administrator Ricardo Visaya.

The Colmenares group sought the issuance of a temporary restraining order to halt the implementation of the deal, where the Philippines stands to lose natural-gas deposits in the Recto Bank or Reed Bank in the South China Sea (West Philippine Sea) in case of loan default.

Associate Justice Antonio Carpio had said China would ravish the natural gas in the area if the Philippines

➤ **LoanA2**

■ LOAN FROM A1

SC asked to void

failed to pay the \$62-million loan.

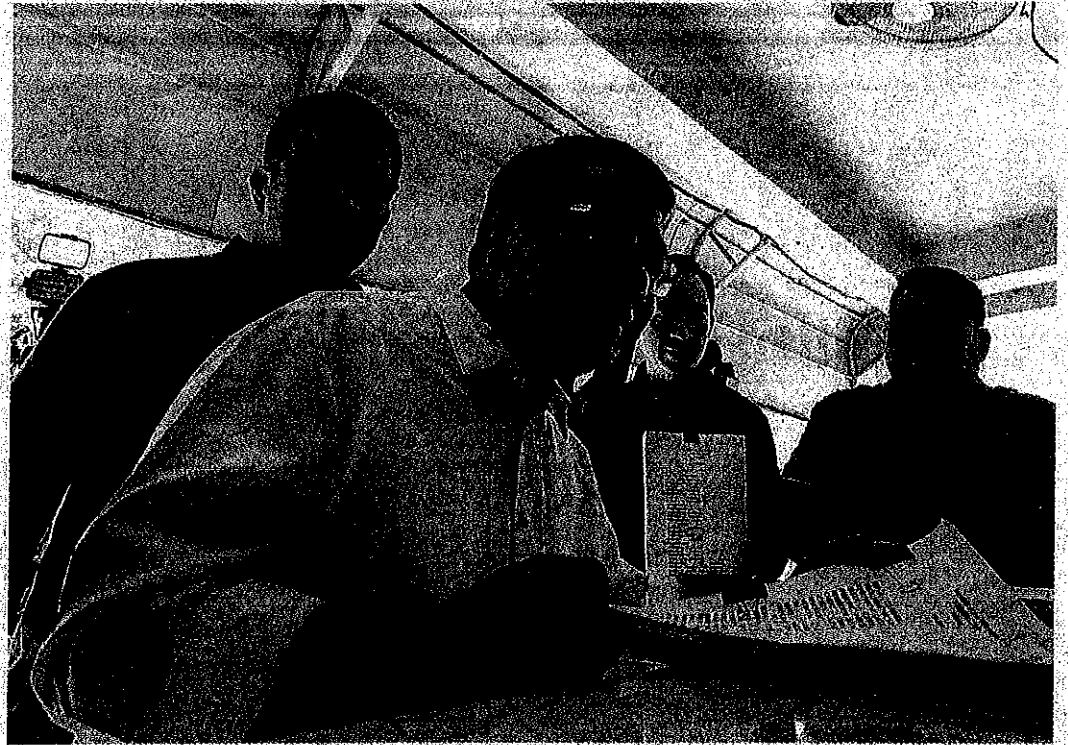
The 20-year deal for the Chico River Pump Irrigation Project was signed by Dominguez and Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of China Zhao Jianhua on April 10, 2018.

The petitioners asked the respondents to produce procurement documents in granting civil works to the Chinese contractor and other relevant documents in connection with the case.

They wanted the high tribunal to order all concerned agencies of the government to produce certified true copies, upon request, of all loan agreements executed by and between Manila and Beijing.

Meanwhile, two of Colmenares' fellow candidates for senator opposed Duterte's order to review the loan deal with China and all other government contracts, saying the power to investigate these agreements might be "weaponized."

In a forum at Adamson University in Manila, former solicitor general Florin "Pilo" Hilbay and Magdalo party-list Rep. Gary Alejano likened the review to a "narcologist," saying it might be



STOP CHICO LOAN Senate candidate Neri Colmenares files a petition questioning a loan agreement with China before the Supreme Court in Manila on Thursday. PHOTO BY DJ DIOSINA

used as a means to run after enemies of the government.

The government has entered into what Hilbay said were hundreds of thousands of contracts.

Malacañang also on Thursday assured the public that the President was "serious" in his order to review all existing contracts entered into by the Philippine government with private entities, multilateral agencies or foreign countries.

Palace spokesman Salvador Panelo made the assurance in an interview with radio dzMM after some senators urged the government to exercise caution in implementing the order.

Sen. Franklin Drilon said the government should carefully assess existing and binding contracts as these could not simply be classified as onerous and canceled.

Drilon said the review of the

contracts "must not be used to harass" and should be brought to the Ombudsman if proven to have violated the anti-graft law.

Sen. Sherwin Gatchalian agreed, saying the assessment should not be meant to scrap contracts as it could tarnish the reputation of the country in attracting potential investors.

JOMAR CANLAS, CATHERINE A. MODESTO AND CATHERINE S. VALENTE

DFA says Chinese vessels around Pag-asa Island illegal

BY ASHZEL HACHERO

THE Department of Foreign Affairs yesterday said the presence of Chinese vessels around the Philippine-occupied Pag-asa Island in the South China Sea is illegal and a violation of the country's sovereignty.

Pag-asa Island is about 12 to 14 nautical miles from the Chinese-occupied Subi Reef.

The DFA also said the presence of Chinese vessels, especially in large numbers and for sustained and recurring periods, have raised questions about China's intent and role "in support of coercive objectives."

It was the first time the DFA issued a strong statement against China.

The Duterte administration has been under constant criticism for its passive stance on the presence of hundreds of Chinese vessels that the military said were mostly manned by members of Chinese maritime militia.

In Beijing, Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang did not refer directly to Manila's protest, but he said bilateral talks on the South China Sea held in the Philippines on Wednesday were "frank, friendly and constructive."

Both sides reiterated that South China Sea issues should be re-

solved peacefully by parties directly involved, he said.

Last month, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo assured the Philippines it would come to its defense if it came under attack in the South China Sea.

President Duterte has pursued warmer ties with China since taking office in 2016 in exchange for billions of dollars of pledged loans and investment. He said this week China just wants to be friends with the Philippines.

Earlier, Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. said he will file a diplomatic protest over the presence of Chinese vessels around Pag-asa Island if there is a

major difference between a diplomatic protest and a note verbale. He added that if and when a diplomatic protest is filed, it will not be made public. He has also said he filed diplomatic protests with Beijing before undertaking his first official trip to China last month.

The Philippines has monitored at least 200 Chinese boats Pag-asa in the Philippines, from January to March this year, according to military data.

The Philippines, Brunei, China, Malaysia, Taiwan and Vietnam have competing claims of sovereignty in the busy South China

See DFA ► Page B3

DFA

Sea, a conduit for goods in excess of \$3.4 trillion every year.

"The Pag-asa Islands are part of the Kalayaan Island Group (KIG), which is an integral part of the Philippines over which it has sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction. Accordingly, the presence of Chinese vessels near and around Pag-asa and other maritime features in the KIG is illegal. Such actions are a clear violation of Philippine sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction, as defined under international law including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea," the DFA said.

"Such actions when not repudiated by the Chinese government are deemed to have been adopted by it," it added.

The DFA said the country has consistently manifested its position on the Pag-asa Islands and on the KIG, and its objections or concerns over "illegal, tension-raising or coercive activities," through diplomatic actions, including notes verbale and in meetings with the Chinese side, including the Philippines-China Bilateral Consultation Mechanism.

"We call on concerned parties to desist from any action and activ-

ity that contravenes the ASEAN-China Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), as these generate tension, mistrust and uncertainty, and threatens regional peace and stability," it added.

The DFA said while negotiations for a code of conduct in the South China Sea are ongoing, the Philippines reiterates its calls "for the full and effective implementation of the DOC."

"We cannot emphasize enough the imperative to build and promote mutual trust and confidence, to exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities; and to avoid actions that may further complicate the situation and undermine peace, security and stability in the region," the DFA further said.

It stressed that a joint statement issued by the Philippines and China during last year's state visit of President Xi Jinping includes an agreement to exercise self-restraint with respect to activities in the South China Sea that would complicate or escalate disputes and affect peace and stability.

"We call on the Chinese government to adhere to this consensus reached at the highest levels, down to its agencies and its military," the DFA said. — *With Reuters*

DFA rebukes China anew

'Swarm of Chinese vessels in WPS illegal'

By Rey E. Requejo

THE Department of Foreign Affairs on Thursday labeled as "illegal" the presence of hundreds of Chinese vessels swarming around the Philippine-occupied Pag-asa Island in the West Philippine Sea.

"The Pag-asa Islands are part of the Kalayaan Island Group, which is an integral part of the Philippines over which it has sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction," the DFA said in a statement sent to the media Thursday afternoon.

"Accordingly, the presence of Chinese vessels near and around Pag-asa and other maritime features in the KIG is illegal," it added.

Such actions are a "clear violation of Philippine sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction," as defined under international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the DFA statement read.

Ahead of the release of the statement, *Next page*

DFA...

From A1

Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. on Thursday noted that "such actions when not repudiated by the country concerned, are deemed to have been adopted by it."

"When a country lets its countrymen swarm into foreign territory and does nothing to drive them out, it is deemed to have endorsed and in effect adopted that aggressive act against a foreign country," he said on his official Twitter account.

The Philippine government has observed that the Chinese vessels have been present in large numbers for sustained and recurring periods.

The DFA said these "swarming" tactics raise questions about their intent as well as "concerns over their role in support of coercive objectives."

In its statement, the DFA asserted that the presence of Chinese vessels within the KIG, "whether military, fishing or other vessels," will continue to be the subject of appropriate action by the Philippines.

Philippine Ambassador to China Jose Santiago Sta. Romana on Thursday confirmed that the country raised this issue during the two nations' fourth meeting of the Bilateral Consultative Mechanism.

"It was discussed during the Philippine-China bilateral talks on the South China Sea held in Manila on April 2 to 3," he told the Philippine News Agency in a text message.

Meanwhile, leftist lawmakers asked the Supreme Court to strike down as

unconstitutional the government's \$62-million loan agreement with China to fund the construction of the Chico River irrigation pump project in the Cordillera region.

In their petition, lawmakers led by senatorial candidate Neri Colmenares also sought the issuance of a temporary restraining order to stop the implementation of the loan deal where China could seize natural gas deposits in the Recto Bank if the Philippines defaults on its loan.

Taking the cue from arguments publicly raised by Senior Associate Justice Antonio Carpio, the petitioners said the agreement violates several provisions of the 1987 Constitution as it contains an express waiver of sovereign immunity over the country's patrimonial assets in favor of China.

They cited provisions of the contract showing that the government "has allowed its patrimonial assets to stand as security for unpaid obligations under this loan agreement. 'Collateralization' of patrimonial property for unpaid obligations under a foreign loan contract or as an award in an arbitral proceeding is unconstitutional and illegal."

Specifically, they said, the contract violates Section 2, Article XII of the Charter, which reads: "All lands of the public domain, waters, minerals, coal, petroleum and other mineral oils, all forces of potential energy, fisheries, forests or timber, wildlife, flora and fauna, and other natural resources are owned by the state. With the exception of agricultural lands, all other natural resources shall not be alienated. The exploration, development, and utilization of natural resources shall

be under the full control and supervision of the state."

Carpio on Thursday urged the government to file a diplomatic protest against China to preserve the country's sovereignty over its territorial sea.

"To preserve our sovereignty over our territorial sea around Pagasa, the Philippines should file a diplomatic protest. Otherwise, the Philippines will be deemed to have acquiesced to China's claim that the waters around Pagasa belong to China under its nine-dash line claim," Carpio said in a statement.

Carpio said China's fishing vessels have no right to fish within the 12 nautical mile territorial sea of Pagasa.

"They can only exercise innocent passage in our territorial sea—meaning these vessels must transit in a straight, continuous and expeditious passage. These vessels cannot stop, loiter or even zig-zag in [and] out [of the] territorial sea," he said.

The Court's most senior magistrate also insisted that the country should also protest China's seizure of Sanday Cay and two other sandbars.

"Sandy Cay, a high-tide sandbar, and two nearby low-tide sandbars, are less than two nautical miles from Pagasa. These sandbars emerged within our 12 nautical mile territorial sea in Pagasa," Carpio pointed out.

"Anything that emerges within our territorial sea is also our territory. That is well recognized under international law," he said.

Sandy Cay was seized by China two years ago. However, no protest was filed by the Philippines despite its promise that it will do so. **With PNA**

DFA slams Chinese ships' presence near Pag-asa

The Department of Foreign Affairs yesterday branded as "illegal" the presence of Chinese vessels near and around Pag-asa Islands, which it said are part of the Kalayaan Group of Islands and an integral part of the Philippines over which it has sovereignty, sovereign rights, and jurisdiction.

This is the first time that the DFA has openly objected to aggressive Chinese activities in the disputed waters of the South China Sea or the West Philippine Sea under the three-year-old administration of President Duterte.

"Accordingly, the presence of Chinese vessels near and around Pag-asa and other maritime features in the KIG is illegal. Such actions are a clear violation of Philippine sovereignty, sovereign rights, and jurisdiction, as defined under

international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea," said the DFA in a statement issued by the office of acting Assistant Secretary for Strategic Communications Emmanuel Fernandez.

The DFA said that it has been observed that Chinese vessels have been present "in large numbers and for sustained and recurring periods."

It pointed out that such action is what is commonly referred to as "swarming" tactics that raise questions about their intent as well as "concerns over their role in support of coercive objectives."

When not repudiated by the Chinese government, the DFA said such actions are "deemed to have been adopted by it." **(Roy Mabasa)**

Chinese ships near Pag-asa 'illegal'

THE Philippines yesterday branded as "illegal" the recent presence of hundreds of Chinese ships near a disputed island in the South China Sea — a rare public rebuke of Beijing by Manila, which has backed off their once tense territorial standoff.

Control over the South China Sea is a point of regional contention because trillions of dollars of

goods pass through it, and rich petroleum reserves are thought to sit deep beneath its waters.

Under President Rodrigo Duterte, however, Manila has largely set aside its previously confrontational stance on China's claims in favor of seeking trade and investment from Beijing.

Pag-asa, also called Thitu island, is held by the Philippines, but in the first

three months of the year at least 275 Chinese fishing and coast guard vessels were sighted in the area, the Philippines military said.

"The presence of Chinese vessels near and around Pag-asa (island)... is illegal," the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said in a statement.

"Such actions are a clear violation of Philippine sovereignty," it added.

The DFA statement said the "swarming tactics" raised questions about the ships' intent, which critics have speculated is an effort to pressure the Philippines over infrastructure work it is doing there.

"Such actions, when not repudiated by the Chinese government, are deemed to have been adopted by it," the statement added.

AFP

SC asked to stop Chico River loan deal

BY ASHZEL HACHERO

LAWMAKERS belonging to the leftist Makabayan bloc yesterday asked the Supreme Court to strike down the government's \$62-million loan agreement with China for the Chico River irrigation pump project in the Cordillera region.

In a 67-page petition, the lawmakers said the agreement contains provisions that violate the 1987 Constitution.

Among the alleged unconstitutional provisions are the confidentiality clause, choice of Chinese arbitration tribunal, and the waiver of sovereign immunity over patrimonial assets.

The petitioners said the assailed provisions "open the possibility for China to acquire patrimonial properties in the Philippines."

It will be recalled that Supreme Court Senior Associate Justice Antonio Carpio warned that China could seize gas and oil reserves at the Reed Bank if the country is unable to pay its loan for the Chico River project. He cited a provision in the loan agreement

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wherein Manila waived its immunity to patrimonial assets and assets dedicated to commercial use.

Reed Bank is within the country's 200-mile exclusive economic zone, according to a 2016 ruling issued by the Netherlands-based Permanent Court of Arbitration which invalidated China's massive claims in the South China Sea.

China though refused to honor the arbitral ruling. China and the Philippines have competing claims in the South China Sea together with Brunei, Malaysia, Taiwan, and Vietnam.

The petitioners are former Bayan Muna representative and now senatorial candidate Neri Colmenares, Bayan Muna Rep. Carlos Zarate, Anakpawis Rep. Ariel Casilao, Gabriela Reps. Emmy de Jesus and Arlene Brosas, ACT Teachers Reps. Antonio Tinio and Francisca Castro, and Kabataan Rep. Sarah Jane Elago.

Named respondents were President Duterte, Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea, Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III, National Economic Development Authority head Ernesto Pernia, and Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra.

WPS inquiry nixed

What is important is that a formal protest had been filed

By Mario J. Mallari

There is no need for congressional inquiry into the presence of Chinese vessels in the disputed West Philippine Sea (WPS), an opposition senator said yesterday.

According to Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon, the filing of notes verbale by the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) is enough to protect the country's interest in the area.

"I believe that we should file a protest and Secretary (Teodoro) Locsin (Jr.) said he has filed a protest, which is important, because the continued assertion of our rights over that territory is critical to our continuous claim over the Panatag Shoal," Drilon said.

Asked if there is a need for Senate

inquiry into the matter, Drilon replied: "No need. It's sufficiently expressed in public forum. What is important is that a formal protest had been filed."

Earlier, Locsin had said that before he went on an official visit to Beijing last month he filed several *notes verbale* against the swarming by Chinese vessels in the disputed territory.

The DFA also cited the holding of the 4th Bilateral Consultation Mechanism in Manila on 2-3 April as venue for the Philippines and China to find "friendly" ways to address the recent developments in the WPS.

"Both sides likewise agreed that their bilateral relations should serve the interests of the Filipino and Chinese peoples and contribute to peace, stability, and development in the region," the DFA

said in a statement.

Meanwhile, a political analyst on Thursday cautioned Philippine government forces not to provoke Chinese maritime militia sighted around Pag-asa Island saying Beijing can use this as justification to intensify pressure in the area.

In a TV interview, University of the Philippines' Institute for Maritime Affairs and Law of the Sea director Jay Batongbacal noted that while the Chinese vessels are neither Navy nor Coast Guard ships their crew could be armed with personal weapons and some may even have combat training.

"We should never be provoked into taking aggressive actions in these vessels, but exposing them and then trying diplomatic channels to get them to back off and eventually get out of the area is another thing," Batongbacal said.

With Elmer N. Manuel

Independent study on alleged WPS damage pushed

MALACANANG on Tuesday said an independent body should conduct a study to confirm whether there is indeed "destruction of the environment" due to China's buildup in the West Philippine Sea or South China Sea.

Presidential Spokesperson Salvador Panelo made this remark despite the 2016 ruling of the Hague-based Permanent Court Arbitration (PCA) ruling which detailed environmental damage caused by Chinese land-reclamation activities.

"I think mas maganda kung (it's better if an) independent body ang tumingin doon (conducts a study there)," Panelo said in a Palace briefing.

"You have to have a scientific finding for that," he added.

His statement came a day after Chinese Ambassador Zhao Jianhua described the case filed by two former Philippine government officials against Chinese President Xi

Jinping before the International Criminal Court (ICC) as a "fabrication".

Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert Del Rosario and former Ombudsman Conchita Carpio-Morales filed a complaint before the ICC on March 13 this year insisting Chinese officials be held accountable for crimes against humanity and damage to environment over China's activities in the disputed waters.

President Rodrigo R. Duterte has clarified that his administration has no participation in the said activity.

The PCA ruling reads: "The tribunal found that China's recent large-scale land reclamations and construction of artificial islands at seven features in the Spratlys Island has caused severe harm to the coral reef environment and that China has violated its obligation of the convention to preserve and protect."

"The tribunal also found that Chinese fishermen have engaged in the harvesting of endangered sea turtles, coral and giant clamps on a substantial scale," it added.

According to Panelo, the government has the option to implement its arbitration win against China before the United Nations (UN) General Assembly.

Moreover, he said the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) has already filed a diplomatic protest against China.

Panelo, meanwhile, blamed Del Rosario and the previous administration for their inaction when China started reclamation activity in the South China Sea.

"Lahat ng problema ngayon kaya nandito because of you -- pinaalala ninyo eh (All the problems we have now are because of you -- you made it worse)," Panelo said, addressing Del Rosario.

Fierce gun battle erupts in Comval province's far-flung town

By MIKE U. CRISMUNDO

CAMP BANCASI, Butuan City - An undetermined number of Communist New People's Army Terrorists (CNTs) were believed killed or wounded when a 20-minute fierce gun battle erupted between government forces and communist insurgents in Southern Mindanao.

First Lieutenant Jhocell D. Asis, Civil Military Operations (CMO) officer of the 71st Infantry (Kaibigan) Battalion (71st IB) said their operating unit also seized several war materials, lower receiver M16 Rifle, one

long magazine of M16 Rifle, bomb materials including Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), one blasting cap, one homemade shotgun with one magazine loaded with live bullets, 150 meters tripwires, one transistor radio, and subversive documents with high intelligence value.

"Our operating troops also seized from the encounter site several food stuffs, batteries, three water containers, three backpacks with personal belongings and hammocks," the 71st IB CMO officer said.

The clash took place at 9:45 a.m. on Sunday, March 31, in Sitio Dasuran, Barangay

Golden Valley, Mabini, Compostela Valley (Comval) province, where the March 28, 2019 encounter also happened, she said.

No one was injured on the government side while several CNTs were believed killed or wounded.

Lt. Col. Esteveyn E. Ducusin, commanding officer of the 71st IB commended the troops for the relentless pursuit operations against the CNTs.

"We believe that they are still the same terrorist group that our troops encountered three days ago," the 71st IB commander said.

Cyber sleuths track hackers

Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) acting secretary Eliseo Rio on Thursday said the agency is hot into the digital trail of the culprits in the supposed hacking of the website of Philippine Army's (PA) school.

The hackers only gained access to old and unclassified data.

In a radio interview, Rio said the agency's cyber security bureau is already looking into the incident, noting they are in close coordination with the PA in connection with the hacking of its database.

"The Army explained to us that they were transferring old files from a third Internet service provider to their own website since January and that was where the breach was done," Rio explained.

Apart from the DICT, Rio said the National Privacy Commission (NPC) is also conducting a separate probe of the incident.

While the hacked data were "old files," Rio said the need to pursue the investigation because there were personal data involved.

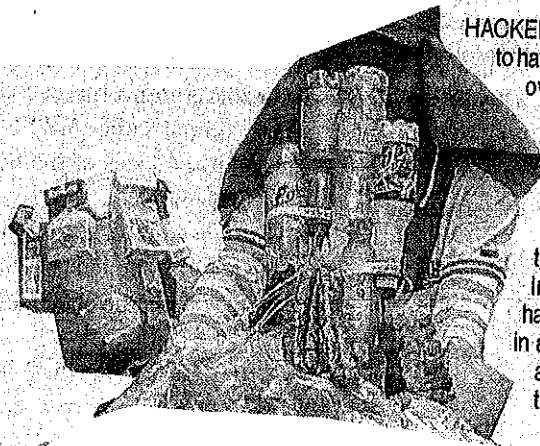
A group calling themselves Piracy LulzSec owned up to the hacking, claiming they managed to compromise information on more or less 20,000 Army troops.

Lt. Col. Ramon Zagala, the Army's spokesman, clarified the Army's website was not really hacked. He said the hackers only gained access to old and unclassified data, particularly the list of those who joined the Army's Scout Ranger Force from 1950 to 2014.

"What they leaked were exposed dumped files from an old database which were used by a third party Internet service provider. It happened last December of 2018," he said.

"According to Zagala, the Army's Network Enterprise Technology Battalion is likewise probing the incident to unmask the hackers.

E.N. Manuel



HACKERS who claimed to have gained access over data of the Philippine Army are now being tracked by cyber hounds to answer for their illegal act. In contrast, this hacker is engaged in a perfectly legal and honest way to earn a living.
ROMAN PROSPERO

Mayor Sara barred from sorties

By Nat Mariano

DAVAO City Mayor Sara Duterte-Carpio on Thursday said she was barred by the Presidential Security Group from attending a campaign rally in Tangub City, Misamis Occidental, amid reports of an assassination plot against her father, President Rodrigo Duterte.

The mayor, the campaign manager of the Hugpong ng Pagbabago coalition,

said the security group did not say why she could not proceed, noting that the order came from "the highest officer of the PSG."

On Tuesday, the President spoke during a campaign rally behind bullet-proof glass, also upon the insistence of the PSG.

Presidential Spokesman Salvador Panelo said whether the threats to kill the President are real or imagined, the government takes them seriously. *Next page*

Mayor Sara...

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"There have always been threats against national leaders... It is public knowledge that the Chief Executive has made many powerful enemies for spearheading this reform agenda in the two-and-a-half years of his presidency," Panelo said.

"There is also no denying that the President is a man of the masses and has made himself accessible to the public, and will do so at every opportunity," he added.

While Duterte "could not care less" about the threats against his life, the Chief Executive is still bound by mandatory security protocols, Panelo said.

"Whether he likes it or not, these protocols are mandatorily attached to the position he holds. It is the duty of the PSG to provide the highest level of security protocols, which includes putting up a bullet-proof glass panel if it deems necessary at a given situation, to keep the man holding the most powerful position in the country safe," he added.

"[Also,] whether the threats are real or imagined, we take them seriously and the Palace commends the PSG for doing a good job," Panelo said.

Brig. Gen. Jose Eriel Niembra, deputy commander of PSG, earlier said the bullet-proof glass was needed as the venue during the President's recent engagement was held in an open area.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said the use of bullet-proof glass is a normal precaution, especially in open areas.

"Is there a threat to the life of the President? We always assume the existence of threat to the President. Assuming otherwise would be foolhardy, reckless, and irresponsible," Lorenzana said.

The Philippine National Police, meanwhile, said it has yet to receive any validated information on threats to the life of the President. **With PNA**

Albayalde tells militant solons: You quit, not me

By Jeannette I. Andrade
@jiandradeINQ

Reacting to calls for his resignation over the recent deaths of 14 farmers in Negros Oriental, Police Gen. Oscar Albayalde on Thursday dared his critics to apply the same standards on themselves.

"Let me express this: That in the name of *deliquadeza* (sic), which is obviously not [among these lawmakers'] moral virtues, they themselves should have resigned long ago while enjoying the perks and privileges shouldered by the Filipino people," Albayalde said in a statement.

The Makabayan bloc in the House of Representatives on Wednesday called for Albayalde's removal as chief of the Philippine National Police over the killings of 14 farmers.

The police claimed that the dead were actually communist rebels and supporters who violently resisted arrest and were killed in separate shootouts.

Baseless call

The call for his removal over the killings was baseless, Albayalde said.

"I swiftly ordered the administrative relief of the provincial director of Negros Oriental Police Provincial Office (Noppo) and three police chiefs in the province to pave the way [for] a thorough investigation of the incidents," he said.

Relieved were Police Col. Raul Tacaca, director of Noppo; Lt. Col. Patricio Degay, chief of



Oscar Albayalde

Canlaon City police; Lt. Kevin Roy Mamaraldo, chief of Manjuyod town police, and Capt. Michael Rubia, chief of Sta. Catalina town police.

Sympathizers

Albayalde said the calls for his removal was proof that there were "sympathizers who are in power [but are] supporting the leftist movement and its vain provision to dismantle and overthrow a constitutionally elected government."

On the evening of March 30, police with search warrants separately raided the homes of the 14 farmers in an anticrime operation. A13

Police claimed they found guns and bullets in the farmers' homes.

"I assure [the public] that this corresponding investigation by the PNP Internal Affairs Service is deemed in the ambit of fairness, truth and justice whatever results [it] may divulge," Albayalde said.

The investigation will determine if there were lapses in police operating procedures during the operations, he added. INQ

Albayalde lashes back at Makabayan bloc

BY VICTOR REYES

PNP chief Gen. Oscar Albayalde yesterday lashed back at left-leaning lawmakers calling for his ouster over the alleged massacre of 14 farmers last Saturday in Negros Oriental, saying they are supporting enemies of the state, referring to Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army.

Albayalde said the lawmakers, led by Anakpawis party list Rep. Ariel Casilao, should have resigned long ago in the name of delicadeza.

"Let me express this that in the

name of delicadeza, which is obviously not in their moral virtues, they should be the ones who have long since resigned while enjoying the perks and privileges shouldered by the Filipino people," said Albayalde.

"We should vehemently send our condemnation against these people supporting the perceived enemies of the state to gain power themselves, even sacrificing the innocent lives of young students to attain their own propaganda

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against our country and government," said Albayalde.

The lawmakers have asked President Duterte to dismiss Albayalde from the service over the massacre of the 14 farmers tagged by authorities as NPA rebels.

They also filed separate resolutions urging the House to conduct an investigation on the incident, release of 12 others arrested during the operations, and a stop to Oplan Sauron which they said calls for killings and persecution of peasants and activists.

Albayalde noted that he swiftly ordered the relief of the Negros provincial police director and the chiefs of police of Cantalan City and Manjuyod and Sta. Catalina towns "to pave the way for a thorough investigation on the incidents."

"I assure that this corresponding investigation by the PNP Internal Affairs Service is deemed in the ambit of fairness, truth, and justice whatever results may divulge," he said.

Albayalde said the investigation is meant "to determine if there were lapses in this series of police operations launched by our local police units."

Army, NPA in Quezon clash

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

Government troops seized firearms and ammunition following an encounter with New People's Army (NPA) guerrillas in Quezon last Wednesday.

The military reported that the clash took place in Barangay San Luis I, Guinyangan town around 5 p.m.

Troops from the Army's 96th Infantry Battalion were sent to the barangay to check information that members of the NPA's Larangan 1, Komiteng Probinsya 1 were in the area.

The fighting lasted for about five minutes after which the rebels retreated with their wounded comrades.

The government troops recovered an M16 rifle with live rounds, two cellular phones and two backpacks containing personal belongings.

There were no casualties on the government side, the military reported.

In a statement it released, the Joint Task Force (JTF) Bicolandia said the campaign against the NPA was gaining ground.

It said that for the first quarter of this year, 11 rebels had been neutralized and numerous high-powered firearms were recovered.

The task force said it expects the NPA to lose its traditional bases and lairs in Quezon.

"We want to resolve this insurgency problem in a peaceful manner that's why we are reaching out to the remaining members of the rebels to surrender and give up the violent armed struggle," said Maj. Gen. Fernando T. Trinidad, the task force commander.

Criminal raps filed vs Albay mayor

BY ASHZEL HACHERO

THE Justice Department yesterday filed criminal cases against Daraga, Albay mayor Carlwyn Baldo over the killing of Ako BICOL party-list Rep. Rodel Batocabe and his security escort last December.

"He was indicted on two counts

of murder and six counts of attempted murder. It was filed this morning," Acting Prosecutor General Richard Anthony Fadullon said in a phone interview.

Fadullon said the charges were filed before the Legazpi City Re-

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gional Trial Court in Albay.

"No bail was recommended for the accused," he added.

Also indicted for the same offense were Christopher Naval, Emmanuel Roselle Andes, Jaywin Babor, Henry Tyson and Rolando Arimado. Fadullon said Danilo

Muella was indicted as an accomplice to the crime.

Baldo was tagged by the six suspects and a witness as the mastermind in the December 22 killing of Batocabe and his escort, SPO2 Rolando Diaz, during a gift-giving sortie in a barangay in the municipality.

Tyson, one of the alleged gun-

men, claimed that Baldo ordered him to kill Batocabe for P5 million, adding the local chief executive, along with Muella and Naval, began planning the assassination in August last year.

Baldo denied Tyson's claim.

The police said Naval, Muella and Babor are former Army soldiers, while Arimado and Tyson

are former members of the New People's Army.

Police arrested Baldo last January 22 while implementing a search warrant in his residence where they seized several unlicensed firearms.

Last January, the DOJ placed Baldo and the other respondents under the immigration lookout bulletin order.

AsPac nations warned not to aid Reds

THE Philippines flagged terrorists' global funding schemes to homeland security authorities of Asia-Pacific countries, seeking cooperation to combat a wide international network of communist-infiltrated front organizations.

Major General Antonio Parlade Jr., Armed Forces of the Philippines Deputy Chief of Staff for Civil Military Operations, in his speech at the Milipol Asia-Pacific 2019 Conference in Singapore on Thursday, warned that the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed units, are masking themselves as humanitarian non-government organizations to secure funds from international donors—which are then used to conduct terrorist activities.

He said the 50-year-old CPP has already established an international network, named the International Department, comprised of some 252 member-organizations based in 39 countries.

The group established 16 chapters abroad through the International League of Peoples' Struggle headed by CPP chairperson Jose Maria Sison.

"We foresee that this problem, if not checked can turn out to be a hybrid scheme that can be a transnational crime problem. The purpose of this presentation is to make you aware that there is such a thing, and because of how intricate these international funding is being done. It may not be in our radar," Parlade said.

He also named local organizations that are affiliated with the ILPS, such as the IBON Foundation, General Assembly Binding Women for Reforms, Integrity, Equality, Leadership, and Action, Alliance of Concerned Teachers, KARAPATAN, National Union of Peoples' Lawyers, among others. A2

Parlade said these organizations conduct international solidarity missions where they publish inaccurate reports to portray a tyrant and oppressive Philippine government. At the same time, they lobby for funds from foreign institutions claiming that they will be used for projects to solve the fabricated issues, but will rather be used to fund terrorist activities.

Militants seek probe of Negros 14

By Maricel V. Cruz

THE Makabayan Bloc in the House of Representatives on Wednesday assailed the killing of 14 farmers during police operations in Negros Oriental on March 30, 2019.

The group slammed the killing even as party-list Representatives Antonio Tinio and France Castro of ACT-Teachers, Ariel Casilao of Anakpawis, Arlene Brosas of Gabriela, and Carlos Isagani Zarate of Bayan Muna filed three resolutions calling for the investigation, in aid of legislation, of the killings.

In another development, the Philippine National Police on Thursday condemned the people who continued to support the "enemies of the state" by taking advantage of the search

warrant operations that resulted in the death of 14 suspects in Negros Oriental for their alleged propaganda against the government.

"We should vehemently send our condemnation against these people supporting the perceived enemies of the state to gain power themselves, even sacrificing the innocent lives of young students to attain their own propaganda against our country and government, Police Chief Oscar Albayalde, said in a statement.

He made the statement amid the calls for his resignation over the incident.

The lawmakers condemned the killing that they described as "political *tokhang*."

Casilao said Anakpawis was outraged over the incident, adding that the victims were leaders and members of the different local organizations in Negros Oriental.

Casilao said the incident could be the implementation of Memorandum 32 that he described as a type of martial law, an open crackdown on legitimate organizations that the police had tagged as communist fronts.

He said the victims, who were civilians and members of active organizations and local organizations of peasants, "became the sacrificial

lamb of the police counter-insurgency operations."

Casilao said Makabayan was calling for an independent investigation and would not accept the investigations conducted by the National Police's Internal Affairs Service or IAS.

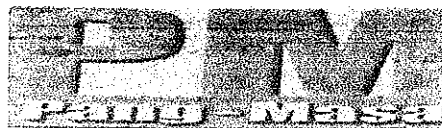
He did not say how his group would react should the National Police's IAS find the policemen implicated in the killing guilty.

"This will lead to a whitewash only. We know the script, Casilao said.

He said they were collating the testimonies of the survivors and the victims' families which would form part in the case buildup against the policemen.

Tinio also called on the House to take action on the killing of the 14 farmers.

With PNA *Ad*



PNP CHIEF SA SOLONS: KAYO ANG MAG-RESIGN!

Binuweltahan at hinamon ni Philippine National Police (PNP) Chief Police General Oscar Albayalde na mag-resign ang mga militanteng mambabatas na pinagbibitiw siya sa puwesto kaugnay ng isyu ng pagkamatay ng 14 katao sa One Time Big Time (OTBT) sa Negros Oriental noong nakalipas na linggo.

Ayon kay Albayalde, sa halip na siya ang pagbitiwin sa puwesto ay ang mga militanteng mambabatas ang dapat magpakita ng delicadeza

upang mag-resign dahil ang mga ito ang mga supporters ng mga rebeldeng New People's Army (NPA) sa bansa.

"We should vehemently send our condemnation against these people supporting the perceived enemies of the state to gain power themselves, even sacrificing the innocent lives of young students to attain their own propaganda against our country and government," pahayag ni Albayalde.

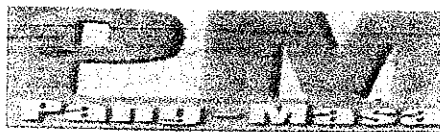
"Let me express this

that in the name of delicadeza, which is obviously not in their morale virtues, they should be the once who have long since resigned while enjoying the perks and privileges shouldered by the Filipino people," mariing hamon ng PNP Chief.

Gitawa ng PNP Chief ang reaksiyon bilang tugon sa panawagan ng mga partylist representatives na mag-resign na sa puwesto bilang PNP Chief kaugnay ng nangyaring pagkamatay ng 14 katao sa OTBT operations sa

Negros Oriental.

Muli ring nanindigan si Albayalde na lehitimo ang kanilang operasyon na inisyuhan ng search warrants ng korte sa serye ng OTBT sa Canlaon City at maging sa mga bayad ng Manjuyod at Sta. Catalina kaugnay ng pag-iingat ng mga armas at eksplosibo ng napaslang na 14 New People's Army (NPA) rebels noong Marso 30 ng taong ito. *Joy Cantos*



Pulis tinodas ng 10 rebelde sa sabungan

Dead-on-the-spot ang pulis na si P/Corporal Randy Ylanan Almanzor, 39, nakadestino sa Dimasalang Police Station matapos na pagbabarilin ng sampung katalakihan na hinihinalang mga

kasapi ng rebeldeng New People's Army sa loob ng Pio V. Corpuz Cockpit Arena sa Brgy. Bugang, Pio V. Corpuz, Masbate, kamakalawa ng hapon.

Sa ulat, dakong alas-4:00 ng hapon nang pu-

masok ng sabungan ang naka-off duty na biktima para magsabong.

Ilang sandali lang ay nagkagulo na sa loob ng sabungan nang marinig ang magkakasunod na putok at duguang bumu-lagta ang biktima.

Ayon sa ilang saksi, sampung lalaki na armado ng maiigsing uri ng baril ang lumapit sa biktima at saka ito pinagbabaril. *Jorge Hallare-*

Probers say Kudarat blast has BIFF mark

Police, military looking at extortion try behind explosion at Isulan resto

By Edwin O. Fernandez,
Orlando Dinoy
and Bong Sarmiento
@inqmindanao

ISULAN, SULTAN KUDARAT—Shrapnel recovered from the site of the blast that wounded 18 people here on Wednesday bore the "signature" of the Islamic State-linked Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), according to police and military officials.

Police Maj. Ronnie Dardo, spokesperson for the Sultan Kudarat provincial police, on Thursday said the improvised explosive device (IED) was similar to those used by BIFF in recent attacks in the region.

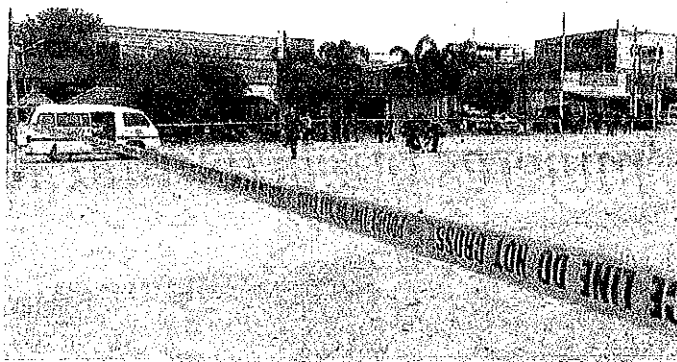
Bomb experts said the bomb was fashioned from highly combustible black powder placed inside a plastic jar rigged with broken nails and metal sheets. It was detonated using a mobile phone.

Among the victims of the blast at Carlito's Chicken House were six children and a pregnant mother.

Protection money

Dardo said police were looking at extortion as a motive based on text messages received by the restaurant owner from unknown senders who demanded P50,000 as monthly protection money.

Isulan Mayor Marites Pallasigue believed the bombing was not an act of terrorism. "I am convinced that it was motivated by extortion," she told



BLAST SITE Investigators cordon off an area fronting the restaurant hit by a blast in Isulan, as they mark spots where debris and shrapnel are found. —PHOTO COURTESY OF 6TH INFANTRY DIVISION

reporters on Thursday.

Police Lt. Col. Junny Buena-cosa, Isulan police chief, said the restaurant management did not inform the police about the text messages.

Diversionary tactic

In Manila, Malacañang explored the bombing as it appealed to the public not to let down their guard and watch out for any unusual behavior to thwart similar incidents.

"While we commit to bring the perpetrators to justice, we also continue to advise the public to remain vigilant in their surroundings and not to be hesitant in reporting any unusual behavior that they may observe to proper authorities," said presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo.

Maj. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, commander of the Army's 6th Infantry Division, said there were indications that BIFF was

involved and that the attack could be a "diversionary tactic."

Retaliatory attacks

Sobejana said the military was expecting retaliatory attacks from the BIFF after several of its members were killed during military operations in Maguindanao.

Abu Toraiife's group, the most rabid among the three BIFF factions, was blamed for the series of bomb attacks in Cotabato, Maguindanao and Sultan Kudarat, including the twin bombings in August and September last year.

Toraiife's brother, named Ali, one of the students in bomb making of the slain Malaysian terrorist Zulkifli bin Hir, also known as Marwan, was killed in clashes with military forces in Shariff Saidona Mustapha on Wednesday, about nine hours before the Isulan bombing.

Military officials said it was

possible that the group bombed the restaurant to avenge the death of Ali.

Pallasigue said a security camera footage showed a man buying roasted chicken in an establishment in front of Carlito's Chicken House. He was seen leaving a package behind, which exploded soon after he left.

Security lapses

The mayor was puzzled how the bomb could have entered the city despite the tight security and the many police checkpoints.

Pallasigue said the restaurant owner received another call on Thursday morning, warning of more bomb attacks if the owner would not pay protection money.

The military and the police in Sultan Kudarat have intensified security operations to get the culprits and thwart similar attacks.

Police Col. Bernard Banac, PNP spokesperson, said the Special Investigating Task Group Carlito, apart from working to identify and arrest the bombers, was looking into security lapses that enabled the attack.

Erlan Deluvio, Commission on Human Rights (CHR) acting regional director, urged authorities to arrest the bomber. He said the suspect would not receive "any amount of sympathy, much less, a legal succor from the CHR." —WITH REPORTS FROM JULIE M. AURELIO AND JEAN-NETTE I. ANDRADE INQ

'Dawlah Islamiya could be behind Kudarat blast'

BY ROY D.R. NARRA AND JUMUNIR I. JANNARAL

THE Philippine National Police (PNP) and the military on Thursday said the Dawlah Islamiya Philippines could be responsible for the bombing of a restaurant in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat that wounded 18 people.

Police Brig. General Eliseo Rasco, Police Regional Office (PRO)-12 regional director, confirmed in a text message to *The Manila Times* that they were looking at the possibility that the Dawlah Islamiya Philippines was the group behind the explosion of an improvised explosive device (IED) outside Carlito's Chicken House.

Rasco said based on their initial findings, the IED carries the signature of the Dawlah Islamiya, a group led by Abu Toraife and Salahudin Hassan.

"Those were the initial findings of investigators. They found similarities in the signature of the IED that exploded last year in Isulan over which Abu Toraife and his group were charged," he added.

In an interview with reporters, Rasco said the owner of the restaurant had been receiving text messages demanding money from the latter.

"[The owner] received two text messages last week, then after the

explosion, he allegedly received a text saying 'Did you receive our delivery to you?'" he added.

Investigation also showed that before the blast, a person entered the restaurant with a bag then left it under a table. The waiter noticed the bag and tried to call the person, but he could no longer find the latter. He then left the bag outside the restaurant. After a few minutes, a loud explosion was heard.

In a statement, Maj. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, 6th Infantry Division (6th ID) and Joint Task Force Central commander, said the bombing in Isulan could be meant to intimidate Central Mindanao's business community and to avenge the deaths of 21 bomb makers, among them a foreigner, in Abu Toraife's group during a series of clashes with soldiers in nearby towns along the Liguasan Marsh last month.

He added that the attack was perpetrated by followers of Esmail Abdulmalik alias Abu Toraife,

leader of Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF).

Eighteen civilians, including six minors and a pregnant woman, were still confined in various hospitals after sustaining wounds from the explosion.

"We expressed our sympathy to the victims of this barbaric act perpetuated by the peace spoilers who are sowing terror and fear in the community. Rest assured of our best efforts to apprehend the perpetrators and give justice to the victims," Sobejana said.

Meanwhile, Major Arvin Encinas, 6th ID spokesman, said an Army Mechanized Team proceeded to the area to secure and cordoned off the explosion site.

He added that the Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Team of the Army had been sent to Isulan and military checkpoints had been put in place.

Palace condemns act

Malacañang also on Thursday denounced the recent explosion as it vowed "to bring the perpetrators to justice."

In a statement, Palace spokesman Salvador Panelo said investigation was ongoing.

According to the PNP, he added, "extortion was behind this dastardly act."

"The Palace deplores yesterday afternoon's explosion in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat, which wounded scores of individuals who are currently receiving medical treatment," Panelo said.

"While we commit to bring the perpetrators to justice, we also continue to advise the public to remain vigilant in their surroundings and not be hesitant in reporting any unusual behavior they may observe to proper authorities," he added.

Turaife brother killed

Also on Thursday, troops killed Ali Abdulmalik, a brother of Abu Turaife, in fierce fighting in Liguasan Marsh.

"Early this morning, 6th Infantry Division troops engaged in a heavy firefight against the BIFF in Liguasan Marsh, which resulted in the death of Ali Abdulmalik, brother of Abu Turaifei, commander of Dawlah Islamiya," Sobejana said in a statement.

He did not say if there were military casualties in the fighting, but the BIFF owned up to the motorcycle bombing also in Isulan on Aug. 28, 2018 that left two dead and at least 35 wounded.

WITH REPORTS
A7 FROM AL JACINTO
AND CATHERINE S. VALENTE

Palace condemns bombing in Sultan Kudarat town of Isulan

By Nat Mariano

THE Palace on Thursday condemned a recent bombing incident in Sultan Kudarat that left at least 18 people wounded.

In a statement, Presidential Spokesman Salvador Panelo said, "The Palace deplores yesterday afternoon's explosion in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat which wounded scores of individuals who are currently receiving medical treatment."

On Wednesday afternoon, an improvised explosive device went off in front of Carlito's Chicken restaurant along Barangay Kalawag 2 in Isulan town, leaving several people, including six minors and a pregnant woman, wounded.

Isulan Mayor Maritess Pallasigue said that her office did not receive any threat prior to the blast, admitting that she had no idea what the purpose of the incident was as the town is known as a "peaceful place."

Panelo said that the police is looking at extortion as the possible motive behind the "dastardly act."

This was the third explosions which occurred this year in the third year of the imposition of the martial law in Mindanao.

In January, twin explosions near a Roman Catholic Church in Jolo, Sulu killed 21 people and wounded 100 others. A bomb also went off inside a mosque in Zamboanga City, killing two and injuring four others.

The Palace is calling on the public to remain vigilant and to report to the authorities any suspicious behavior.

"While we commit to bring the perpetrators to justice, we also continue to advise the public to remain vigilant in their surroundings and not to be hesitant in reporting any unusual behavior that they may observe to proper authorities," Panelo said.

Extortion eyed in Isulan blast

Police are looking at the extortion racket of an extremist group based in Central Mindanao as the motive behind the bombing of a restaurant in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat last Wednesday.

Police Brig. Gen. Elseo Rasco, director of the Central Mindanao police, said they have identified at least one person responsible for the bombing who is identified with the Dawlah Islamiyah.

The group is reportedly headed by a certain Abu Toralife. Most of the members of the group are from the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, a breakaway faction of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

"We are now preparing charges against him and his other accomplices," said Rasco in a phone interview.

The bomb courier remains at large and is now being hunted down by the police based in the description of the witnesses and the closed circuit camera television footage.

A week before the explosion at Carlito's Chicken Haus, Rasco said the owner of the establishment received an extortion demand

through text messages.

The improvised explosive device was inside a bag which was abandoned at the restaurant.

A waiter thought that the man accidentally left the bag. He then gave it back to the man who was already leaving the place, police investigators said.

The bag was abandoned near the compressor of an air conditioner outside the restaurant where it exploded a few minutes later.

Rasco said the blast injured 18 persons. The explosion would have a deadly impact if it exploded inside the restaurant, police said.

(Aaron Recuenco)

Police eye extortion in Isulan bombing

THE Police Regional Office 12 headed by Brig. Gen. Eliseo Rasco yesterday blamed on a group of extortionists the bombing of a restaurant in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat at which left 18 civilians wounded on Wednesday afternoon.

"We condemn in the strongest possible term the bombing of the Carlito's Chicken House which took place at about 3:15 p.m. last Wednesday in the municipality of Isulan, Sultan Kudarat. Right now, we believe that the motive behind this incident is extortion," said the PRO 12 director.

Rasco said that seven of the 18 victims were discharged from the hospital after undergoing treatment while 11 are still under confinement.

"We are looking at a group called Dawlah Is-

lamiyah Terror Group (DITG) as the suspects behind the bombing. Right now, we believe it was a bombing triggered by the failure of the restaurant owner to heed the group's extortion demand," the official said.

Last week, the owner of the restaurant received several text messages from a group which introduced themselves as "Al Irhab" demanding that they be given money or they will target the establishment.

"Based on the bomb signature, intelligence reports and statement of the owner, we believe it was the handiwork of the DITG," Rasco said.

The same group engaged in extortion has been blamed for a number of terror bombings in Mindanao as well as some foiled attempts to bomb

soft targets, including malls and markets, in the region in the past.

The official said all efforts are underway to identify and arrest the suspects who planted the powerful improvised explosive device at the restaurant. Police and military troops have also tightened their security measures in Isulan and the nearby municipalities and provinces in the aftermath of the explosion.

Rasco ordered the creation of Special Investigation Task Group Carlito to lead the investigation of the case and the hunt for the bombers. He also advised the public to remain extra-vigilant and be mindful of unattended belongings in their area.

"Please immediately report suspicious persons and unattended bags and

packages to the nearest police or military station," he said.

4 BIFF fighters killed, 11 wounded in Maguindanao

By Francisco Tuyay

FOUR members of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, including a brother of a top terrorist leader, were killed while 11 others were wounded following a running gunbattle against government troopers in Maguindanao early Monday.

The military said one of those wounded was a nephew of another terrorist leader belonging to a separate radical group.

Major Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, commander of the Army's 6th Infantry Division identified the slain terrorists as Ali Abdul Malik, brother of BIFF leader Abu Toraype; and three others who have yet to be unidentified.

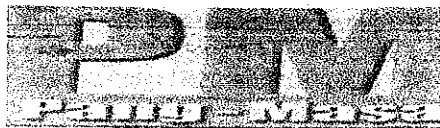
Citing intelligence reports, Sobejana identified two of the wounded terrorists as Hairudin Abubakar and a certain Maranao, all members of the Bungos group, a separate faction of the BIFF.

The killing of the four BIFF members came after security forces launched search and destroy operations against terrorists operating in the outskirts of Maguindanao, particularly in Datu Unsay town.

While searching for the terrorists' lair, ground troops launched indirect fire which hit the supposed hideout of Ali Abdul Malik, triggering a fierce firefight.

After a lull in the fighting, ground troops conducted clearing operations, which led to the recovery of war materiel, including Improvised Explosive Devices.

Hours later, the BIFF Bungos faction tried to reinforce their comrades under the Toraype group, triggering renewed firefight which led to the deaths of the terrorists ^{AB}



Utol ng BIFF kumander, 3 pa napatay

Napatay ng tropa ng pamahalaan ang apat na miyembro ng Bangsa-moro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) kabilang ang kapatid ng kumander ng grupo sa isang sagupaan sa Maguindanao.

Kinilala ang napatay na si Alih Abdulmalik, na tinamaan ng artillery fire sa Brgy. Pamalian, Datu Unsay, Maguindanao.

Si Abdulmalik ay kapatid ni Esmail Abdulmalik alyas Abu Torafe, Commander ng isa sa paksyon ng BIFF na nag-pledge ng kalapatan sa ISIS.

Sinabi ni Major Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, agad naglunsad ng operasyon ang tropa ng mga sundalo matapos ang nangyaring pagpapasabog sa Carlitos Restaurant sa Isulan, Sultan Kudarat bandang alas-3:15 ng hapon na ikinasugat ng 18 sibilyan.

"It was part of our focused military operations, we thoroughly searched all of their hideouts and that's where the brother of Abu Torafe was taken out. We also carried indirect fire support," ani Sobejana.

Patuloy ang pagtugis ng tropa ng militar laban sa nalalabi pang grupo ng BIFF na sumisira sa peace and order sa Central Mindanao. -Joy Cantos-

35 years of the annual Balikatan Exercise

THE annual Balikatan exercise between Philippine and American armed forces began last Monday. It is the 35th time the exercise is being held, with 4,000 Philippine and 3,500 American troops joined this year by 50 members of the Australian Defense Force.

Five years after the Philippines achieved independence from American colonial rule in 1946, the two countries signed a Mutual Defense Treaty in 1951. Balikatan began in 1985 to enhance the two nations' military organizations' close relations through joint exercises. In 1992, the US closed down its bases in the Philippines, but the two countries signed a Visiting Forces Agreement in 1998 governing the conduct and protection of American troops visiting the Philippines and of Philippine troops visiting the US.

Balikatan has become the cornerstone of Philippine-American military relations, with Australia participating in the annual activity since 2014. This year's exercise includes the usual land, amphibious, and aviation operations, along with humanitarian and civic assistance activities – the building of classrooms and clinics, health consultations, and holding of feeding programs for children.

At the opening ceremony Monday at Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City, Brig. Gen. Christopher McPhillips, exercise director for the US side, said Balikatan has become one of the premier military

training exercises in the Pacific and has helped maintain regional stability. The Philippine exercise director, Lt. Gen. Gilbert Gapay, said Balikatan enhances the ability of the two militaries to meet any crisis that may threaten the security of the nation.

In the last two years, threats to national and regional security have come largely from Islamic jihadist efforts to establish a Southeast Asian center for the ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria). Now that ISIS forces have been forced out of Syria, they might step up their efforts for an ISIS caliphate in this part of the world.

The South China Sea also has its potential conflict areas, with the US especially concerned that it should remain free and open to all shipping and air travel under the principle of freedom of navigation. For a while there was great hope that the nuclear threat from North Korea was over, but the recent Trump-Kim summit in Hanoi, Vietnam, failed to reach any final peace agreement.

It is in this atmosphere of uncertainty that the 35th Balikatan Exercise was launched last Monday. As in the past, it will serve to update the participating military forces on the latest in weaponry and operational practices.

Even more important, it should serve to reassure our two nations that we continue to share a common concern for security in our part of the world and a resolve to strive together in the face of challenges.

Limiting democratic space?

“These are always the excuses made by these aboveground commies since they fear the halt in UN and other foreign funds from going to local NGO that are suspected of being Red sympathizers.”

With the United Nations (UN) taking action on the charges raised by the Philippine police, as well as the military, where foreign contributions to non-government organizations (NGO) are allegedly spent for other purposes, by ensuring an independent investigation, the communists by now must be running scared that the contributions for their criminal and illegal moves are about to dry up.

The contributions, as claimed by the Philippine police and military, go to NGO that are alleged to be communist fronts or communist sympathizers at the very least.

Philippine National Police (PNP) chief Police General Oscar Albayalde was earlier quoted in reports as saying that even Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) founding chair Jose Maria Sison himself had enumerated its allied organizations in an old video posted on Youtube in 2009. That should be evidence enough for the UN to start the probe.

There quickly went the aboveground Reds, blasting what they call the red tagging of their group, and NGO mentioned who sport what can be called the “red fronts,” or, at the very least, known and suspected commie “sympathizers.”

The Council of People's Development and Governance (CPDG) also slammed the government's allegations that NGO funds are being used to support communist rebels.

Former lead convenor of the National Anti-Poverty Commission and currently CPDG spokeswoman Liza Maza wailed that tagging some organizations as “communist fronts” does not make for a healthy democratic space, she said.



FRONTLINE
Ninez Cacho-Olivares

known aboveground commies.

“That is why they are orchestrating allegations that ‘communists have infiltrated’ the United Nations, that rights defenders have supposedly been ‘projecting false news’ internationally,” she added.

“Maza must be conveniently forgetting that some of these aboveground commies are members of the House of Representatives elected by the people nationwide.”

It cannot be denied that these Red fronts composed mainly of aboveground commies have been spreading. As Maza says “false news proliferate internationally, because they have done so,” such as inflating the claimed extrajudicial killings, without evidence, based on Rappler's online reporting of EJK placing it at 12,000 a few weeks after the drug war started. This is the figure that was quickly claimed by the commies, together with the yellows, which has now been exaggerated further to some 20,000 killings that are false figures.

More false news? CPP founding chairman Jose Maria Sison has claimed that President Duterte's war on drugs is fake, claiming, without any shred of evidence, that it is the President himself who is benefiting from the narcotics trade. Sison said the President used the drug menace to “deceive” voters in 2016 and to “impress the public that he was a strong man and a decisive leader.”

He added that “since the beginning, the so-called war on drugs launched by Duterte has flagrantly

“Political and economic interests wish to veer attention away from legitimate concerns on rights violations and development problems in the country,” said Maza, who used to be President Duterte's chief of the poverty project of the Duterte administration, along with three others appeared as fake because he has in fact been openly protecting major drug lords and smugglers, including his own son Paolo Duterte, Peter Lim, Michael Yang, Allan Lim and others.”

Sison was reported as saying that Duterte's anti-narcotics campaign was aimed at suppressing the criminals “that rival the Duterte drug syndicate” and the objective of the release of a “fake narco list” was done “to deflect attention from the real drug lords and discredit his political opponents.”

And these are only a few of such unfounded and unproved charges raised by Sison and his fellow Reds in the country.

The CPDG also claimed that the allegations against the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines, IBON Foundation and Karapatan only “serve to discredit their work as rights defenders and civil society organizations.”

These are always the excuses made by these aboveground commies since they fear the halt in UN and other foreign funds from going to local NGO that are suspected of being Red sympathizers if not dyed-in-the-wool communist fronts in the Philippines.

Red tagging limiting democratic space says Maza?

Maza must be conveniently forgetting that some of these aboveground commies are members of the House of Representatives elected by the people nationwide, as a partylist congressman/woman, apart from which, some of these far-left partylisters have done nothing but criticize Duterte, spread fake information, and, yes, even join anti-government protests and are not arrested.

Where do you think they get the funds? From their pork barrel that is not supposed to be used for their anti-government rallies, for virtually every cause, instead of better projects to improve the lives and conditions of the poor.

With the funding that these armed Reds get through the left-leaning NGO, policemen and military troops are killed by the armed commies known as the New People's Army. They use these foreign funds to continue extorting from businesses to make them cough up more funds to kill the innocents and legitimate Armed Forces that are doing their job to protect the people from these armed commies and continue to try and bring down the Duterte government.

These Reds have always had more democratic space than they deserve to have.

It's time to unmask these Reds who have been coddled too long by the Duterte peace negotiators.

Onerous contracts



VIRTUAL
REALITY
TONY
LOPEZ

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte told his Cabinet April 1, to review the contracts of the government—with companies and other countries, including “concession agreements on public utilities and foreign loan contracts.”

Some quarters have denounced the terms of the Chinese loan for the P12-billion Kaliwa Dam, which will provide backup water supply (600 million liters a day) to Metro Manila when completed, and the Chico River loan agreement. Specifically, the Department of Justice and the Office of the Solicitor General are to do the review.

“Even if it [the loan] is executed, if it’s in violation of the Constitution, you can rescind and strike it down. We’ll ask the court to rescind it,” Presidential Spokesman Salvador Panelo told a press conference.

It seems to me Duterte’s contract review order is very comprehensive. It could include not just the Kaliwa Dam and the Chico River loans—both provided by the Chinese, who Duterte said just want to be friends with the Philippines. It could include contracts of the two water concessionaires—Manila Water and Maynilad Water, whose contracts include sovereign guarantees, unlimited pass-on costs to consumers, and it seems, a ban on their payments of penalties for non-delivery of contracted water to consumers.

Senior Associate Justice Antonio Carpio told the Integrated Bar of the Philippines that in the Chico River loan agreement, China can seize, to satisfy any arbitral award in favor of China, “patrimonial assets and assets dedicated to commercial use” of the Philippine government, in case of default.

Such patrimonial assets include oil and gas-rich Reed Bank in the West Philippine Sea. According to Carpio, it will be easy for the Chinese to get hold of them because according to the loan agreement, (1) any arbitration will be held in Beijing; and (2) any court cases will have to be brought in China, because Chinese law will apply.

“The Chinese loans are onerous,”

maintains *Inquirer* columnist Solita Montano. The (loans) say specifically that the laws of China will obtain in any disagreement, and we have to go through their courts; their grounds for default are definitely in favor of China; arbitration is to be held in Beijing (Chico River) or Hong Kong (Kaliwa Dam); and the waiver of immunity over patrimonial assets is not mentioned in any other contract.

Japan and Korea loans carry a 40-year tenor (with 10 or 12 years grace), before you pay the principal, at interest rates ranging from 0.09 percent to 0.26 percent per year.

China gives 20 years to pay (with seven years’ grace), at an interest of 2 percent per year.

Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III has denounced critics who he says have

“The Finance secretary insists it is unlikely we would default on our loans.”

raised the false spectre of the Philippines defaulting on its concessional loans to China have no faith in their own country.

“Fears of the Philippines defaulting on any of its loans are unfounded, given that the government has never failed to pay its debts even during the worst of times,” the DOF chief insisted.

“The Philippines has never, never defaulted on its loans. The Philippines has not done it even in the worst time and the worst time was right after Marcos,” Dominguez told reporters.

He recalled that even when the Philippines was cash-strapped, it never defaulted on any of its loans, recalling that the country paid its obligations on the \$2.2-billion Bataan Nuclear Power Plant project despite it turning out to be a “white elephant.”

“The Philippines has no history of defaulting on its loans. So why are people saying now that we will default? They have no faith in the Philippines? I don’t know why people are saying ‘There might

Turn to A5

Onerous...

From A4

be a default.' That means to say those people have no faith in their own country," Dominguez sneered.

The Finance chief also said there is no collateral involved in the loans that the government has entered into with any country. He invited the public to examine the terms of all the loan accords that the Philippines has signed with its development partners, which are available for viewing at the Department of Finance website, www.dof.gov.ph.

Meanwhile, lawmakers have dismissed concerns about the Philippines defaulting on its loans and China seizing the country's public assets. Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon points out "default will never happen."

Presidential Decree 1177 mandates the automatic appropriations for debt servicing, which means the Philippines will al-

ways have to pay its debts.

Earlier, Dominguez assured the public that the Philippines will not fall into a "debt trap" to any country as the government expands its infrastructure investments through concessional loan financing from its development partners in the region.

He also reiterated that in conformity with the Constitution and our laws, none of the pipeline projects funded with official development assistance from countries like Japan and China allow for the appropriation or takeover of domestic assets in the event of failure to pay, which is unlikely.

The government's borrowing program, Dominguez pointed out, remains "very conservative in the sense that we only borrow to invest in projects that will generate economic gains which are greater than the borrowing cost."

According to Dominguez, no infrastructure project is funded through ODA without going through a rigorous system

of reviews and approvals by the Cabinet and the President, and unless there is certainty that the project is economically viable and highly beneficial for the Filipino people.

Dominguez said the government's debt is carefully structured to ensure that it does not borrow without raising its own capital for infrastructure projects, while at the same time sourcing a significant portion of financing from the local debt market to minimize exposure to adverse external factors.

He said that as of 2018, the government's project debt exposure was only 0.66 percent to China and 9 percent to Japan in relation to the total debt. By 2022, when most of the financing for the "Build, Build, Build" program will have been accessed, the country's project debt to China will account for 4.5 percent, while that of Japan's will be twice as large at 9.5 percent of the total debt.

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EDITORIAL**35 years of the annual
Balikatan Exercise**

THE annual Balikatan exercise between Philippine and American armed forces began last Monday. It is the 35th time the exercise is being held, with 4,000 Philippine and 3,500 American troops joined this year by 50 members of the Australian Defense Force.

Five years after the Philippines achieved independence from American colonial rule in 1946, the two countries signed a Mutual Defense Treaty in 1951. Balikatan began in 1985 to enhance the two nations' military organizations' close relations through joint exercises. In 1992, the US closed down its bases in the Philippines, but the two countries signed a Visiting Forces Agreement in 1998 governing the conduct and protection of American troops visiting the Philippines and of Philippine troops visiting the US.

Balikatan has become the cornerstone of Philippine-American military relations, with Australia participating in the annual activity since 2014. This year's exercise includes the usual land, amphibious, and aviation operations, along with humanitarian and civic assistance activities – the building of classrooms and clinics, health consultations, and holding of feeding programs for children.

At the opening ceremony Monday at Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City, Brig. Gen. Christopher McPhillips, exercise director for the US side, said Balikatan has become one of the premier military training exercises in the Pacific and has helped maintain regional stability. The Philippine exercise director, Lt. Gen. Gilbert Gapay, said Balikatan enhances the ability of the two militaries to meet any crisis that may threaten the security of the nation.

In the last two years, threats to national and regional security have come largely from Islamic jihadist efforts to establish a Southeast Asian center for the ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria). Now that ISIS forces have been forced out of Syria, they might step up their efforts for an ISIS caliphate in this part of the world.

The South China Sea also has its potential conflict areas, with the US especially concerned that it should remain free and open to all shipping and air travel under the principle of freedom of navigation. For a while there was great hope that the nuclear threat from North Korea was over, but the recent Trump-Kim summit in Hanoi, Vietnam, failed to reach any final peace agreement.

It is in this atmosphere of uncertainty that the 35th Balikatan Exercise was launched last Monday. As in the past, it will serve to update the participating military forces on the latest in weaponry and operational practices.

Even more important, it should serve to reassure our two nations that we continue to share a common concern for security in our part of the world and a resolve to strive together in the face of challenges.

Editorial

**Magprotesta
 na sa China**

HINDI pa nagpoprotesta ang Department of Foreign Affairs sa China kaugnay sa mga umaaligid na barko sa Pag-asa Island. Taliwas ito sa sinabi ni Presidential Spokesman Salvador Panelo sa media briefing noong nakaraang Lunes na nagsampa na ng diplomatic protest. Bakit kailangang maglihlim ang Malacañang ukol dito? Ang isyu nang pagdagsa ng mga barko ng China ay hindi maliit na isyu kaya hindi dapat manahimik ang DFA. Dapat agad silang magsampa ng kaso laban sa China. Hindi porke at sinabi ni President Duterte na hindi siya makikipag-away sa China ay mananahimik na lang. Dapat magpakita ng pagtutol ang Pilipinas sa ginagawa ng China.

Noong Enero pa ng kasalukuyang taon namataan ang mga barko ng China na umaaligid sa Pag-asa Island na sakop ng Pilipinas. At dumarami nang dumarami ang mga barko roon. Noong Pebrero 10, naitala na 87 na barko ng China at noong Marso, mayroon nang 600 barko. Noong nakaraang linggo, ayon sa TV report, nadagdagan na naman at may kabuuang 617 na barko ang China sa Pag-asa.

Okey na sana ang mga sinabi ni Panelo na naghain na raw ng protesta at idinagdag pa ng Presidential Spokesman na hindi papayag ang Pilipinas na basta itaboy ang mga mangingisdang Pinoy ng Chinese vessels. Nalulat na hina-harass ng mga barko ng China ang mga mangingisdang Pinoy at ayaw pangisdain sa paligid ng Pag-asa. Sabi pa ni Panelo ay hindi raw maaaring itaboy sa sariling teritoryo ang mga mangingisdang Pinoy.

Talaga namang hindi dapat itaboy sa pagkat sakop ng Pilipinas ang islang Iyon. Ito rin ang isa sa mga dahilan kaya sinampahan ng rektamo ni dating Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert del Rosario at dating Ombudsman Conchita Carpio Morales sa International Criminal Court (ICC) si Chinese President Xi Jinping. Bukod sa pagtatatay, inirereklamo rin nila ang loans nito sa Pilipinas na ang collateral ay ang minerals sa West Philippine Sea.

Wala pang aasahang resulta dahil hindi pa nakapagsampa ng protesta ang gobyerno. At habang usad-pagong sa pagsasampa, patuloy naman ang pagdami ng mga barko ng China sa Pag-asa at walang ibang kawawa kundi ang mga mangingisdang Pinoy na doon lamang umaasa ng ikabubuhay.



Bawal naman pala

NADISKUBRE na ang 34 na Chinese workers sa isang private construction site ay nabigyan ng special work permit kahit bawal ito. Ayon sa Bureau of Immigration (BI), bawal maging construction worker, kahera, waiter, janitor, kasambahay, karpintero, basurero, guwardiya at bodegero ang mga banyaga.

Isyu nga ang Chinese workers kung saan inaagawan na ang mga Pilipinong trabahador. Nakapanayam ang isang Chinese at sinabing hindi kasi kaya ng Pilipino ang kanilang ginagawa. Anong trabaho naman kaya iyon? Dapat patunayan nila na hindi talaga kaya gawin ng Pilipino, para may katwiran ang pagkuha sa kanila. At ituro kung sino ang nagbigay sa kanila ng special work permit, kung bawal naman

pala sila magtrabaho nang ganun.

Katulad ng barkong nasa Lobo, Batangas. Nag-alala ang mga taga-Lobo sa pagdating ng barko. Una, sinabing galing China ang barko, na nagsisigawa ng dredging sa nasabing lugar. Kumilos ang DENR at kinansela ang Environmental Clearance Certificate na ibinigay sa mga ito noong 2018. Nagkontrahan ngayon ang mga opisyal at ang kompanya na umarkila sa barko, na nakabase sa Singapore at rehistrado sa Africa, hindi China, hinggil sa mga permit at dokumento para magsigawa ng dredging sa lugar. Inakalang galing China ang barko dahil mga Chinese ang nagpapatakbo. Ayon sa Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), hindi nila mapaalis ang barko dahil nagbayad daw sa Philippine Ports Authority (PPA).

Malaking gulo na naman iyan. Sino ang mga nagbigay ng permit? Bakit hindi alam ng lokal na pamahalaan ng Lobo ang pagdating ng barko? Papayagan na lang ba na kayurin ang buhangin sa ilog at ibebenta sa gagawa ng bagong airport sa Hong Kong? Ano naman ang epekto sa kalikasan ng lugar, kung matuloy ang dredging? Bakit ngayon lang sila maglimbestiga? Nakapasok ang barko na hindi alam ng PCG at Philippine Navy? Kampante nga ang mga tauhan ng barko dahil kumpleto raw ang dokumento. Dapat malaman kung sino ang mataas na opisyal na nagbigay ng permit sa barko para makapasok.



Scarborough maaring bawiin; protektado tayo ng America

MATAPANG at malinaw ang pangakong tulong ng America kontra sinumang lulupig sa Pilipinas. Hindi man binanggit ang China, 'yun ang tinutukoy dahil sa armadong pambubulabog nito sa ere at dagat sa mga sundalo at mangingisdang Pilipino. "Dahil bahagi ng Dagat Pacifico ang South China Sea, anumang pag-atake sa tropa o sasakyan ng Pilipinas ay magbubunsod ng proteksiyon sa ilalim ng ating Mutual Defense Treaty," ani U.S. State Sec. Mike Pompeo. Hindi 'yon hiningi o inasahan nina President Rody Duterte at Foreign Sec. Teddy Locsin.

Sa depensa ng America, lumakas sana ang loob ng mga

pinunong Pilipino na payapang bawiin ang Scarborough Shoal sa China. Legal na teritoryo ng Pilipinas ang bato't baturang 120 milya mula Luzon at 600 milya mula Hainan. Illegal itong inagaw ng China nu'ng 2012 nang sitahin ng patrolyang Pilipino ang mapanirang pangangisda ng Chinese.

Dokumentado ang pag-aari ng Pilipinas sa Scarborough. Tulad ng Corregidor, markadong "punto de mandato" o tanod sa mga mapa hung rehimeng Kastila, 1700-1800. Kasama ito sa mga isla na isinalin ng Spain sa America sa Treaties of Paris, 1898, at Washington, 1900. Kontrolado ito ng Pilipinas nu'ng Panahon ng Amerikano. Pati mga shipwreck doon ay mula at sa Maynila sinasalba at nililitis -- hanggang umabot sa US Supreme Court.

Nu'ng Philippine Commonwealth kinumpirma ng US Secretaries of War, of the Navy, at of Commerce na sa Pilipinas nga ang Scarborough. Nagpatuloy ang soberenya ng Pilipinas sa teritoryo sa ilalim ng Republika. Nagdaos doon ng joint PH-U.S. military exercises, na Maynila ang nagbabala sa mga dumadaang dayuhang sasakyan.

Imbento lang ang claim ng China sa Scarborough. Kesyo minanmanan daw ito ng isang Chinese explorer mula sa mga tore sa mainland daan-daang milya ang layo. Kesyo nagtayo raw ito ng tore sa mga batuhan sa shoal -- na imposible dahil lubog ito sa high tide.

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'Balikatan 2019', tribute to PH, US WW2 veterans

By Priam Nepomuceno

MANILA -- The ongoing "Balikatan" exercises is a fitting tribute to Filipino and American troops who sacrificed their lives during World War 2, a ranking military official said Thursday.

"This comes as gesture to pay tribute to the heroism and indomitable courage of Filipino and American soldier-patriots as they fought side-by-side, shoulder-to-shoulder, against seemingly insurmountable odds," Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) spokesperson, Brig. Gen. Edgard Arevalo, said in a message to the Philippine News Agency (PNA).

Around 4,000 Filipino, 3, 500 American and 50 Australian troops will participate in the annual military maneuvers which formally started April 1 and will end on the 12th.

Acting as observers of the exercises are military personnel from the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Japan, Thailand, and Vietnam.

"To date, the friendship and the fight continues alongside one another in combating contemporary challenges of terrorism and in capacitating one another towards resilience to natural and human induced disasters among other events of significance covered in the exercise," Arevalo added.

Earlier, AFP chief-of-staff, Gen. Benjamin Madrigal Jr., said the 35th iteration of the "Balikatan" is a testament of the Philippines and US' enduring defense partnership.

"Incidentally, the timing of this year's exercise coincides with our annual observance of the Philippine Veterans Week and Bataan Day which we call the Day of Valor and falls on April 9. Indeed, the memories of World War 2 have molded the US-Philippine relationship, remember the Fall of Bataan and Death March in 1942, the Battle of Corregidor in the same year and the Battle of Leyte Gulf of 1944. It was in these crucial moments of insurmountable odds when our forebears, the forebears of our great nation, our soldiers have truly embodied, understood and experienced the real meaning of 'Balikatan', carrying the load together on our shoulder, however heavy the load, however huge the obstacle, and at whatever the cost," he added. **(PNA)**

<http://retiredanalyst.blogspot.com>

Fierce gun battle erupts in Comval province's far-flung town

From the Manila Bulletin (Apr 4, 2019): Fierce gun battle erupts in Comval province's far-flung town

CAMP BANCASI, Butuan City – An undetermined number of Communist New People's Army Terrorists (CNTs) were believed killed or wounded when a 20-minute fierce gun battle erupted between government forces and communist insurgents in Southern Mindanao.

, First Lieutenant Jhocell D. Asis, Civil Military Operations (CMO) officer of the 71st Infantry (Kaibigan) Battalion (71st IB) said their operating unit also seized several war materials, lower receiver M16 Rifle, 1 long magazine of M16 Rifle, bomb materials including Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), 1 blasting cap, 1 homemade shotgun with 1 magazine loaded with live bullets, 150 meters tripwires, 1 transistor radio, and subversive documents with high intelligence value.

“Our operating troops also seized from the encounter site several food stuffs, batteries, three water containers, three back packs with personal belongings and hammocks,” the 71st IB CMO officer said.

The clash took place at 9:45 a.m. on Sunday, March 31, in Sitio Dasuran, Barangay Golden Valley, Mabini, Compostela Valley (Comval) province, where the March 28, 2019 encounter also happened, she said.

No one was injured on the government side while several CNTs were believed killed or wounded.

Lt. Col. Esteveyn E. Ducusin, commanding officer of the 71st IB commended the troops for the relentless pursuit operations against the CNTs.

“We believe that they are still the same terrorist group that our troops encountered three days ago,” the 71st IB commander said.

“We are always in pursuit of those who refuse to heed the call for peace. We are in focused military operations to keep the pressure on the terrorist group for them to surrender or else be destroyed,” said Lt. Col. Ducusin.

“We continue to hunt down the terrorist group to protect the community from their deceptive recruitment, extortion activities, and atrocities,” Lt. Col. Ducusin added.

<https://news.mb.com.ph/2019/04/04/fierce-gun-battle-erupts-in-comval-provinces-far-flung-town/>

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