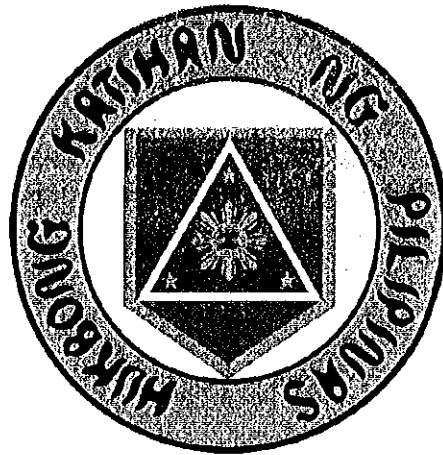


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NEWS CLIPPINGS

08 April 2019

Monday



Honor. Patriotism. Duty.

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'US to remain Phl's only military ally'

By PIA LEE-BRAGO

The United States will remain the only military ally of the Philippines, Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. said yesterday.

"Why the US, the only world power that is a bastion of democracy and human rights, is and will remain our only military ally. We don't need any other," Locsin tweeted.

During a joint press conference with US Secretary of State Michael Pompeo in Manila last month, Locsin had said, "in vagueness lies the best deterrence," to describe the almost seven-decade-old Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT).

The MDT provides that the Philippines and the US will come to each other's aid in case of armed attack.

Locsin's remarks were issued amid the apparent growing influence of China in the Philippines under President Duterte.

Pompeo assured the Philippines that US obligations under the MDT are "real."

"As the South China Sea is part of the Pacific, any armed attack on Philippine forces, aircraft, republic vessels in the South China Sea would trigger mutual defense obligations under Article 4 of our Mutual Defense Treaty," he said.

Since Duterte assumed office in 2016, he has set aside a landmark arbitral court ruling in exchange

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US

From Page 1

for economic grants from Beijing, investments and expanded trade, which have been described as a "policy of appeasement."

The Philippines, Washington's oldest ally in Asia, wants to have a bigger relationship with China that has a major presence in the Indo-Pacific region and looks at great economic opportunities.

Locsin also reacted to the US not joining the Interna-

tional Criminal Court. The ICC announced it has started its preliminary examination on the killings tied to President Duterte's war on illegal drugs.

The US, he said, never joined the ICC and warned the Philippines not to.

"Ignore it. I said at the UN that there is no power on earth that can enforce a judgment of the ICC. And no one disputed it. We're well out of it and

should never have gotten in against the advice of our only military ally, the United States of America," Locsin said.

Resolution vs 5 US senators

Meanwhile, Sen. Panfilo Lacson yesterday pushed for a resolution to rebuke the five US senators, who earlier condemned what they said was the "ongoing human rights abuses" in the country.

Lacson, who chairs the committee on public order and dangerous drugs, said a Senate

resolution "is appropriate to call out these five US senators."

"We are not their colony. We have a Constitution that provides for three co-equal branches and a judicial system where due process is followed, regardless of its flaws and weaknesses," he said through Twitter.

US Senators Edward Markey, Marco Rubio, Richard Durbin, Marsha Blackburn and Chris Coons earlier filed a six-page resolution expressing alarm over the human rights situation in the country.

The resolution also called on the Duterte administration to release detained Sen. Leila de Lima and end the harassment of veteran journalist and Rappler chief executive officer Maria Ressa.

"Extrajudicial killings in the Philippines have been a stain on the country's human rights record," Markey said.

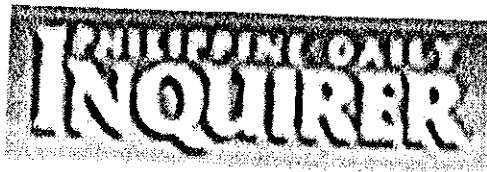
"But rather than working with lawmakers, journalists and civil society in the Philippines to hold perpetrators for these crimes accountable, the Duterte government is turn-

ing the law against the very voices promoting the rights of the Philippine people," he added.

The Philippines is a close ally of the US, according to Markey, but the resolution seeks to convey the sentiment of the US Congress in seeking "an immediate improvement in the government's behavior and the end of efforts to weaponize the rule of law against brave individuals like Senator Leila de Lima and Maria Ressa."

- With Paolo Romero

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DUTERTE SLAMS PCIJ FOR WEALTH SERIES

STORY BY NESTOR P. BURGOS JR. AND JULIE M. AURELIO

The President says what his family earns outside of politics should be of no concern to the public. He is reacting to a report about the unregistered law firm of his daughter and undisclosed business interests.

A8

FROM A1

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
and Julie M. Aurelio
@Team_Inquirer

Whatever his family earns outside of politics is nobody's business, President Duterte said on Saturday night in Iloilo City.

The President rose to the defense of his children following a media report on the allegedly unregistered law firm of his family and other undisclosed business interests.

While not naming the report and the news organization, he was apparently referring to a series of the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ).

The series delved on the significant increases in the incomes of the President and his children, Davao City Mayor Sara Duterte-Carpio and former Vice Mayor Paolo Duterte, while they were in office.

"My children and I are being criticized, all about lawyering. What do they care about what happened to my law office?" he asked.

Mr. Duterte said he was not required to report what he earned through his own sweat.

'None of your business'

"What we earned outside is none of your business, actually. That we have businesses and law firms, what a goddamn shit," he said.

He made the remarks in a speech in Iloilo City before some 2,000 delegates to the 25th National Convention of the National Federation of Motorcycle Clubs of the Philippines at the Iloilo Convention Center.

Citing the statements of assets, liabilities and net worth (SALNs) of Mr. Duterte, Sara and Paolo, the report claimed that the Dutertes had an unregistered law firm and shares in other companies that they did

not include in their SALNs.

PCIJ reported that Carpio & Duterte Lawyers, with Sara and husband Manases Carpio as partners, was not registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Cebu branch

The law firm, put up by Sara and her husband in 2008, opened an office at City Times Square II in Mandaue City on Feb. 13, 2019. Its clients included cigarette maker Mighty Corp., Panay Electric Co. and those that deal with the Bureau of Customs.

The President himself was a partner at Fabiosa Duterte Cimafranca Carcedo law office but he did not declare his interest in the firm in his SALNs, according to PCIJ.

PCIJ cited the prohibition on mayors and governors from exercising their profession. But the President said the law firm was a necessary option for their family.

He, however, said other people had no business poking their noses into their affairs, as long as it did not involve public funds.

Fallback position

"Our law firms and what happened to our business partnership, it's not your goddamn business. It's my worry. For as long as it's not the people's money," he said.

He added: "You have to have a law office because there is an election every three years. And it's so short. What if you lose this election, where would you go?"

Mr. Duterte argued that it was fine for a politician to own a law firm, as long as he did not practice law while in public office or give advice contrary to the government's position.

"Well, there's nothing wrong if we advertise our names. As long as you do not practice and you do not help people get something from government, that is illegal," he said.

He added: "I am a lawyer, I

worked hard for it, naturally I will have my name displaced. They say I shouldn't be practicing so my name and Sara's shouldn't be there. You fools. We are just saying we are lawyers!"

Mr. Duterte said his wealth was inherited from his late mother, Soledad Duterte, and that he had lived with her even when he was Davao City mayor.

He added: "SALN? You didn't work for that money. Were you the one who earned it? Why should I put it in my SALN?"

Impeachment, ouster

A government employee who does not declare certain assets in his SALN risks losing his job.

That happened to Chief Justice Renato Corona, who was found guilty by the Senate impeachment court of not declaring his dollar deposits in his SALN. Corona was ousted in 2012.

In his speech, Mr. Duterte accused PCIJ of being a paid hack used by his enemies to smear his family's name and reputation.

PCIJ is an independent, nonprofit media agency that specializes in investigative reporting. It was founded in 1989 by nine Filipino journalists who realized, from their years on the beat and on the news desk, the need for newspapers and broadcast outlets to go beyond day-to-day reporting.

In 2000, it reported that then President Joseph Estrada, his family members and cronies allegedly acquired multibillion-peso lands and houses in Metro Manila, Baguio and Tagaytay on Estrada's behalf.

Estrada was impeached but was toppled by the EDSA uprising in January 2001. The Sandiganbayan found him guilty of plunder on Sept. 12, 2007, and was pardoned a month later by then President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. —WITH A REPORT FROM INQUIRER RESEARCH INQ

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Chinese arbitration body's standards questioned amid Phl loans

By PAOLO ROMERO

The government must find out whether the arbitration body in Beijing that will resolve possible disagreements between the Philippines and China over the loans extended will follow international standards in handling such disputes, Sen. Sherwin Gatchalian said yesterday.

Gatchalian, chairman of the Senate economic affairs committee, made the pronouncement amid fears of a lopsided ruling from a Beijing-based arbitration body in the event the two countries get into a dispute over the huge loans from China.

"We must find out if the arbitration entity in Beijing follow international standards in resolving disputes, how they are different from internationally recognized arbitration bodies," Gatchalian told *dzBB*.

Supreme Court Associate Justice Antonio Carpio has warned that the country could lose its natural resources, particularly its huge natural gas deposits in Recto Bank, if it defaults in its loan payments to China.

Experts said the loan agreements are governed by Chinese laws, and any dispute arising from contracts will have to be resolved by arbitration bodies in Beijing.

Carpio warned the Philippines is not assured of fair proceedings under the China International Economic and Trade Arbitration Commission that will use its own rules to resolve disputes.

Gatchalian said it was the first time that the country agreed to submit to an arbitration body based in Beijing.

He said the loan contracts, official development assistance, and other financing agreements entered into by the Philippines with other countries and multilateral institutions have designated the respected and independent arbitration bodies such as the Singapore International Arbitration Centre; International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes in Washington; Hong Kong International

Arbitration Centre, or the New York International Arbitration Center.

President Duterte earlier ordered a review of all foreign loan agreements entered into by the country even as senators asked that this should be done carefully so as not to discourage investors.

5

This time, unhindered PH fishing in Panatag

By **Gabriel Cardinoza**
@gabrielcardinozaINQ

INFANTA, PANGASINAN-- The Chinese Coast Guard appears to have lifted a blockade of Panatag Shoal following the filing of a complaint in the International Criminal Court (ICC) against President Xi Jinping by two former Philippine officials.

Fishermen returning from Panatag, known internationally as Scarborough Shoal, reported fishing in the area unhindered by Chinese coast guards who usually drove them away from their traditional fishing grounds in the West Philippine Sea.

West Philippine Sea is the local name of the waters within the Philippines' 370-kilometer exclusive economic zone in the South China Sea.

Former Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario and former Ombudsman Conchita Carpio Morales last month filed a complaint against Xi and other senior Chinese officials on behalf of Filipinos "persecuted and injured" by China's aggressive moves in insisting it owned almost the entire South China Sea.

'Testing the waters'

Fishermen from this town had expressed fear of a backlash from the filing of the complaint, but those from Barangay Cato who had sailed to Panatag to "test the waters" returned on Thursday with good news.

Benjamin Sumagunday,

skipper of the fishing boat *Ruvina 1* that sailed to Panatag on March 23, reported that the Chinese coast guards allowed his group free access to the shoal.

He said the coast guards even allowed them to fish inside the shoal's lagoon, something they were not allowed to do before.

Sumagunday said he did not notice any unusual movements by the five Chinese Coast Guard ships stationed near the shoal during his group's stay there.

China seized Panatag from the Philippines after a two-month maritime standoff between the two countries in 2012.

With no military muscle to retake the shoal, the government of then President Benigno Aquino III challenged China's claim over nearly all of the South China Sea at the UN-backed Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague.

Arbitral ruling

The court ruled in favor of the Philippines in 2016, invalidating China's sweeping claim and declaring it violated the Philippines' sovereign rights in the West Philippine Sea.

But President Duterte set aside the ruling, preferring warmer ties with China in exchange for aid, loans and investment.

Although China reportedly agreed to allow Filipinos to fish at Panatag, fishermen often reported being shoed away by the Chinese Coast Guard.

Last week, fisherman Usaffe Fontanilla reported that the Chinese Coast Guard seemed to be testing its water cannon when his group was about to leave the shoal on March 19.

But Sumagunday said on Thursday that the Chinese coast guards were driving away Vietnamese, not Filipino, fishermen.

The Vietnamese fishermen would move about 10 km from the shoal then return to resume fishing there, he said.

They would leave before the Chinese coast guards could see them, he said.

Panatag overfished?

Sumagunday, however, had a sad story to tell: Fishing at Panatag was no longer the lucrative business it used to be.

He said his group's trip to the shoal last month was almost a losing one, with each man on the boat making only P2,000 after selling their catch of small red snapper, parrot and rabbit fish.

That could mean only one thing: Panatag could be overfished.

"Maybe there are now too many fishermen in the area," Sumagunday said, adding that there were more than 20 fishing boats in the area during his group's trip there last month.

He said fishermen from the Visayas and Palawan were now going to Panatag, unlike before when only fishermen from Pangasinan and Zambales fished at the shoal. INQ

Climate change will end sea dispute – Locsin

FOREIGN Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. on Sunday claimed rising sea levels brought about by climate change would eventually wipe out structures and artificial islands built by China in the contested Kalayaan (Spratly) island group.

➤DisputeA7

■ DISPUTE FROM A1

Climate

He made the remark on Twitter in response to a news article on the prospects of floating cities amid rising sea levels in Antarctica due to climate change.

"Rising sea levels will wipe out the issue of disputed reefs in the South China/West Philippine Sea. And good riddance," Locsin said.

"At the UN (United Nations) Security Council I said the Philippines would not regret climate change and rising sea level if it covers the disputed reefs in the South China Sea and exposes the foolishness of taking and weaponizing them," he said.

President Rodrigo Duterte on Thursday warned China not to touch Pag-asa (Thitu) Island in the South China Sea (West Philippine Sea), where hundreds of Chinese vessels have massed.

The President issued the warning following reports from the Armed Forces of the Philippines that hundreds of Chinese coast guard and fishing vessels had "swarmed" the Manila-held Pag-asa Island.

The military's Western Command said the vessels were part of China's maritime militia.

Chinese Ambassador to the Philippines Zhao Jinhua, however, said the Chinese vessels seen near the island were not armed.

The Philippines had filed a diplomatic protest with Beijing over the matter.

BERNADETTE E. TAMAYO

Roxas to Duterte: Focus on real problems

BY WENDELL VIGILIA

FORMER interior secretary Manuel A. "Mar" Roxas II is calling on President Duterte to focus on addressing pressing national issues, like high prices of food and basic commodities, instead of wasting time thinking of ways to silence his critics.

He said President Duterte is veering away from the real problems that Filipinos are facing with

his threat to suspend the writ of habeas corpus and to declare a revolutionary government.

"The ordinary Filipino people have so many problems. We've walked around and heard from the market vendors that business is slow. People don't have money. The buyers think that everything is expensive," he told reporters on Saturday while campaigning at a public market in Blumentritt, Manila.

"So this is the (economic) squeeze people are going through. This is the real problem which needs to be addressed," he added.

The President on Thursday last week warned critics he would suspend the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus so that he can order their arrest and declare what he called a "revolutionary war" until his term ends in 2022.

Duterte first threatened to declare a revolutionary government

in 2017 amid alleged destabilization efforts against him which he said was being hatched by including communist rebels, "oligarchs," and the Central Intelligence Agency.

The President's latest threat was prompted by a statement from Sen. Franklin Drilon who urged him to be extremely cautious in reviewing government deals, including those with China. Duterte last week said

See ROXAS ► Page B5

ROXAS

he wants a review of all contracts entered into by government with companies and other countries to determine if there are "onerous provisions" in any of the deals.

Rep. Gary Alejano (PL, Magdalo) said the threat to declare a revolutionary government is just another "diversionary tactic" amid the controversy linking the President's son, Paolo, to illegal drugs trade and the allegedly onerous deals with China.

Alejano also belongs to the Otso Diretso slate whose candidates have been pressing Duterte to face issues "squarely" and not resort to means outside the Constitution.

Detained opposition Sen. Leila de Lima likened President Duterte to a "mad dog" for his latest threat.

"This President does not really care about the Constitution and the rule of law. All he cares about is his psychotic self. The kind of revolution that we need, and urgently, is a revolution of conscience among the enablers and all others who still cannot see or refuse to see through the moral bankruptcy of this regime," De Lima said.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson said he does not believe Duterte meant what he said, saying "he will not do it because he is too smart and intelligence to know he cannot do it."

Opposition Sen. Francis Pangilinan, Otso campaign manager, said the President should instead run after big-time drug lords and not declare war against his own people.

Vice President Leni Robredo yesterday denounced what she said were efforts to mislead the public on her supposed "eagerness" to replace Duterte should he declare a revolutionary government.

Robredo, a lawyer, said she was only responding to questions about her "readiness" to succeed Duterte after his threat to declare a revolutionary war, suspend the writ of habeas corpus, and arrest his critics.

The President's remarks had sparked discussions of revolutionary government among legal experts, who said Robredo would be his rightful successor.

Last Friday, Robredo was asked if she was ready in case Duterte make good his threat.

She answered in the affirmative, but her detractors accused her of being too eager to replace the President.

"Hindi naman tayo iyong nag-simula ng usapin. Actually, si Pangulo ang naggawa ng isang deklarasyon at tayo ay pinapa-komento lang doon (I didn't start the issue. Actually, it was the President who made the declaration and I was just asked to comment about it)," Robredo said during her weekly radio show.

Robredo also responded to comments comparing Duterte's remarks with the late President Corazon Aquino's declaration of a revolutionary government.

The Vice President pointed out that Aquino made the move in line with re-establishing a democratic government.

She added that the situation during the time of Aquino was different because of the "confusion" that arose from 1986 EDSA "People Power Revolution."

The Vice President reiterated that declaring a revolutionary government runs against Duterte's duties as President, in particular his oath to protect and uphold the Constitution.

She also stressed that there are no circumstances that would warrant the suspension of the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus.

Robredo called on the government officials to remain cautious in words and actions, even in the face of criticisms.

Election lawyer Romulo Macalintal, another Otso candidate, has said Duterte will cease to be President once he declares a revolutionary government and such act will pave the way for Robredo to take over the vacant position.

He said declaring a revolutionary government would mean that Duterte "becomes the leader of a revolutionary government while Robredo becomes the leader as president of a duly constituted government." — *With Raymond Africa and Angela Lopez de Leon*

As world power, China portrayed as 'good friend'

By Macon Ramos-Araneta

SHANGHAI—China, the rising world superpower, said it was not a competitor with other economies in the global market, but rather a "good friend" that could help spur development in its neighboring countries.

Yujun Yang, former Ministry of National Defense Information Bureau director and spokesperson said China wants to be friends with all nations of the world.

"China is a friendly nation. We want to make friends with everybody. We won't go into war with any country,"

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As world...

From A1

said Yang when pressed if China would to war over the maritime disputes in the South China Sea.

Despite a ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration that the Philippines has exclusive sovereign rights over the West Philippine Sea, China has maintained its claim over most of the South China Sea.

But Yujun, now dean and senior research fellow at the Academy of Media and Public Affairs of the Communication University of China noted that while China maintains its claim over the disputed waters, it does not intend to use force to gain control of what it believes belong to the country.

A military official before his retirement from the Chinese government service, he said China will always opt for peaceful negotiations to settle disputes. He said it is better to sit down and talk than resort to destruction.

"China will not destroy nations, but instead, will help build nations, help build infrastructure, help give jobs. China will always be a partner in nation-building and development," he said.

He also noted that China's continuing technological innovations should not be taken as a move of China to be competitive.

"We are doing this not to compete, but to make life easier and more comfortable for all the people of the world and improve livelihood," said Yang in an interview during a dinner here with Shanghai municipal officials.

In particular, he said, the Chinese people are taking initiatives to make Shanghai and Beijing investment-friendly.

"We want investors to come to us in Shanghai, Beijing and other cities of China and make investments," said Yujun, one of the speakers during the 10-day China-ASEAN Center Advanced Studies Seminar Workshop on New Media sponsored by CUC.

With \$18,450 per capita GDP in 2017, Shanghai, located in eastern China, is the country's largest economic center. It's GDP is equivalent to a medium-developed country or region.

China challenge prompts ROTC revival—Gordon

By Macon Ramos-Araneta

SENATOR Richard Gordon said Sunday he would renew his proposal to revive the Reserve Officers Training Corps in preparation for any attacks from China.

"We are challenged right now, and we should be prepared," Gordon said, referring to recent reports that more than 200

Chinese vessels were positioned near Philippine-held Pag-asa Island in the West Philippine Sea.

"I have been proposing the revival of the ROTC so that male citizens who are 18 years old will have military training," Gordon said.

He said the ROTC cadets can be asked to give six months of military service,

noting that in other countries, citizens are even asked to give as long as two years.

"The young should know how to be soldiers," he said in Filipino. "They should fight for the country if it's needed."

Gordon last year filed Senate Bill No. 1417, or the Citizen Service Act of 2017 which proposes to require all college

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China...

From A1

students and those of technical vocational courses to undergo basic citizen service training.

Saying the country faces disasters both natural and man-made, Gordon stressed the importance of having an army of reserved officers who could be called upon and mobilized to assist in external and territorial defense, internal security and peace and order, and disaster risk reduction and management.

In a radio interview on dzBB, GMA resident analyst Richard Heydarian said the continued presence of Chinese vessels in the West Philippine Sea shows that the country's effort to build "friendly" ties with China does not work.

"Here's the problem. After everything President Duterte did for them, our fishermen still cannot fish inside the Scarborough Shoal lagoon," he said in Filipino. "The Chinese lied because they promised easier access for our fishermen, and that did not happen."

He said there was no evidence to suggest that President Rodrigo Duterte's policy toward China was working.

"If anything, China could be encouraged to push the envelop and become aggressive in the West Philippine Sea," he said.

'History Walls' retell stories of heroism of PH veterans

By **Tonette Orejas**
@ttorejasINQ

CLARK FREEPORT—What happened in various parts of the Philippines during World War II?

The Philippine Veterans Bank (PVB) tells local war stories through its "History Walls."

At least 30 of the bank's 60 branches feature local World War II history to pay tribute to the courage and sacrifices of Filipino veterans for national freedom.

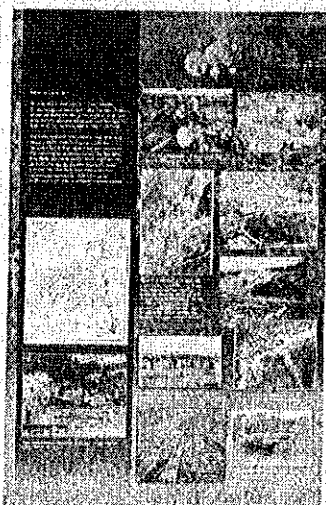
They actually own PVB because half of the bank's seed fund in 1963 came from the \$20-million reparation payment of Japan to them.

Educating the youth

"We want to educate the youth on this history of the Philippines in World War II," former PVB president and chief operating officer, Nonilo Cruz, said of the History Walls project.

These walls consist of permanent panels of photographs, video documentaries and display cases of memorabilia.

The PVB branch in Building 2435 on E. Quirino Street here opened its history wall for



GLIMPSES OF WAR Branches of Philippine Veterans Bank feature old photographs of World War II mounted on "History Walls" to educate the youth on the Filipinos' struggle during the Japanese invasion.

—PHOTO COURTESY OF PHILIPPINE VETERANS BANK

public viewing in 2017 to remember the 72nd anniversary of the retaking of Clark Field by two US Army Infantry Divisions from the Japanese Imperial Army's Kembu Group in less than a month of air and

land combat in 1945.

Built in 1919 next to Fort Stotsenberg and regarded as the most important military air field in the country, the erstwhile Clark Field was taken by the 30,000-men Kembu Group immediately after Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in Hawaii on Dec. 8, 1941.

After months of defense by Filipino and American soldiers, Bataan and Corregidor fell to enemy's hands on April 9, 1942.

Clark Field attack

An account in the History Walls says: "The US Army's 37th and 40th Divisions attacked Clark Field on Jan. 24, 1945 and within a week, the Kembu Group lost all its heavy weapons and tanks."

"The survivors took up harassing positions in the Zambales mountains, where they infiltrated Clark Field and destroyed aircraft and equipment in night raids."

It recalls that "Exhausted, the 40th Division garrisoned Clark Field while the unit refitted. The XIV Corps secured the Clark Field air center for the Allied Air Forces—construction work began and the Fifth Air

Force planes fly in from repaired strips.

Filipino veterans share their accounts in documentaries that are played during banking hours.

The display cases feature a copy of the "instrument of surrender" that Gen. Tomoyuki Yamashita and Vice Adm. Denhichi Okochi of the Japanese army and navy, respectively, signed at Camp John Hay in Baguio City on Sept. 3, 1945.

The documentary "Unsurrendered 2: The Hunters ROTC Guerrillas" shares the story of college cadets who resisted the Japanese invasion, mounted operations and ambushes and launched the raid on Los Baños in February 1945.

The glass cases also show Japanese occupation stamps, an Asiatic-Pacific campaign medal, an old cover of the mimeographed newspaper "Liberator" illustrated by Esmeraldo Izon, sketch of guerrilla intelligence work on Japanese positions, Gen. Douglas MacArthur's "I Shall Return" buttons, matchboxes and leaflets, and guerrilla money as emergency currency ordered printed by President Manuel L. Quezon. INQ

Duterte to AFP, PNP: Learn art of assassination

By CHRISTINA MENDEZ

President Duterte is urging the police and military to form their own hit squads to go after communist New People's Army (NPA) guerrillas, and to "learn the art of assassination."

Duterte over the weekend expressed displeasure that the Communist Party of the Philippines, its

political arm the National Democratic Front and the NPA have stepped up attacks against government forces.

"I'm addressing myself to the police and the military. I've been telling you: sparrow, sparrow, sparrow. *Kasi kukunin talaga nila 'yang armas na 'yan. Para sa kanila, 'pag makakita ng armas 'yung NPA, hindi ka hintuan niyan hanggang...* So you - *sabi*

ko, learn the art of assassination," said Duterte, apparently referring to the NPA urban hit squad Sparrow Unit, whose members seize the firearms of law enforcers.

Almost done with half of his six-year term, Duterte lamented that the communists remain at large to overthrow the government. He has also

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yet to lick the Abu Sayyaf problem.

"The NPAs are there trying to overthrow government. *Meron akong mga citizen na Abu Sayyaf na walang ginawa kung hindi mag-decapitate ng tao pati sundalo,"* he said, bewailing the bandit group's penchant for beheading cap-

tives.

Duterte said he had ordered the procurement of more equipment and arms for the military in a bid to address the insurgency.

"That's the reason why the Army and they are also the targets now of sparrow. I've been telling them. I'll give you the arms. *Alam mo*

bakit? Bakit lahat sila binilhan ko? It cost us a billion," he said, emphasizing money is no object in the fight against insurgency.

"You know, but in southern part of our country, it's the base of Abu Sayyaf. They cannot be satisfied by whatever deal that you can offer them. No, because they belong to the ISIS. They take their cue from the Middle East," Duterte said.

AFP told: Learn assassin's ways

By Nat Mariano

WHATEVER the New People's Army rebels will do, the Philippine government will also deliver, President Rodrigo Duterte said Saturday as he ordered the armed forces to "learn the art of assassination" against the communist rebels.

In his speech during the National Federation of the Motorcycle Clubs of the Philippines' annual national convention in Iloilo City, Duterte said he had not given up his dream to create his own military squad to counter the NPA Sparrow unit.

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AFP told:...

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He said he had been telling the police and military forces to be wary of the NPA's liquidation unit.

"I'm addressing myself to the police and the military. I've been telling you sparrow, sparrow, sparrow," Duterte said.

"They would really take the arms, that ammunition. If they [NPA] saw you with arms, they will not stop until... So, I told them to learn the art of assassination."

The President first floated the idea of matching the NPA's "talent" in assassinating people in November 2018.

While his recommendation was previously studied by his Cabinet officials to come to "fruition," human rights defenders were quick to slam him for his proposal. Still, the Palace viewed the President's idea against the NPA rebels as a "serious" one.

"Now, I said, this one's real. If the NPA has a Sparrow [unit], then why don't we have one? So, I told them, 'Well, you form a unit to target the NPA'," the President said.

"Whatever you [NPA] do, I will do also. Why? Do you think you're the only one who wants to have an advantage in this life?"

In the same speech, the President advised the military not to allow themselves to be captured by communist rebels, telling them to kill themselves instead.

"I do not want to see planes carrying decapitated soldiers. Put the gun in your mouth and shoot yourself, Duterte said.

"If you surrender, you will be brought to their camp and treat you like a dog."

Learn 'art of assassination,' Duterte tells soldiers, cops

BY JOCELYN MONTEMAYOR

ALMOST half a year since he broached the idea of forming a special unit that will go after communist rebels, President Duterte on Saturday night advised the military and the police to learn the "art of assassination."

He also reiterated that they should form their own hit squads

to go after the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the New People's Army which has a liquidation squad called "Sparrow" unit.

The President, at the 25th annual convention of the National Federation of the Motorcycle Clubs of the Philippines on Saturday night in Iloilo City, said he has repeatedly told the military and

the police that the NPA and its Sparrow unit have been targeting government forces and grabbing their firearms.

"Kung may sparrow ang NPA, bakit wala akong Sparrow? O? 'Di sabi ko sa kanila, 'Well, you form a unit, Kung maghanap lang rin para sparrow-hin, iyung NPA.' Kung

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LEARN

anong gagawain mo, gagawin ko (If the NPA has its own sparrow, why can't I have a sparrow? I told them, "Well, you form a unit. If they will look for someone to hit, there's the NPA. Whatever you do, I will do it also)," he said.

In November last year, Duterte said he would create his own hit squad, to be called the "Duterte Death Squad," to match the NPA's Sparrow. He said he had tried to talk peace with the communists but they refused. Duterte formally ended the peace talks with the CPP-NPA-National Democratic Front of the Philippines last month. He said the communists would have to wait for the next administration if

they want to hold peace talks again.

Duterte on Saturday night also reiterated he has been distributing guns to soldiers and policemen to help them defend themselves against rebel attacks, especially when they are not on duty.

'DIE LIKE A WARRIOR'

The President also said policemen and soldiers should learn to "die like a warrior" as he advised them anew not to allow themselves to be captured, especially by terrorists groups and Islamic State-inspired groups like the Abu Sayyaf.

The President said he does not want to see soldiers and policemen decapitated.

He also said captives are treated like animals.

"Kasi kung mag-surrender ka, dalin ka sa kampo, bababuyin ka lang parang aso. Kung anong gagawain sa iyo, magpamasahe, tapos 'yung... And there are homosexuals there. They will use you day and night. Sabi ko, do not go into that kind of s*** there. You die a warrior. You kill yourself. Do not surrender ("Because if you surrender, you will be brought to the camp, they will treat you inhumanely. They would ask you to do a lot of things, some will ask for a massage... And there are homosexuals there. They will use you day and night. I told them, do not go into that kind of s*** there. You die a warrior. You kill yourself. Do not surrender)," he said.

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Duterte orders hit squad vs Sparrows

By GENALYN D. KABILING

To counter the threat from communist rebels, President Duterte has called on the military and police to learn

the "art of assassination" and form their own hit squad.

The President said if the New People's Army (NPA) has liquidation teams targeting soldiers and cops, the government should ►9

Duterte orders hit...

also create a unit that will hunt down these hitmen.

"I'm addressing myself to the police and the military. I've been telling you sparrow, sparrow, sparrow. Kasi kukunin talaga nila 'yan, 'yang armas na 'yan. Para sa kanila, 'pag makakita ng armas 'yung NPA, hindi ka hintuan niyan hanggang... So you — sabi ko, learn the art of assassination [because they will try to get your weapons. The NPAs will not stop until they get the weapons so I said learn the art of assassination]," Duterte said during a gathering of motorcycle club members in Iloilo City.

"Kung may sparrow ang NPA, bakit wala akong sparrow? O? 'Di sabi ko sa ka-

nila, "Well, you form a unit, kung maghanap lang rin para sparrowhin (sparrow) 'yung NPA' (If the NPA have sparrow units, why don't I have my own sparrow? I told them, 'Well you form a unit to target the NPAs)," he said.

Duterte taunted the rebels that they don't hold the monopoly of having a group of hitmen. "Kung anong gagawain mo, gagawin ko. Bakit? Sino bang — ikaw lang ang gustong makalamang sa buhay na ito? Kung hindi ka g*** (I will do whatever you do. Why? You think you are the only one who has an edge in this life? You fool)," he said.

The President first broached the idea of forming a government death squad back in

◀1

November. Dismayed by the rebel attacks on government troops, Duterte said he would be forced to create a team that will target the NPA sparrow units.

"I will match their talent of assassinating people," he said during the turnover of military housing units in Bohol last November.

The President has recently distributed new pistols to soldiers and policemen after expressing concern that they remain vulnerable to rebel attacks.

The government has terminated the peace talks with the communist rebel group in protest of the atrocities committed against troops and civilian communities.

Duterte told communist leader Jose Sison to try to talk to the next president since he was no longer pursuing peace negotiations with them.

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Military, police urged to form hit squads vs NPA

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte has called on the military and police to learn the "art of assassination" and form their own hit squads against the New People's Army (NPA).

Duterte said if the NPA has liquidation teams targeting soldiers and cops, the government should also create a unit that will hunt

down these hitmen.

"I'm addressing myself to the police and the military. I've been telling you sparrow, sparrow, sparrow. Kasi kuku-nin talaga nila 'yan, 'yang armas na 'yan. Para sa ka-riila, 'pag makakita ng armas 'yung NPA, hindi ka hintuan miyan hanggang... So you - sabi ko, learn the art of as-sassination," Duterte said

during a gathering of motorcycle club members in Iloilo City.

"Kung may sparrow ang NPA, bakit wala akong sparrow? O? 'Di sabi ko sa kanila, 'Well, you form a unit, kung maghanap lang rin para sparrowhin (spar-row) 'yung NPA,' he said.

Duterte taunted the rebels, saying they don't hold the monopoly of having a group of hitmen.

"Kung anong gagawin mo, gagawin ko. Bakit? Ikaw lang ang gustong makalamang sa buhay na ito?," Duterte stressed.

The President first broached the idea of a possible creation of a government death squad back in November. Dismayed by the rebel attacks on government troops, Duterte said he would be forced to create a team that will target the NPA sparrow units.

The President also said government troops should "die a warrior" and kill themselves rather than risk getting captured by Islamic State-linked militants.

Duterte gave this advice to troops battling the Abu Sayyaf Group and other lawless elements as he warned against being tortured, raped and decapitated if taken to their camp. **Ehren Montano**

Russian warships arriving in Manila today

Two Russian anti-submarine ships and a sea tanker will arrive in Manila today for a five-day goodwill visit.

The Philippine Navy said warships *Admiral Tributs* and *Vinogradov* and sea tanker *Irkut* of the

Russian Navy would dock at Pier 15 of Manila's South Harbor at around 9 a.m.

Capt. Jonathan Zata, naval public affairs office chief, said the Russian vessels would be given a welcome

ceremony to be followed by a press briefing with key officials of both navies.

Three Russian Navy vessels visited the country for five days last January. — Michael Punongbayan

**3 Russian Navy ships
arrive for five-day visit**

Three Russian Navy ships are expected to arrive on Monday for a five-day goodwill visit. The Russian Pacific Fleet's large antisubmarine vessels Admiral Tributs and Vinogradov will be accompanied by large sea tanker Boris Botuma, which docked in the Philippines for a similar visit in January. According to Navy spokesperson Capt. Jonathan Zata, goodwill visits from other navies foster and strengthen relationships and "enhance and sustain the promotion of peace, stability and maritime cooperation" through naval diplomacy and camaraderie. This is the second goodwill visit of the Russian Navy this year. The Russian Navy ships will be open to the public on April 9.

—JEANNETTE I. ANDRADE

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Russian Navy ships arriving in Manila

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

Three Russian Navy vessels will arrive in Manila today for a five-day goodwill visit.

Philippine Navy Captain Jonathan V. Zata, Director of the Naval Public Affairs Office, said the large anti-submarine ships Admiral Tributs and Vinogradov, and large sea tanker Irkut, will dock at Pier 15, South Harbor.

Zata said the Philippine Navy will render the customary welcome ceremony for the vessels to be followed by a press briefing with both navies' key

officials led by the Commander of Detachment of the Russian Pacific Fleet, Capt. Sergey G. Alantiev.

He said the docking of the Russian vessels is a tradition that signifies Russian and Philippine Navy cooperation.

During the five-day port call, the Russian Navy will hold a wreath-laying ceremony, courtesy calls on top military officials, friendly sporting events, and maneuvering exercises with its Philippine counterparts.

On Tuesday, the Russian ships will also hold an Open Door Day from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

The Pacific Fleet ships will wrap up their visit on Friday, April, 12.

Zata said this will be the second visit of the Russian Navy this year and the eighth since 2012.

Last January, three Russian Navy vessels — the large anti-submarine ship Admiral Panteleev, the guided missile cruiser Varyag, and the large sea tanker Boris Botuma — were in Manila for five days.

It will be the second time for the Admiral Varyag and the Boris Botuma to visit the country. It will be the first visit for the Admiral Panteleev. 9

Russian ships to visit Manila amid 'Balikatan'

THREE Russian Navy ships arrive today (Monday) for a five-day goodwill visit to Manila, amid the "Balikatan" (shoulder-to-shoulder) exercises between the Philippine and US militaries.

Capt. Jonathan Zata, Philippine Navy spokesman, said two large

anti-submarine ships, *Admiral Tributs* and *Vinogradov*, and the large sea tanker *Irkut*, were set to dock at the Port of Manila.

This will be the second call of Russian vessels this year after a visit in January.

» 'Balikatan' A2

■ 'BALIKATAN' FROM A1

Russian

Zata said the visiting ships were part of the Asian fleet of the Russian Navy.

"This is in accordance with the policy of our President that we maintain closer relationship with our neighboring navies and other navies as well," Zata explained.

In October last year, Philippine

Navy officials visited Vladivostok, where they were welcomed by the Russian Navy and Philippine diplomats based in Moscow.

President Rodrigo Duterte has pivoted to Russia and China since he assumed office in 2016, following US criticism of his brutal war against illegal drugs.

Zata said Duterte might be able to visit the Russian ships, but there was no Palace confirmation yet.

DEMPSEY REYES

3 Russian vessels due for 5-day visit

THREE Russian Navy vessels, including two anti-submarine ships, are due to arrive today for a five-day goodwill visit, the second one to be made by the Russians this year.

Navy spokesman Capt. Jonathan Zata said there are initial plans for President Duterte to visit the ships after their arrival at the South Harbor in Manila but no final decision has been made yet.

Zata said the three ships – the anti-submarine Admiral Tributs and Admiral Vinogradov and sea tanker Irkut – are due to arrive at around 9 a.m. and will be welcomed by a Philippine Navy delegation.

The Russian delegation will be involved in several activities while in the country, including a courtesy call on Navy chief Vice Adm. Robert Kimpedrad and friendly games with their Filipino counterpart. B3

Last January, the Russian sent anti-submarine Admiral Panteleev, guided missile cruiser Varyag, and sea tanker Boris Botunia to Manila for a similar port visit.

Relations between the two navies have improved under President Duterte's independent foreign policy. The Russians have donated 20 trucks, 5,000 assault rifles, a million rounds of ammunition and 5,000 helmets to the Philippine military during the Duterte administration.

– Victor Reyes

Philippine Navy sealift vessel to join Chinese Navy fleet review

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

The Philippine Navy (PN) will send a strategic sealift vessel to China to participate for the first time in the Chinese Navy's fleet review later this month.

The Flag-Officer-in-Command (FOIC) of the Philippine Navy, Vice Admiral Robert Empedrad, said the BRP Tarlac (LD-601) will join the fleet review to mark the 70th anniversary of the People's Liberation Army Navy.

Empedrad said the Tarlac will depart for Qingdao, China, on April 16 and arrive on April 21.

The ship will have 118 crewmembers and 493 passengers from the Naval Task Group, students from the Naval Education Training and Doctrine Center, and Philippine Military Academy (PMA) cadets.

The Tarlac is the lead ship of her class of Philippine Navy landing platform docks. She is the second ship to be named after the Philippine province of Tarlac, one of the provinces considered to have significant involvement in the Philippine revolution against Spain.

The ship can accommodate 500 troops and support vehicles and equipment.

Capt. Jonathan V. Zata, director of the Naval Public Affairs Office, said the fleet review will be held on April 23 in the city of Qingdao.

He added that the Philippine Navy's participation in the Chinese navy's fleet review is in keeping with President Duterte's policy of engaging not only with the country's traditional ally and strategic partners but other countries as well.

"The Navy, through its naval diplomacy role, maintains good relations with other countries' navies while safeguarding our country's maritime interests," Zata said.

Gordon wants ROTC a 'patriotic duty' for students

By HANNAH L. TORREGOZA

Senator Richard Gordon has renewed his appeal to make the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) program mandatory for students.

Noting how China is already getting a foothold in Philippine territories in the disputed islands in the West Philippine Sea, Gordon urged the government to support proposals to revive the ROTC in prepara-

tion for any possible armed attacks.

"We are challenged right now, and we should be prepared. I have been proposing the revival of the ROTC so that male citizens who are 18 years old will have military training," Gordon said during the Commemoration of the 77th Araw ng Kagitingan and Philippine Veterans Week held at Fort Bonifacio last Friday.

"They can be asked to give six months military service. In other coun-

tries, citizens are even asked to give as long as two years," Gordon said.

Gordon also stressed that having an army of reserved officers that can be mobilized to assist in matters of external and territorial defense, internal security and peace and order is important given that the country "faces a buffet of disasters, both natural and man-made."

He said reserved officers can be tapped for disaster risk reduction and

management.

Gordon was the guest of honor and speaker at the said event. The senator's father, former Olongapo City Mayor James Leonard Tagle Gordon, was given a posthumous award as one of the heroes of World War II.

According to Gordon, his father was assigned as a junior officer under the Intelligence Staff engaged in intelligence gathering and monitoring the province of Zambales. The senator said his father had the rank of a first lieutenant and joined the resistance on November 1, 1943.

"Ang mga bata dapat marunong magsundalo. Dapat kaya nilang lumaban para sa bayan kung kailangan (the

youth should know how to be a soldier. They ought to know how to fight for the nation in any eventuality)," he added.

With the aim to foster patriotism and nationalism among the youth, Gordon filed last year, Senate Bill No. 1417, or the Citizen Service Act of 2017 which proposes to require all college students and those of technical vocational courses to undergo basic citizen service training.

The Senate sub-committee on education, arts and culture chaired by Sen. Sherwin Gatchalian, will hold its second hearing on the issue today, April 8, together with the committees on national defense and security, youth and finance. 9

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'WE HAVE TREATED YOU TOO WELL FOR TOO LONG'

Military dares militants to debate on live TV

THE ARMED Forces of the Philippines on Sunday hit back at militant groups under the Makabayan bloc, daring them to a television debate over the latter's supposed links to communist rebels.

Maj. Gen. Antonio Parlade Jr., the military's deputy chief of staff

for civil-military operations, was responding to pronouncements of Senate candidate Neri Colmenares and of Bayan Muna party-list Rep. Carlos Zarate, accusing the military of "setting up" attacks against their group and the National Union of

► Debate A7

■ DEBATE FROM A1

Military

People's Lawyers (NUPL), think tank IBON Foundation, Gabriela women's group, rights group Karapatan and labor group Kilusang Mayo Uno.

"Makabayan, take the challenge. See who are propagandizing. Let's see who is on the side of truth. [On] Monday, choose your TV station. That's how simple it is," Parlade said in a text message.

"We have treated you activists too well for too long. We don't attack and maltreat activists and even capture NPA (New People's Army) members as you claim," he added.

Parlade said former Bay-

an Muna Rep. Saturnino "Satur" Ocampo was aware this.

Ocampo, he claimed, was "surprised" after finding out that NPA members captured in Batangas were being fed fried chicken and ice cream for dessert.

"They were brainwashed to believe the [Philippine] Army will skin them alive when captured and it didn't happen. Since then, these former rebels have been helping the government win over the NPA," Parlade said.

Zarate on Sunday said: "Progressive people's organizations have done a lot to serve our people. NUPL has represented impoverished farmers like the victims of the Sagay massacre and the Negros massacre, as well as victims of the 'Tokhang' (anti-drug) operations.

Bayan Muna, on the other hand, led the fight against unwarranted power rate hikes and the increase in pension for senior citizens, among other issues," Zarate said.

Colmenares said Parlade and President Rodrigo Duterte tended to make rash statements when embarrassed or offended by their critics.

"If they have real proof against these organizations, then file a case against them," he said.

The government has asked the European Union and the Belgian government to review funding given to a number of progressive groups, claiming these organizations were "fronts" for the communist rebellion.

GLEE JALEA
AND DEMPSEY REYES

Ly

Pulis, AWOL na sundalo 160 pa huli sa SACLEO

NI DANILO GARCIA

Higit sa 160 katao ang pinagdadakip ng mga otoridad kabilang ang isang aktibong pulis at Grab driver na kasapangkat nito at isang sundalo na matagal nang AWOL (absence without leave) sa isinagawang "simultaneous anti-criminality law enforcement operations" o SACLEO sa Makati City mula Sabado ng gabi.

Ang nadakip na pulis sa bisa ng search warrant na ipinalabas ni Hon. Judge Elmo Alameda ng Makati City RTC dahil sa kasong illegal possession of firearms ay kinilalang

si Police Staff Sgt. Chris Marquez, nakatalaga sa Police Regional Office 4A, habang arestado rin ang kasabwat nito na si Dennis Tamonan, na umano'y sangkot sa illegal drug trade.

Nakumpiska sa bahay ni Marquez ang dalawang kalibre .38 na baril, isang kalibre 22 rifle, isang airgun at tatlong plastic sachet ng shabu.

Ang sundalong matagal nang AWOL sa Philippine Army's 2nd Infantry Division mula pa noong

2015 ay si Cpl. Nolan Yatar. Isang sachet ng shabu ang nakumpiska ng mga pulis mula sa kanya.

Sinabi ni Makati City Police chief, Colonel Rogelio Simon, kabilang sa mga inaresto nila ay mga sangkot sa pagtutulak ng ilegal na droga, loose firearms, Most Wanted Persons, at mga lumabag sa mga ordinansa.

Mula alas-5 ng hapon hanggang alas-5 ka-hapon ng umaga, nasa 18 drug suspek ang nadakip habang 18 plastic sachet

ng shabu na may kabuuang halaga na P80,000 ang nakumpiska.

Nasa 22 naman ang dinampot sa ilegal na sugal, siyam sa inuman sa kalsada, 46 sa paninigarilyo, isa sa pagdadala ng patalim, at 64 na kabataan sa curfew.

Anim katao rin ang inaresto ng mga tauhan ng Intelligence Unit sa illegal possession of firearms kung saan nakumpiska ang dalawang kalibre .38 baril, isang kalibre .45, mga bala at pitong plastic sachet ng shabu.

Reds free village chief, 2 others in Mindoro

By ED AMOROSO and EMMANUEL TUPAS

CAMP VICENTE LIM, Laguna – Suspected New People's Army (NPA) guerrillas have released a village chief and two other civilians whom they reportedly seized along with a militiaman in Oriental Mindoro on Friday night.

Peter de los Santos, 52, chairman of Barangay Malo; Louie Medinilla, 47, and Rocky Boy Bueta, alias Ricky Capillo, 40, were released on Saturday morning, according to Col. Marceliano Teofilo, commander of the Army's 203rd Infantry Brigade.

A separate report from the Mimaropa (Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon and Palawan) police identified De Los Santos' wife Ruth as among those

kidnapped and released by the insurgents.

Capt. Patrick Jay Retumban, spokesman for the Army's 2nd Infantry Division, said De Los Santos' wife was not among those snatched by the NPA.

The rebels have yet to release militiaman Reymond Malupa.

Malupa's wife and children appealed to the rebels to release him unharmed.

The victims were reunited with their families after undergoing debriefing.

Lt. Col. Socrates Faltado, spokesman for the Mimaropa police, did not say if ransom was paid in exchange for the release of the hostages.

Teofilo said at least 10 members of the NPA's Kilusang Lanrangan Gerilya-Ignacio Clafero Magadia snatched the victims from their homes in Barangay Malo at around 8 p.m. on Friday.

The rebels, who were reportedly clad in military uniform, brought the victims to Sitio Pay-Pay.

A pursuit operation by a joint team of the local police and the military must have

compelled the kidnappers to release three of the captives, according to Teofilo.

"I alerted all camps and patrol bases as these terrorists may attack soft targets to divert and disrupt the joint Army-PNP operations," Teofilo said.

De los Santos is a known supporter of Bansud Mayor Angel Saulong, who is seeking reelection in the May 13 elections.

Saulong told police he received a text message on April 4, purportedly from the rebels, demanding permit to campaign fees.

He said the "rebels" threatened to snatch his supporters if he would refuse to pay.

**CHR condemns NPA
for Mindoro abductions**

The Commission on Human Rights (CHR) on Sunday condemned the abduction of a barangay captain, two civilian and a paramilitary member allegedly by members of the New People's Army (NPA) in Bansud, Oriental Mindoro. "We condemn any act that transgresses on fundamental human rights," CHR spokesperson Jacqueline Ann de Guia said. —PATRICIA DENISE M. CHIU

**Int'l lawyers group slams
Red-tagging of NUPL**

The International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL) condemned the Duterte administration's Red-tagging of members of the National Union of Peoples' Lawyers (NUPL) as "irresponsible, slanderous and legally punishable." The international organization also called on the government "to immediately cease and desist" maligning the NUPL and other human rights lawyers, and to let them do their work unhampered. In a Saturday resolution passed during the meeting of the IADL bureau, the group said that statements made by Maj. Gen. Antonio Parlade Jr. suggesting that the NUPL and other people's organizations had links to the Communist Party of the Philippines and the New People's Army were "unsupported." The resolution added that the claims had no specific and verifiable evidence. —PATRICIA DENISE M. CHIU

70 former rebels get free housing in Bukidnon

By **ARMANDO B. FENEQUITO JR.**

BUKIDNON – Around 70 former rebels (FRs) who surrendered to the Eighth Infantry Battalion (8th IB), Fourth Infantry Division (4th ID), were among the beneficiaries of the housing project undertaken by the National Housing Authority (NHA) as part of the Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (E-CLIP) benefits here at Brgy. Poblacion, Impasugong, Bukidnon on April 4.

Capt. Reggie Go, 4th ID spokesperson, said the NHA, in partnership with 8th IB and 403rd Brigade, conducted an orientation for the 70 FRs regarding the housing units that they will be receiving.

Go said the former rebels were given options whether to avail of the house and lot in Malaybalay City or be given a total amount of ₱450,000 for the renovation of their houses if they opt to stay in their places of origin prior to their involvement with the New People's

Army (NPA).

He said, based on the directive issued by the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), E-CLIP seeks to contribute towards achieving the goal of permanent and peaceful closure of all armed conflicts with non-state armed groups, and mainly focuses on the facilitation of the mainstreaming of ex-rebels and Militia ng Bayan (MB) as productive citizens.

"FRs and MBs are qualified to avail of the program, they will be entitled to safety and security guarantees, including relocation," he said.

Go said the E-CLIP provincial committee in Bukidnon, in partnership with the Task Force Balik Loob and the Army, was doing its best to reach out to other rebels in Bukidnon by delivering the promised services to those who have already surrendered, so that this could serve as a strong message to them that there would be life after they turn their backs on the NPA.

NPA abducts 4 in Mindoro Oriental

BY ROSELLE R. AQUINO

CAMP EFIGENIO Navarro, Calapan City: The New People's Army (NPA) on Friday evening abducted a *barangay* (village) chairman, two civilians and a member of the Civilian Active Auxiliary (CAA) in Barangay Malo, Bansud, Oriental Mindoro.

Col. Marceliano Teofilo, commander of the 203rd Brigade, said kidnapped were Malo village chief Peter de los Santos, Louie Medinilla, Ricky Capillo and CAA Reymond Malupa.

"They were forcibly taken from

their houses by about 10 NPAs under Kilusang Larangan Gerilya-Ignacio Clafero Magadia (KLG-ICM) clad in military uniform, who brought them to Sitio Paypay, which is two hours' walk from their *barangay*," Teofilo said.

"We strongly condemn the desperate actions of the CPP-NPA. The abduction only shows how weak these NPA terrorists are, they do not spare even innocent civilians. They threaten, extort money and if they are refused, they will kidnap," he added.

The CPP is the Communist Party of the Philippines and the NPA is its armed wing.

The *barangay* chairman's refusal to support the NPA is one of the motives police are trying to look into.

He is a well-known supporter of Bansud reelectionist Mayor Angel Saulong, who refused to give in to the extortion demand (permit-to-campaign) of the NPA.

Malo residents said the victims were respected in their community and they were wondering why the NPAs abducted them.

In Bongabong, Mindoro Oriental, more than a week ago, the NPA abducted one civilian, who was forced to join the communist rebels, but he managed to escape and reported the incident.

His identity is being withheld for fear for his life and for his family.

Troops of the 203rd Brigade and the Mindoro Oriental police already sent out troops to hunt down the kidnappers.

"This forced the NPA terrorists to release other victims. I already

alerted all camps and patrol bases as these terrorists may attack soft targets to divert and disrupt the joint Army-PNP (Philippine National Police) operations," Teofilo said.

Maj. Gen. Rhoderick Parayno, commander of the Philippine Army's 2nd Infantry Division, said: "The NPA terrorists are no different from being kidnappers. They have violated Republic Act 9851 (An Act on Crimes Against International Humanitarian Law, Genocide and Other Crimes Against Humanity), such as taking of hostages under Section 4 (b) (3). In this case, they have deprived the civilians of their rights to liberty. The full force of

law will run after them."

Meanwhile, Police Regional Office Mimaropa (Mindoro Occidental and Mindoro Oriental, Marinduque, Romblon and Palawan) spokesman Lt. Col. Socrates Faltado said the NPAs already released three of the kidnap victims, while the CAA is still being held hostage.

Those released are now with their families after debriefing with local police and social workers.

The wife and the four children of the remaining kidnap victim now fear for their father's life and they are appealing to the NPA to release their father and not to hurt him.

AFP corks CPP fund radices

By Marlo J. Mallari

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has apprised security officials from Asia-Pacific countries about the threats posed by the Communist Party of the Philippines' (CPP) international network.

The AFP presentation was made during an event in Singapore recently.

Turn to page 2

The CPP networks pose threats, not only to the Philippines but to other countries as well, if left unchecked

From page 1

Maj. Gen. Antonio Parlade Jr., AFP Deputy Chief of Staff for Civil Military Operations (J7), claimed that Australia, Hungary and member-states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are convinced of the terror threats and are in agreement with the AFP that the CPP networks pose threats, not only to the Philippines but to other countries as well, if left unchecked.

Initially, Parlade said Australian, Hungarian and the ASEAN delegates at the Millipol Asia-Pacific 2019 Conference in Singapore have expressed surprise over the AFP presentation which centered on the CPP schemes to gain power, influence and money.

But Parlade disclosed that the delegates later appreciated the AFP presentation and vowed to exert pro-active efforts to help the Philippines address its concerns over insurgency and terror.

"It's (CPP) totally under their radar. Now they know where to

look," Parlade said.

"They are convinced this scheme or scam can easily morph into a transnational syndicated criminal activity in the region, especially as the Philippine government tightens the noose against the communist terrorist group," Parlade added.

In his presentation, Parlade detailed how the CPP, 50 years since its founding, managed to establish an international network, named the International Department, comprised of some 252 member-organizations based in 39 countries.

The group established 16 chapters overseas through the International League of Peoples' Struggle (ILPS) headed by CPP founding chairman Jose Maria Sison.

Through the ILPS, Parlade said that the CPP connects organizations from various countries with similar orientations and solicits funding to support armed revolution being waged by the New People's Army.

"This formula of the CPP can easily be copied by other terrorist organizations around the world,"

Parlade said.

Parlade also revealed that he had one-on-one dialogues with the representatives of Hungary and Australia, two countries whose support to the Philippines is crucial.

Parlade said that Hungary vowed to back AFP efforts to engage other stakeholders from Europe from where huge donations to CPP legal fronts are coming from.

Australia, meanwhile, wants to have a more comprehensive briefing about the CPP practice, Parlade said.

'ROTC to prevent Reds from recruiting students'

BY VICTOR REYES

THE military yesterday it wants the mandatory Reserve Officers Training Course (ROTC) to be revived to prevent students from getting recruited by the New People's Army, the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines, and other threat groups.

Army spokesman Lt. Col. Ramon Zagala said some of the student-recruits ended up getting killed in clashes with soldiers.

"One of the reasons we want to bring back (mandatory) ROTC is to make our students, our youth more productive members of the society, instead of getting recruited by the rebel movement and becoming destructive," Zagala said in a radio interview.

Lawmakers are discussing proposals to revive the mandatory ROTC, this time for Grade 11 and 12 students.

President Duterte is in favor of reviving the mandatory ROTC. In November last year, he said the program will help prepare the youth to defend the country in times of war.

The ROTC program was made

optional by virtue of a law passed in 2001 after the killing of Mark Welson Chua, an engineering student of the University of Sto. Tomas. Chua was killed by an ROTC soldier-instructor for exposing anomalies in the ROTC.

"There are a lot, documented instances wherein students were killed in encounters," said Zagala referring to students who got killed in encounters with soldiers after being recruited by the NPA.

"The youth is very malleable. They can be shaped by anyone. That's why we want ROTC (to be mandatory) because the main objective of ROTC is selfless service, patriotism," said Zagala.

Zagala also said there are groups, including the NPA and even cyber hackers, who can recruit the youth through various means including cyberspace.

"Everybody uses social media which is a platform for agitation. It's a platform for recruitment, not only by ISIS-inspired groups but also by the communist rebels who want to bring down this government through violent means," said Zagala.

Massacre suspect nabbed in Cotabato

An alleged member of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) tagged in the killing of 44 Special Action Force (SAF) commandos in Mamasapano, Maguindanao in 2015 was arrested in Cotabato City on Saturday.

Maj. Gen. Amador Corpus, chief of the Philippine National Police-Criminal Investigation and Detection Group, said Tamano Esmail Sabpa was arrested at the parking area of the Cotabato Regional and Medical Center in Barangay Rosario Heights at around 2 p.m.

The suspect was arrested based on a warrant issued by Judge Alandrex Betoya for direct assault with murder.

A card identifying Sabpa as a member of the MILF was found in his person, authorities said.

Sabpa was reportedly one of the gunmen who engaged the SAF commandos in an encounter in Barangay Tukanalipao on Jan. 25, 2015.

Aside from the 44 commandos, Malaysian terrorist Zulkifli bin Hir, alias Marwan, was killed in the firefight. — Emmanuel Tupas

MILF member arrested in Cotabato City

BY VICTOR REYES

A MEMBER of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front was arrested on Saturday in Cotabato City for involvement in the January 2015 "Mamasapano massacre" in which 44 policemen from Special Action Force died in Mamasapano town in Maguindanao.

Tamano Esmail Sabpa, who is also known as Tamano Sabpa Esmael, was arrested by operatives of the PNP's Criminal Investigation and Detection Group-Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao at the parking lot of the Cotabato Regional and Medical Center in Cotabato City at around 2 p.m. on Saturday, said police Lt. Col. Mary Grace Madayag, CIDG spokeswoman.

Madayag said the policemen were armed with a warrant issued by Cotabato City judge Alandrex

Betoya for direct assault and murder in connection with the massacre.

Sabpa's arrest was in line with the PNP's "Oplan Pagtugis," a campaign plan meant to account for persons with arrest warrants. Sabpa is described as a wanted person at the national level.

On Jan. 25, 2015, hundreds of fighters from the MILF and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters waylaid SAF commandos who had just killed Indonesian bomber Zulkifli bin Hir alias Marwan in Mamasapano.

The attack left 44 SAF members dead.

MILF officials said the policemen entered their territory without any coordination, in violation of a ceasefire agreement. They claimed the policemen fired the first shots and that MILF rebels merely acted in self-defense.

SAF slay suspect falls in Cotabato

By MARTIN A. SADONGDONG

A man considered as a suspect in a bloody encounter between the Philippine National Police Special Action Force (PNP-SAF) and rebel groups in Mamasapano, Maguindanao, in 2015 was arrested by police in Cotabato City Saturday.

Tamano Esmail Sabpa, whom police identified as a member of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), was arrested by a team from the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (CIDG-ARMM) and Cotabato City Police Station.

A report from Police Lt. Col. Mary Grace Madayag, CIDG spokesperson, said Sabpa was caught at the parking area of a regional hospital in Cotabato City around 2 p.m.

Oplan Paglugis is a police operational plan for capturing "national level" most wanted persons (MWP).

According to the report, the police were armed with a war-

rant of arrest for direct assault with murder issued by Judge Alandrex Betoya of the Cotabato City Regional Trial Court, 12th Judicial Region, Branch 15 dated Jan. 25, 2017.

The report said Sabpa was among the MILF and Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) who engaged the SAF troopers deployed for Oplan Exodus, a special mission to neutralize or capture Malaysian bomb-maker Zulkifli Ab-dhir alias Marwan at Barangay Tukanalipao in Mamasapano on Jan. 25, 2015.

Marwan was killed by the government forces but 44 SAF troopers, now known as the SAF 44, were killed by the MILF and BIFF in a surprise attack.

According to the police report, an identification card detailing the membership of Sabpa to the MILF was recovered from the suspect.

Sabpa was brought to the CIDG-ARMM station in Cotabato City for documentation.

The court has recommended no bail for Sabpa.

SAF 44 suspect arrested in Cotabato City

A SUSPECT in the bloody Mamasapano clash that left 44 elite police officers dead in 2015 was arrested by the Philippine National Police (PNP) in Cotabato City over the weekend.

The Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region

in Muslim Mindanao (BARM), led by the Cotabato City police, apprehended Tamano Esmail Sabpa or Tamano Sabpa Esmael at 2 p.m. on Saturday at the parking area of a regional hospital in Cotabato City, according to a police report.

Police said the suspect was arrested on a warrant issued by Cotabato

City Regional Trial Court Branch 15 presiding judge Alandrex Betoya, dated Jan. 25, 2017.

This was effected over charges of direct assault with murder of the 44 Special Action Force (SAF) policemen in Mamasapano, Maguindanao, in January 2015, while the troops were serving an arrest

warrant against terrorist Zulkifli Abduhir in the same town.

According to the police, the case of Esmail was not recommended for bail and the arrest was also under the PNP's nationwide "Oplan Pagtugis."

Authorities recovered from him one identification card.

AY
DEMPSEY REYES

Mamasapano suspect snared

By Gladys Mae Ablon

Authorities in Cotabato City have arrested a suspect in the killing of 44 commandos of the Philippine National Police-Special Action Force (PNP-SAF) during the infamous encounter in Mamasapano, Maguindanao in 2015.

According to the PNP Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (PNP-CIDG), Tamano Esmail Sabpa was arrested in a parking area of a hospital in Cotabato City late Saturday afternoon.

The arrest was conducted by members of the CIDG in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and operatives of the Cotabato City Police.

On 25 January 2017, Judge Alandrex Betoya

issued a warrant from Branch 15 of the Regional Trial Court in Kabacan, Cotabato against the suspect for a direct assault case. An ID recovered from the suspect indicated is a member of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

In 2015, PNP-SAF commandos conducted a successful mission to neutralize Malaysian terrorist Marwan in Mamasapano. But as they withdrew, they ran into MILF troops and members of the Bangsamoro Freedom Fighters (BIFF), triggering an encounter where 44 SAF men were killed.

Meanwhile, the military reported on Sunday that four suspected members of the BIFF were killed in an encounter between government troops and members of the Islamist militant group in Maguindanao last 4 April.

Elements of the 1st Mechanized Infantry Battalion, 37th Infantry Battalion and 64th Division Reconnaissance Company encountered the suspected BIFF members while conducting combat clearing operation in Barangay Tina in Shariff Aguak.

Tamano Esmail Sabpa was arrested in a parking area of a hospital.

After the 15-minute encounter, government troops recovered one M203 grenade launcher, one Barrett .50 caliber rifle, assorted anti-personnel mine components, as well as assorted parts of firearms and equipment.

According to military estimates, at least 11 other BIFF fighters were wounded during the clash.

With Kathleen Mae Bulquerin

2 Abu hostages freed, 1 drowns

An Indonesian fisherman held hostage for four months by the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) has drowned while two other captives were rescued by government troops, a military spokesman said.

The three men were seized by the Islamic militant group from their fishing boat early December last year. They were held on a remote island for nearly six weeks as a standoff ensued when government troops blockaded the island in a bid to corner the kidnappers.

According to military spokesman Lt. Col. Gerry Besana, the ASG fled

the southern island of Simusa Friday, bringing their hostages with them.

He is currently being treated at a military hospital.

One Indonesian fisherman, Heri Ardiansyah, was rescued as the militants tried to flee, but another captive, identified only as Hariadin, drowned in the escape bid.

Besana said another hostage, Malaysian Jari Abdullah, was rescued by soldiers a day earlier. He is currently being treated at a military hospital for

gunshot wounds but is in a "stable" condition.

Three of at least seven kidnappers were killed in the operations, Besana said.

After getting wind of the location of the ASG in late February, Besana said the military ordered the small civilian population of the island to leave to ensure their safety.

The ASG has gained notoriety for bombing attacks and kidnapping of tourists and missionaries for ransom.

EWB

AS A MATTER OF FACT

SARA SOLIVEN DE GUZMAN

Lutong Makaw

My father, the late Max Soliven once wrote about China. He said: *The People's Republic of China, once a pariah and "doomed" to failure in the world's eyes after the June 1989 Tiananmen Square "massacre," is now the Travel Destination of the Year. In ancient times, the saying went that "all roads lead to Rome." Not anymore. Even Wal-Mart and Starbucks -- and yes, Versace -- are making a beeline for China. Now, China has become a world power. It is so strong that it could in fact widen its influence wherever they want and get what they want with such ease and candor.*



My father first met Chairman Deng Xiaoping when he, as a member of the Philippines' Foreign Policy Council accompanied the late Vice-President and Foreign Affairs Secretary Salvador Laurel to Beijing in 1988. It was at that session in the Fujian Room of the Great Hall of the People that Chairman Deng first announced that the Spratly's "belonged" to China.

Chairman Deng called the Spratly's by another name -- Nansha Islands. He also made clear to the Philippine group that whatever name is given to the islands they still belong to China. For years now, China and the Philippines have contesting territorial claims in the South China Sea, an international waterway that Beijing claims as its own.

Remember how former President Benigno Aquino III launched a formal case against China over the matter in 2016 and the Hague tribunal ruled in favor of Manila, invalidating Beijing's claims? Well, nothing happened because Chinese officials dismissed that ruling.

Then came Duterte. For some reason, he gave up on us and softened his approach to China. His stand is that China is so big and so strong she can wipe us out in a few seconds. Then, he made a dramatic turn around on our foreign policy when he declared a separation from the United States and chose to align with China. The president's action of course angered many Filipinos.

Records show that in a span of 18 months, the government normalized its ties with China, thought of conducting a joint exploration in the disputed islands, re-enabled the Filipino fishermen to operate within the Scarborough Shoal and strengthened cooperation on tourism. A Six-Year Development Program was signed by the two countries to follow on the progress of their economic partnership in the areas of trade, investments, agriculture and fisheries, infrastructure, and tourism among others.

In October 2016 Duterte visited China. Chinese President Xi Jinping agreed to normalize diplomatic relations as well as resume bilateral dialogues on the issue of the West Philippine Sea dispute. This resulted in the signing of 13 cooperation agreements with the Chinese government and secured financial assistance and investment pledges worth USD24 billion, with business-to-business contracts amounting to USD 15 billion and official development assistance (ODA) comprising the remaining USD 9 billion.

With the closer ties between Manila and Beijing, 19 projects and programs worth a total of P731.7 billion are said to be rolled out during President Duterte's term through loans and grants from China.

Two projects worth at least P500 million are the Department of Agriculture's P500-million Philippine-Sino Center for Agricultural Technology-Technical Cooperation Program Phase 3, and the Seawater Desalination Complete Equipment Project in Dauis, Bohol will be financed by Chinese grants.

So far, the Duterte administration has signed two Chinese loan agreements, the P4.37 billion Chico River Pump Irrigation Project and the Kaliwa Dam worth P12.2 billion.

Projects that are still under negotiation for loans from China are the Department of Transportation's P175.3-billion North-South Railway Project-South Line (Long Haul); and the Bases Conversion and Development Authority's P57.2-billion Subic-Clark Railway Project; the P39.2-billion Ambal-Simuay River and Rio Grande de Mindanao River Flood Control Projects; P25.6-billion Davao City Expressway Project; P97.3-billion Panay-Guimaras-Negros Island Bridges; P56.6-billion Cebu-Bohol Link Bridge; P44.6-billion North Luzon Expressway East Project; P47.4-billion Dinagat (Leyte)-Surigao Link Bridge; P57.6-billion Luzon-Samar Link Bridge; P72.1-billion Bohol-Leyte Link Bridge; P14.4-billion Negros-Cebu Link Bridge, and P2.3-billion Camarines Sur Expressway Project.

The Camarines Sur provincial government's P4.7-billion Pasacao-Balatan Tourism Coastal Development Program as well as the Department of the Interior and Local Government's P20.3-billion Safe Philippines Project-Phase 1, are also seeking Chinese loan financing.

All these planned projects tapping China's ODA sparked concerns on a "Chinese debt trap. How much price do we have to pay for the realization of the country's golden age of infrastructure"? It has been reported that among the loan contracts signed by the Philippines with other countries such as Korea and Japan, the deals with China had specific waivers on sovereign immunity and mentioned patrimonial assets. Socioeconomic Planning Secretary and NEDA chief Ernesto M. Pernia said that the Philippines was "more cautious" and "extra careful in having projects funded by China.

What about the dozens of Chinese citizens working on at least two construction projects under Duterte's "Build, Build, Build" program and funded by Chinese grants? Foreign Minister Wang Yi said that Chinese investments in the country increased more than five-fold in the first six months of the year after a 67 percent expansion last year.

An exclusive report on "24 Oras" mentioned that project managers and many of the engineers and surveyors of the construction of the Binondo-Intramuros Bridge and the Estrella-Pantaleon Bridge are Chinese citizens. Based on DPWH data, there are 93 Filipinos and 55 Chinese nationals working on this project. These two projects cost P3.38 billion and P1.47 billion respectively and are funded by China through grants. By the way, the contractor is also Chinese.

The DPWH also said that it has urged China to abide by the Republic Act 6685 which requires private contractors to hire not less than 50 percent of unskilled laborers and 30 percent of skilled laborers from the residents of the area where the project is being undertaken.

Malacañang said that the Chinese workers are legally entering the country with permits. Those without proper documents shall face violations of immigration laws. Chinese Ambassador Zhao Jianhua told Presidential Spokesperson Salvador Panelo that, "If this government will just deport Chinese not in accordance with law, then we will also do the same." That's tit for tat.

The point is we are anxious about all these. The Spratly's have clearly been taken over by China with the huge developments taking place over there. The Chinese financial assistance is enormous. Reports say that out of the 75 major projects the Duterte administration aims to complete on or before 2022, about one-fourth or 19 will be funded by China. The conditions and situation we are in with China is scary especially with the predicament we have with a country who we all know is positioning itself to be a global superpower. If these loans are not managed well, it can work to our disadvantage. Where do we go from here? Where will all these lead us to? Why is Duterte in a fix?

A friend speaks out

EDITORIAL

Even critics were impressed: President Duterte, in a rare public display of exasperation, said last week that China should "lay off" the Pag-asa island group in the Spratlys.

The President issued the statement after being informed by security officials about the presence of some 200 ships believed to be part of China's maritime militia near Pag-asa Island, part of the Palawan municipality of Kalayaan where many residents are soldiers and the main source of livelihood is fishing in the West Philippine Sea. Records of the Armed Forces of the Philippines show that the Chinese vessels have been monitored in the area since the start of the year.

While the President stressed that his statement was meant as an advice to a friend, he told Beijing, "I will not plead or beg, but I am just telling you to lay off Pag-asa because I have soldiers there. If you touch it, that's a different story. I will tell the soldiers, 'prepare for a suicide mission.'"

Whether his Chinese friends will heed his advice remains

to be seen. In the meantime, the Department of Foreign Affairs has lodged a formal protest over the presence of the Chinese vessels. Similar vessels continue to patrol Panatag or Scarborough Shoal off Zambales, which in 2016 was declared by a UN-backed arbitral court as a common fishing area over which no country is supposed to have control.

The Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague also awarded the Philippines sovereign rights over Panganiban or Mischief Reef off Palawan, which the Chinese have turned into an artificial island on which they have built a multistory garrison. So far, there has been no indication that Beijing intends to leave Panganiban Reef.

President Duterte has gone out of his way to extend a hand of friendship toward China amid the continuing dispute in the South China Sea. Bilateral ties continue to strengthen on various fronts. How Beijing will react to his "advice" on Pag-asa, however, will test whether his rapprochement is worth it.

CHINESE DREDGER SHOULDN'T BE IN LOBO

I am writing this letter to express my dismay over the presence of a Chinese vessel in Lobo, Batangas. *(The vessel already left Lobo.—Ed.)*

The world knows that Chinese aggression is still happening in the West Philippine Sea. And now, this Chinese hopper dredger, the 2,990-ton MV Emerald, has dropped anchor 500 meters from the

30-hectare mangrove reserve of Lagadlarin village in Lobo.

This vessel has no right to enter Philippine territory, as its entry can cause environmental destruction. Lobo is part of the Verde Island Passage, a marine sanctuary considered by scientists as the "center of the center of marine shore-fish biodiversity."

The ship's anchor might

have already damaged the sea grass, a breeding ground for fish and sea turtles. The government must do something to address this issue. I also appeal to the Chinese government to stop its actions in the West Philippine Sea. M3

REGINE MAMAGAT-
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Duterte's suicide mission to Pag-asa Island

President Duterte addressed China on Friday: "Let us be friends, but do not touch Pag-asa Island and the rest. If you make moves there, that's a different story. I will tell my soldiers, 'Prepare for suicide mission.'"

Strong words, indeed! A defiant statement reported all over the world.

Apparently, the statement is not off the cuff. The Philippine government previously issued a statement that the Chinese Navy sent as many as 275 navy, coast guard and maritime militia vessels to the vicinity of Pag-asa. "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."

But one does not exactly know now whether the President says what he means, and means what he says. Is the suicide mission just another "jetski" story?

Mr. Duterte can help us understand him if he will translate his words into deeds.

The first presidential thing to do is for Mr. Duterte to visit Pag-asa and make a strategic declaration of Philippine resolve to defend Philippine territory and sovereignty in the West Philippine Sea. Sen. Panfilo Lacson already gave a strong hint when he said he is willing to accompany Mr. Duterte on such a visit.

Mr. Duterte actually owes it to the nation to visit Pag-asa. A visit to Pag-asa is the operational equivalent of the first stage of his jetski promise to plant the Philippine flag on the Spratlys in the South China Sea. If he is up to it, he can take the Philippine flag to the now



ON THE MOVE

SEGUNDO ECLAR ROMERO

Chinese-occupied Subi Reef, 26 kilometers away from Pag-asa—a jetski-able distance on a tankful of gas, even for an old macho man.

Mr. Duterte would add a nice personal touch if he would also stay the night, and have a boodle fight and a round of beer with the soldiers who are stationed there for boring months on end.

The second presidential thing to do is to now call for volunteers in the military services to make up the suicide mission. Even the Japanese kamikaze had to prepare and go through training and motivation sessions before they went on their one-way mission. They were allowed to write letters to their loved ones, akin to Islamic State suicide bombers making suicide videos.

But it looks unlikely that President Duterte will openly make a personal visit to Pag-asa Island. This will be a defiant, symbolic and potentially strategic move that reverses all the fawning toward China he has maintained over three years. Xi Jinping will not allow him to do that. Unless, perhaps, he is accompanied by

Ambassador Zhao Jianhua of China.

But wait!

We forget that this Pag-asa crisis is happening just before the May elections. Mr. Duterte will do anything to prevent a dramatic shift in public opinion that will endanger the chances of his administration candidates. If he does not win a Senate supermajority (17 automatic votes out of 24), he will not have quasi-dictatorial powers within the framework of the 1987 Constitution.

The candidates of the Duterte administration are way ahead of the opposition candidates according to the surveys. But Mr. Duterte is beleaguered, suffering simultaneous setbacks—the loss of his "air force" of worshipful Facebook accounts due to "coordinated inauthentic behavior." He had to explain to Xi Jinping he had nothing to do with the complaint against the latter before the International Criminal Court. Viral videos allege that the Dutertes are behind drug operations in the country. He is exasperated with the worsening drug and corruption problems. The psychological moment for a shift in political fortunes is in the air!

Will Xi Jinping allow Rodrigo Duterte to play hero, visit Pag-asa Island, boodle with the troops and make hyperbolic announcements in aid of the election of the Hugpong ng Pagbabago candidates? His visit to Pag-asa, of course, would only be a *moro-moro* to calm the natives; the China-Duterte friendship will remain. He closes with a sly wink.

Ah, I am sure Xi Jinping is a reasonable man, with a long-term vision, in dealing even with his subalterns.

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Cold-blooded murder in Bataan

Last week, I asked a young lady from Balanga, Bataan, what she knew about the events that took place in her home province 77 years ago. Understandably, she only had sketchy ideas about what happened during those fateful days in April 1942, and why tomorrow is a national holiday.

Let me provide some background.

In December 1941, Japanese forces attacked US military installations in the Philippines destroying much of what represented American air power in the region. After three months of heavy fighting in the Bataan Peninsula, Maj. Gen. Edward King, commander of Luzon Force defending the Peninsula, surrendered to Japan's 14th Army led by Gen. Masaharu Homma on April 9, 1942. David McCullough in his prize-winning biography of President Harry Truman described the capitulation as "the largest surrender of an American force since Appomattox." (Appomattox, a small village in Virginia, was the scene of Gen. Robert E. Lee's surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia to Gen. Ulysses Grant in 1865, signaling the end of the US Civil War. The surrender also took place on April 9. Lee surrendered an army of 28,000, while King gave up a Fil-American force of 75,000.)

Not many people are aware that King surrendered without informing his immediate superior, Lt. Gen. Jonathan Wainwright, the commander of US Forces in the Philippines who had replaced Gen. Douglas MacArthur. Upon learning of the surrender "MacArthur was shocked and demanded of Wainwright a full explanation of King's conduct. Wainwright replied that he had expressly forbidden such action and that King did not broach the subject of capitulation to him." Nevertheless Wainwright refused to criticize King because "the decision which he was forced to make required unusual courage and strength of character."

Tomorrow, we shall mark Araw ng Kagitingan with the traditional visit by the President or his representative accompanied by Japanese



REVEILLE

RAMON J. FAROLAN

and American embassy officials to the Dambana ng Kagitingan on Mount Samat. We shall once again recall the heroism of men who fought fierce battles in Bataan. We shall relive the Death March and remember the concentration camp atrocities at O'Donnell in Tarlac.

In our thoughts and prayers, let us not forget what happened to some 350 to 400 Filipino officers and men of the 91st Philippine Army Division.

On April 11, 1942, just two days after the surrender, this group was separated from their American colleagues and moved to the Pantingan River that crosses the Pilar-Bagac road. In his book "Bataan: The March of Death," American military historian Stanley Falk describes what took place after the separation: "The captives were formed into three groups and their wrists tied securely with double-strand telephone wire. At a given signal, the execution began. Japanese officers moved down the line from one end, mercilessly beheading the luckless Filipinos with their gleaming sabers. From the other end, Japanese enlisted men worked toward them, methodically plunging their bayonets into the backs of the prisoners. For two hours the grisly slaughter continued, the Japanese sweating at their work in the hot sun, pausing to wipe away the perspiration and then returning to their grim task..." When the slaughter was over, only a few prisoners remained alive buried beneath their slain comrades.

The massacre of Filipino officers and non-coms of the 91st Philippine Army Division remains a mystery of the Bataan saga that has never been fully explained. It was apparently aimed only at Filipinos. And yet, in our commemoration of Araw ng Kagitingan, there is hardly any mention of the event. Much of the national attention centers on the Death March. Painful as it may be, we must confront the fact that what took place was not the usual loss of life in battle—it was a case of the cold-blooded mass murder of prisoners of war.

Have we ever identified who were these officers and men? There should be a roster somewhere of the men belonging to the division. Why were they singled out for execution? Have we dedicated a special portion of our commemorations to remember their memory? How often in world conflicts covered by the Geneva Convention have prisoners of war been treated in such an outrageous manner and then are forgotten by the nation they served? After the war, Homma was tried by an American tribunal for atrocities committed by his troops during the Bataan Death March. Apparently, the mass murder at the Pantingan River was not among the charges made against him.

Each year our national leaders celebrate Araw ng Kagitingan with speeches about the heroism and valor of those who fought in Bataan. Let us also remember those who lost their lives, victims of inhuman conduct by a savage enemy flushed with victory.

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Pag-asa Island? Oops, arbitration award ruled it's just a rock

AND
You
can thank
former
President
Aquino

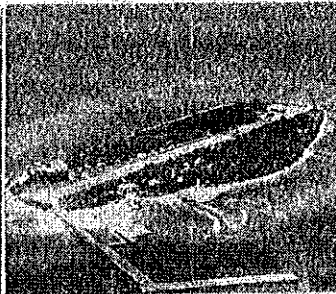
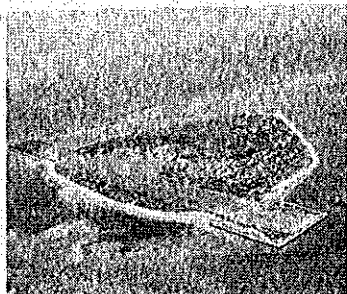


**RIGOBERTO
D. TIGLAO**

and his astonishingly pro-American
Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario for
this, as it was they who got the Republic
to file an arbitration suit against China
for allegedly violating the law of the sea.

» TiglaoA5

Pag-Asa Island? Oops, arbitration award ruled it's just a rock



■ Just rocks, not islands, according to arbitration award: Pag-Asa Island (left) and Taiwan's Taiping.



■ Taiping and Pag-Asa's EEZ (inside the circle) if they were islands.

Yes, the award sided with much of the Philippines' arguments, among them its ruling that China's claim over much of the seas in the South China Sea (demarcated by the ambiguous nine-dash line) had no basis under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

What del Rosario and his pro-American boys posing as objective academics do not mention is the following ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration on the case:

"None of the high-tide features in the Spratly Islands, in their natural condition, are capable of sustaining human habitation or economic life of their own within the meaning of Article 121(3) of the Convention."

And Article 121(3) of the Convention categorizes such features as "rocks," as opposed to "islands."

Our Pag-Asa Island in the Kalayaan Island Group (KIG), as well as three other features that Marcos had called islands when he annexed the area in 1978 through his Presidential Decree 1596, are all in the Spratly Islands, which therefore under the arbitral award are not islands but rocks.

Islands under UNCLOS are entitled to a 200-nautical mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Rocks do not have such a zone, and have only a 12-nautical mile territorial sea.

If there had been no such arbitration ruling, we could have argued that Pag-Asa is an island and therefore entitled to an EEZ. This would have extended our existing EEZ, which as of now is measured from baselines

in Palawan, and ends near the KIG.

Talk of the law of unintended consequences. Or perhaps it was the consequence the US strategists wanted.

Aquino and del Rosario wanted to get the arbitral tribunal to rule that the seven features in the Spratly islands occupied by China were just rocks, and therefore could not have an exclusive economic zone, and could only have a 12-nautical mile territorial sea.

The tribunal agreed with them, which would therefore classify much of the vast area around the Spratlys as international waters. But contrary to their misinformation, the tribunal did not rule what country is the sovereign of any of the Spratly "rocks". That is beyond its authority of the UNCLOS.

China does not recognize the tribunal and its decision on the ground that it actually ruled on sovereign claims over land, which is beyond the law of the sea.

Still though, the award now gives the US much legal justification—which translates to favorable international public opinion—that its Seventh Fleet's increased patrols in the South China Sea, which often sail close to Chinese claims, are all within international waters. These are euphemistically called freedom of navigation operations (FONOPs), but are clearly messages that the US is still the military superpower in the region.

The recent swarm of Chinese fishing vessels near Pag-Asa, which President Duterte has protested over, could be the unintended result of the arbitration award.

It is not clear how far from Pag-Asa island the fishing vessels are, if they are within the 12 nautical miles that is the entitlement of a rock according to the arbitral award and within the Philippines' EEZ as measured from the Palawan baselines, in which case they are indeed violating Philippine territory.

However, if it was the Chinese government that was behind the fishermen, it might have positioned the vessels just outside Pag-Asa's 12-nautical mile entitlement and the Philippine EEZ, just to taunt the Philippines for filing the suit against China.

My suspicion that the arbitration was a brilliant US machination is bolstered by the fact that it devoted much discussion to its ruling that Taiping Island (Itu Aba), occupied by Taiwan is not an island but just a rock.

The award totally disregarded the reality that Taiping is the biggest island in the Spratlys, and has been so developed over the decades that it is a garrison with an airport that can accommodate even C-130 planes, and a meteorological station.

If Taiping were an island, it would have generated a 200-nautical mile EEZ, which would – if

Pag-Asa also had an EEZ – cover a vast area that are not within the EEZs of the littoral states.

The US doesn't have a problem with Pag-Asa's EEZ given its influence over the Philippines. But what if Taiwan became part of the People's Republic of China, which would seem inevitable in the next 50 or even just 25 years?

In the most probable scenario, Taiwan's integration would be similar to Hong Kong's. This would mean that it would become an autonomous region with its independence intact except for one aspect: its foreign policy and external defense.

That would mean a huge part of the South China Sea within the PRC's control as its EEZ, and the US would have to get its permission for its Seventh Fleet to sail through.

The arbitration was a boon not to the Philippines but to the US, which after all planned and executed it. More on that in future columns.

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Public agendas and private interests in ICC/South China Sea

In the contested ICC and South China Sea issues, there are increasing concerns about public agendas fueled by private interests. The structures of Albert del Rosario's think-tank and its many bedfellows are a case in point.

IN February, the US-based Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative (AMTI) released a heavily promoted report alleging that China sought to intimidate Filipinos into ceasing construction work on the Pag-Asa Island (Thitu) in the South China Sea.

In March, former Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert del Rosario and former Ombudsman Conchita Carpio-Morales filed a complaint before the International Criminal Court (ICC) against Chinese President Xi Jinping's South China Sea "plan" portrayed as a "crime against humanity." Perhaps, emboldened by the filing, the ICC, reportedly, also tries to pursue a case against the Philippine drug war.

Filed in the name of "Filipino fishermen," the complaint has been followed by rounds of alarmist media headlines, coupled with heavily touted AMTI reports about "Chinese militarization" of the South China Sea. Yet local fishermen are apprehensive about the filing and its timing since they do not feel harassed by the Chinese coast guards anymore, according to Philippine-based GMA News.

Nevertheless, media carousels have intensified after the visit of US Secretary State Mike Pompeo



DAN STEINBOCK

and US "freedom of navigation" exercises, the debate about the review of the Philippine-US Mutual Defense Treaty, and the impending Philippine midterm elections.

Worse, the ICC filing is also linked with potential private gains behind the public agendas. Every think-tank is entitled to its voice, but neither AMTI nor del Rosario's think-tank are as "independent" as claimed – and the latter is haunted by allegations of perceived conflicts of interest, according to its Filipino critics.

Interest conflicts and energy reserves

Educated in the United States, del Rosario served as Philippine ambassador to the US in the 2000s and Secretary of Foreign Affairs in the Benigno Aquino 3rd government (2010-2016). His ties with the Aquino political dynasty go back to the presidency of Corazon Aquino (1986-1992), when he accompanied her on state visits to the US.

While del Rosario is portrayed

as a diplomat, he is also a business executive. In the Aquino government, he was reportedly the wealthiest, with net worth almost \$14 million in 2013. Prior to government, his business career covered many industries, corporate chairmanships and directorships. These ties were officially suspended during his government activities – but not effectively.

In February 2010, Philippine government granted Forum Energy, the partner of Philex Mining, the right to explore oil and gas in Reed Bank. At the time, del Rosario served as director of Philex, which is led by Manuel V. Pangilingan, a wealthy businessman and the CEO of First Pacific Co., a Hong Kong-based investment firm which in the Philippines has major interests in telecom (PLDT), banking (Metro Pacific Investments) and mining (Philex).

In February 2011, President Aquino appointed del Rosario as Acting Foreign Affairs Secretary. Reportedly, he left the Philex board in March 2011, when he also stepped down from his post as non-executive director of First Pacific. In January 2013, the Philippine Department of Energy deferred to the Department of Foreign Affairs the decision to grant permits concerning the exploration and mining

activities at the Reed Bank "because the area was part of the disputed waters being claimed by China."

That gave del Rosario, as Secretary of Foreign Affairs, effective authority to influence concessions on Reed Bank.

Indeed, the friction in the South China Sea involves more than sovereign interests of several countries in the region. According to a 2013 report by the US Energy Information Administration, Reed Bank could hold up to 5.4 billion barrels of oil and 55.1 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.

So, Philex Mining and its associates, including del Rosario, could gain hugely from concession rights.

Bold dreams, cold realities

At the same time, the Philippines also filed the arbitration case against China in the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) at The Hague. And in 2014, a year later, del Rosario and Aquino achieved the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA), which again opened the country to US military, ships and planes for the first time since 1991.

That's when efforts began to deepen US ties with del Rosario's think-tank, Stratbase (Albert del Rosario) Institute for Strategic

Steinbock A5

Oplan Sauron Part 2

ON March 30, the police and military implemented Operation Sauron Part 2 in Negros Oriental. It became even bloodier than Part 1 last December, where six persons were killed by the police. This time around, 14 persons were killed in the anti-insurgency operation, with eight of the victims in Canlaon City, four in Manjuyod and two in Sta. Catalina. Two of the people killed in Manjuyod were incumbent barangay captains while majority of the rest were reported to be farmers and active members of local affiliates of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas.

The police and military defend Sauron 2's 36 search warrants as having been issued by Judge Soliver Peras of Cebu City's Regional Trial Court Branch 10 (Peras was also responsible for the more than 100 search warrants issued in connection with Sauron Part 1). Aside from the 14 persons shot dead by the police for allegedly resisting arrest, 16 were arrested, among them leaders of Gabriela, Anakpawis and Karapatan. Fifty-three assorted firearms and explosives were recovered, according to authorities.

Murder and massacre, claims Karapatan. The victims were farmers who were simply shot dead in their homes by the policemen. The police and military say that the targets of the search warrants were members or key supporters of the communist New People's Army (NPA) and that they were linked to liquidations and ambushes.

There are two issues here: first, the manner in which the search warrants were implemented; and second, the personalities of the targets of the operation.

Personally, I am convinced that the targets were indeed members of the NPA or supporters providing assistance vital for the NPA to operate and survive. The police and military were reportedly more careful this time compared to last December (Sauron Part 1) where some targets were identified by questionable informants with dubious motives, and thus, mistakes were made.

The NPA has long had a presence in Canlaon City, NPA fighters withdraw to the city during military operations in the adjacent Guihulungan City—especially Brgy. Trinidad—and Moises Padilla, Trinidad, where more than 100 youths “celebrated” the Communist Party of the Philippines’ 50th founding anniversary last December 18, shares boundaries with three barangays in Canlaon City.

On Oct. 13, 2018, the Leonardo Panaligan Command (LPC)—NPA Central Negros liquidated retired Army Master Sergeant Celso Pedochino in Canlaon City. Last month, the LPC murdered three persons in the above-mentioned Brgy. Trinidad; and it claimed responsibility for the March 31 murder of Moises Padilla councilor Jolomar Hilario.



RESURGENCE

**MARIT
STINUS-
CABUGON**

His “crime” was to allocate funds for military operations.

A day after, the Army's 62nd Infantry Battalion engaged a group of NPA fighters at Brgy. Quintin Remo. The encounter lasted more than an hour resulting in 1,740 local residents fleeing the town. The police, serving as a blocking force, arrested 11 suspected rebels—including two minors—at adjacent Brgy. Sebutawan, Isabela. Four of the 11 were subsequently identified as being allegedly involved in the murder of Hilario.

The Leonardo Panaligan Command is without doubt the most active and lethal of the five NPA commands operating on Negros Island. For an observer of the insurgency in Negros in general, and in Central Negros in particular, the March 30 operation in Canlaon City, the encounter in Moises Padilla and the arrest of the 11 in Isabela together put pressure on the NPA in Central Negros. This is a welcome development. The police and the army must continue this offensive until the enemy has been at least significantly crippled.

Of course, committing injustice in the name of ending insurgency is wrong and unwise. Did the police execute the 14 or were proper procedures observed? Did they plant the firearms? Unfortunately, the police have only themselves to thank if the public doesn't believe that the victims shot it out with the team that served the warrants. The police in Central Visayas routinely violate rules of engagement and the rule of law, and then spin strange stories to cover up. The accidental killing of four-year-old Skyler Abatayo, the failed attempt to kill Tejero (Cebu City) Kagawad Jessielou Cadungog, the mysterious death of police officer Roderick Balili, the murder of Guihulngan City Deputy Chief of Police Porferio Cabuya, and the killing of Jesus Isugan, an innocent man, are examples of how the police deliberately misinform the public.

Unfortunately for the 14 killed and 16 arrested in Negros Oriental last March 30, Karapatan is as untrustworthy, if not more, than the police. For years the organization has been covering up for the NPA. The mere presence of Karapatan is proof that the targets of the March 30 operations belonged to the CPP-NPA united front, even if they may not have been communists or armed combatants. It would actually have helped the cause of the killed and arrested persons if Karapatan had stayed away and a credible party with a true concern for human rights had taken the lead. *AS*

EDITORIAL

A strong, united stand

AFTER exhibiting a tolerance that his critics misinterpreted as weakness, President Rodrigo Duterte last week took a strong stand against Chinese aggression in the West Philippine Sea, where Beijing has deployed more than 200 vessels—some of them manned by coast guards and militia—around Pag-asa Island over the last few months.

"Let us be friends, but do not touch Pag-asa Island and the rest," the President said at a rally in Puerto Princesa, Palawan.

"If you make moves there, that's a different story. I will tell my soldiers, 'Prepare for a suicide mission,'" he added. "I'm just telling you [to] lay off the Pag-asa because I have soldiers there."

Earlier, the Department of Foreign Affairs, called the presence of about 275 Chinese vessels near and around Pag-asa island "illegal," saying it was an infringement of Philippine sovereignty.

The firm stand drew support from his critics and allies alike.

Former Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert del Rosario, for

example, commended the President and urged everyone to rally around him.

"Our President is manifesting his own brand of leadership which in this instance is both appropriate and admirable," Del Rosario said in a statement.

"Let us all be one in standing behind him," said Del Rosario, who, along with former Ombudsman Conchita Carpio-Morales, filed a case against Chinese President Xi Jinping, accusing him of committing crimes against humanity in connection with Beijing's activities to gain control over most of the resource-rich South China Sea.

The President's ally in the Senate, Senator Richard Gordon

lashed out at Beijing, saying China was not a friend because its actions did not demonstrate the actions of a friend.

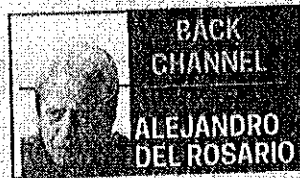
"China said they are our friends but a friend does not send... hundreds of vessels to harass our fishermen in our territory," Gordon said.

In his almost three years in office, the President has opted for a pragmatic approach to the country's giant neighbor to the north, preferring to discuss trade and development rather than territorial disputes.

Given the need to improve the economy, the President took a clearly less belligerent attitude toward China than did his predecessor, paving the way for improved ties with Beijing and access to Chinese investments and loans.

But last week, the President showed there are limits to his administration's accommodation—and that these correctly begin where Philippine sovereignty and territorial integrity are challenged. This is a strong, principled position that all Filipinos can get behind. *mf*

Warning China



IN A rare show of exasperation, President Rodrigo Duterte warned China not to push its boundaries past Pagasa. It was the first time the Philippine president used strong language in asserting the country's territorial sovereignty against an aggressive China.

“The stakes are too high.”

The presidential outburst was triggered by reports of a fleet of Chinese warships near Pagasa known also as Scarborough Shoal. Filipino fishermen earlier reported the Chinese gunboat and complained that they were being prevented to fish in waters well within the 200-mile Philippine exclusive economic zone mandated under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

But China—which considers itself outside the UNCLOS accord including The Hague arbitration tribunal that ruled against its sweeping claim of nearly the entire South China Sea—continues to militarize the region.

The stakes in the South China Sea are the enormous oil, gas and mineral resources under the seabed which China needs to achieve its agenda to rise as a superpower and surpass the United States.

President Duterte meanwhile has alarmed the populace with his recent statement he would “suspend the privi-

lege of the writ of habeas corpus and declare a revolutionary war until the end of my term in 2022.”

The president's threat drew a reaction from lawyer Egon Cayosa of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines. The IBP official said Mr. Duterte as president can suspend the writ of habeas corpus, but only for 60 days and if there is rebellion or foreign invasion. This was according to the Constitution, Cayosa said. He also pointed out that President Duterte said “revolutionary war,” not revolutionary government, adding that if it's the latter, then he would have to resign with Vice President Leni Robredo taking over in the order of succession when the head of state resigns due to health incapacity, death or inability to govern.

Cory Aquino declared a revolutionary government because she was not elected president but was swept to the presidency as an aftermath of the EDSA People Power uprising on Feb. 22, 1986.

President Duterte's outburst was brought about by his own words that he has enough problems with critics adding to his woes. These problems include the proliferation of illegal despite his bloody campaign against it, the P5 billion in damaged agricultural crops because of El Niño which also resulted in water shortage in Metro Manila, the monstrous traffic and now the adverse public opinion against his close ties with China despite its aggressive action in the West Philippine Sea.

But he sought the presidency and won it so he must deal with the problems that come with it and not show his breaking point.

Carry on, Mr. President, you're tougher than your critics think. Otherwise, hand the presidency over to someone who can cope. We are not necessarily thinking of VP Robredo. What does the law say about holding a snap election to choose a new chief executive like then-President Ferdinand Marcos

Turn to A5

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Warning...

From A4

did while still in power?

For sure the wannabes will come out of the woodwork. Expect among them as presidential candidates Senators Richard Gordon, Ping Lacson, Franklin Drilon, Grace Poe and even boxing icon Manny Pacquiao.

Poe, Mar Roxas and Manny Villar would probably try a second attempt to win as president.

It's not too far-fetched for Manny Pacquiao to emerge as winner considering his popularity with the *masa* and his image that he amassed his money through hard work with his iron fists.

Is Manny smart enough to lead a country? To this question, I say any one who won more 50 fights and captured world titles in eight divisions must be a smart man who used his brains aside from his blazing fists. Besides, Manny Pacquiao plays chess, the thinking man's game.

To help him govern, all Manny needs is a capable vice president who has a

deep knowledge of the bureaucracy and the intricacies of handling tradpols who might want to undermine him with their corrupt ways and self interests.

In order to preclude the possibility of having a vice president from another party elected, perhaps a constitutional amendment to have the country's president and veep must be elected together like in the US. This ensures continuity in the government's policy and program.

Under the US setup, the Vice President presides over the Senate and attends foreign events the President cannot go to. Or if the Vice President has the credentials, he can also be appointed as Secretary of Foreign Affairs attending international events as the president's point man.

A president and his vice president if from the same party can work as team. We won't have the same situation like Robredo who is out of the Duterte administration because she was from another political party. This is unfair to the people who voted for her as No. 2 official not to see her doing any work to serve them. President Duterte when abroad to attend meetings with global leaders, does

not assign Robredo as acting president but instead names his executive secretary or some other functionary to act as chief executive. This is rather irregular that the head of state does not trust his vice president because she comes from another political party. How much harm or damage can someone do in a temporary capacity? Plus, there are constitutional limitations to her powers while in an acting capacity.

This is why the time has come for a charter amendment mandating that president and vice president from the same party must be voted together.

As far as I can recall, there has been no instance in Philippine politics that the president and vice president from the same party were elected together. This is why there is so much political intrigue and the perception that the No.2 official is salivating to become No.1.

Another constitutional amendment we should consider is changing the single six-year term for president to just five like in other countries. Six years is too long for a bad president. Shortening this term to just five would make the incumbent do all he can to leave a legacy of good governance.

EDITORIAL

Inspiring bets

THE call is morally compelling because it came from former or retired military officials.

The officials urged voters to choose candidates in the May mid-term elections who encourage people to embrace ideals and virtues that promote the welfare of the people and interest of the nation.

They want leaders who could motivate citizens to excel in their work or profession and contribute to nation-building.

This is essentially leadership by example, which is deeply ingrained in military culture.

Essentially what is being sought is moral leadership.

A group of retired military officers on Friday urged voters to elect local and national leaders who would inspire and motivate the younger generation in the May mid-term elections.

"We postulate that during these challenging times the country needs leaders to inspire our younger generations who shall inherit our patrimony, culture and traditions. Let us therefore elect candidates with vision, character, and will to become the proper role models of our youth, especially our students and school children," said the Advocates for National Interest (ANI) in a statement Friday.

ANI described itself as composed of retired military officers who collectively possess experience and education in public service, diplomacy, defense and security, legislation, and public order and safety.

It added that it is one with the Filipino people in exercising their freedom to select from among the candidates those who have manifest competence, honesty, dedication, morality and patriotism.

"We appreciate the recent government announcement that corruption is a social scourge that must be addressed squarely to effect a lasting national development and reecho Abraham Lincoln's view that if one cannot resolve to be honest in a given position then he or she could look for another occupation where honesty is not required. We subscribe to the constitutional provision that 'public office is a public trust' to mean that public officials should have a strong foundation of core values and principles like honesty because "for ordinary transactions of daily life, we have to believe that most people are telling the truth most of the time," ANI stated.

During these challenging times, the group said, the country needs leaders to inspire the younger generations who will inherit its patrimony, culture and traditions.

"Let us therefore elect candidates with vision, character, and will to become the proper role models of our youth, specially our students and school children," it added.



Editorial

Ba't kailangang patayin ang mga magsasaka?

KAHAMBAL-HAMBAL ang pagpatay sa 14 na magsasaka sa Negros Oriental noong nakaraang linggo. Bakit kailangan silang patayin? Ang pangyayari ay nagbabalik sa alaala ang Escalante massacre sa Negros Occidental noong 1985 kung saan, mga magsasaka rin ang biktima. Pinagbabaril ng mga sundalo ang mga magsasakang nagpoprotesta. Hiling ng mga magsasaka sa Escalante na mapabuti ang kanilang kalagayan. Dalawampu ang namatay sa massacre at hanggang ngayon, ang hustisya sa mga namatay ay hindi pa nakakamitan. Nabaon na sa limot ang pangyayaring iyon.

Ngayon, naulit na naman ang pangyayari. Mga magsasaka rin ang biktima sa Negros Oriental. Ang kaibahan lamang, mga pulis at hindi sundalo ang

rumatrat sa 14 na magsasaka. Ayon sa mga nakasaksi, nagkaroon ng operasyon ang mga pulis sa Canlaon City, Manjuyod at Santa Catalina noong Sabado. Pinasok umano ng mga pulis ang mga bahay ng biktima at naghalughog. Pinagbabaril umano ang mga biktima sa loob mismo ng bahay makaraang halughugin.

Pero sabi ng Philippine National Police (PNP) mga rebelde umano ang mga napatay. Kabilang daw ang mga ito sa mga NPA na sumalakay sa security forces sa Negros Oriental. Lumaban daw ang mga ito kaya nagkaroon ng labanan. Ayon pa sa PNP, mga miyembro ng Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas ang mga napatay at pinatotohanan naman ito mga pinuno ng nabanggit na samahan.

Ayon naman sa mga kamag-anak ng mga napatay, hindi NPA ang mga ito. Wala raw awang pinatay ng mga pulis ang kanilang kaanak. Wala naman daw nakuhang mga armas sa loob ng bahay. Hustisya ang kanilang hiling.

Sinibak naman ni PNP General Oscar Albayalde ang apat na police officials kaugnay sa pagkakapatay sa 14 na magsasaka. Nararapat na magkaroon ng imbestigasyon sa nangyaring ito. Makipagtulungan sana ang PNP para maging mabilis ang pag-imbestiga. Hindi sana ito matulad sa iba pang kaso na nawalang parang bula. Bumuo ng independent body na magsisiyasat sa nangyaring masaker. Maging mabilis sana ang paghalukay sa katotohanan.

ONLINE NEWS

08 APRIL 2019

news.mb.com.ph

Army says it favored revival of ROTC to instill discipline among the youth

By Francis Wakefield

Army spokesman Lt. Col. Ramon Zagala Sunday reiterated that the military was calling for the revival of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) to help instill discipline among the youth and not just to prepare for threats both inside and outside the country.



Lt. Col. Ramon Zagala
(Davao Oriental YouTube channel / MANILA BULLETIN)

In an interview over radio station DZBB, Zagala said one good reason that they want the ROTC revived was to make the youth to be more productive members of society.

"Instead na ma-recruit sila dito sa rebel movement at be destructive, let's just be productive," Zagala said.

(Instead of being recruited by the rebel movemeng and be destructive, lets just be productive).

Zagala cited the case University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) student John Carlo Capistrano Alberto, who was killed in an encounter against government troops in Sitio Pinamintian, Barangay San Buenaventura, Luisiana, Laguna.

A number of students, who joined the NPA have also been killed in previous encounters with the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) after being lured to join the Communist movement, including UP Manila student Josephine Lapira of Gabriela who died in an encounter in Batangas in November 2017.

"There a lot of documented instances wherein students were killed in an encounter. So madami pa tayong mga isntances na ganito [So there are more instances similar to these]," Zagala said.

Zagala said unlike countries such as South Korea, Singapore and Israel, which have mandatory military service because they have active threats all the time, what the AFP wants is to revive the ROTC to also instill leadership and nationalism among the youth of today.

"Magaling talaga ang mga kabataan natin ngayon so very reliable sila, pwede mo silang ma shape to whatever they want to be, whoever wants to help. Kaya ROTC ang gusto namin kasi ang main role ng ROTC talaga is selfless service, patroitism, etc," Zagala said.

(Our youth of today is good, so very reliable, they can be shape to whatever they want to be, whoever wants to help. The reason we want ROTC because its main role is selfless service, patriotism, etc.)

"Kung mabalik natin ang ROTC first of all is to instill discipline, kasi madami sa atin hindi na disiplano eh, simple following of traffic rules, wala nang sumunod, kanya kanya na tayong ginawa. So we want the ROTC program to help in doing all these things. Gusto rin nating magkaroon ng leadership..Hindi naman ibig sabihin na matuto ka ng leadership sa ROTC hindi mo na magagamit sa labas iyan," he added.

"If ROTC is revive first of all is to instill discipline because a lot are no longer disciplined. even traffic rules are not followed, doing our own things. So we want the ROTC program to help in doing all these things. So we want to have leadership, Is doesn't mean you learn leadership from ROTC you cannot use it outside).

The Department of National Defense (DND) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) earlier expressed optimism that the proposed revival of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) would be passed and enacted into law in the current 17th Congress.

DND Undersecretary Cesar B. Yano said the purpose of the reimposition of the ROTC in Grades 11 and 12 (senior high school) levels, no longer in college, will be values and character formation, not much on military affairs.

Yano said that the idea of reimposing the mandatory ROTC training came from the President himself in his first State of the Nation Address (SONA) in July 2016.

The President, Yano said, wanted to strengthen the ROTC that would instill love of country and good citizenship among the youth.

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Time's up for your fake advocacy, AFP exec tells Karapatan

By Azer Parrocha

MANILA -- Foreign non-government organizations (NGOs) will no longer believe in the fake advocacy being promoted by Karapatan once military proves to the world that the group is a front organization of the communist movement, an army official said Sunday.

Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Deputy Chief-of-Staff for Civil-Military Operations, Major Gen. Antonio Parlade Jr., made this comment after opposition lawmakers in the Makabayan bloc urged him to stop red-tagging the group for lack of proof on these allegations.

Bayan Muna Rep. Carlos Zarate earlier claimed Parlade was "doing a disservice to Filipinos" by believing that "progressive people's organizations" such as Karapatan launched a fake human rights advocacy to collect donations from European countries.

Parlade shot back at the Makabayan bloc, insisting the latter was the one which made a disservice to Filipinos by exaggerating figures on people killed during the drug from war from police data which showed only 5,000 deaths to 27,000 deaths only to get more funding from foreign organizations.

"You know you have to paint any sitting government as oppressive, a tyrant, and that there exist in the Philippines a consistent pattern of gross, flagrant, or mass violations of human rights' so that you can continue to ask for donations from Europe, America, Australia, elsewhere for your fake advocacies, through well-meaning govts and foreign NGOs," Parlade said.

"Philippines is safe, its only you who are hyping that scary picture which in turn sends investors and tourists away. Now that's disservice to your fellowmen. That's what progressive" people do - send progress and development away?" he added.

Public debate

Parlade shrugged off Zarate's comment and challenged the Makabayan bloc to a televised public debate to prove that the group is a front organization of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP).

"Makabayan, take the challenge. See who are propagandizing. Lets see who is on the side of truth? Monday, choose your TV station," Parlade said in a statement.

"*Bakit kami mapapahiya* (Why would we be put to shame)? For what? For telling the people the truth?" he added.

Parlade said he has long challenged groups like Karapatan to a public debate but they never accepted his dare.

"Yan nga hamon, matagal na. I challenged Karapatan tumahimik. I challenged Ibon wala din (That has long been my challenge. I challenged Karpatan, they were quiet. I challenged Ibon, no response from them)," he said.

"We will show the world proof, as we have shown EU and Belgium. Lets see who has red tagged who. Its not me. Not us," he added.

'Red-tagging never a crime'

Meanwhile, a former CPP leader who requested anonymity, said he found nothing wrong with AFP's efforts to determine which groups were CPP front organizations.

"Persistently exposing the duplicity and profound hypocrisy of these open and above ground CPP-led organizations and alliance network like BAYAN, BAYAN MUNA, KMU, ACT, NUPL, IBON, LFS, GABRIELA, etc., is not an act of red tagging nor a disservice to the Filipino people," the former CPP leader said.

In fact, he said, it is the obligation of the AFP to expose tactics of the CPP to deceive and manipulate foreign NGOs to the broader public.

"Besides, red tagging is never a crime; it is just a lame excuse and desperate refuge of CPP-NPA-NDF cadres and operators who are utilizing the available democratic space and legal maneuvers for them to continue with their cowardly subversion of legitimate government authority and state instruments," he said.

The former CPP member tagged the Makabayan bloc as "pathological liars" who are deeply wounded by Parlade's head-on approach to expose them.

"They are deeply wounded by the head-on approach of Maj. Gen Antonio Parlade, the reason that these pathological liars styling themselves as communists parrots are now whining like cry babies," he said.

"They deserve such straightforward head-on counter narratives which is long overdue for the government to have been executed as a matter of its moral obligation to the people," he added.

Last month, a Philippine delegation, in a series of engagements with officials of Belgium and EU in Brussels last month, presented to them findings that their governments have been funding front organizations masquerading as NGOs and human rights defenders.

Parlade has repeatedly insisted that Karapatan has always been a supporter of the CPP and urged them to prove him wrong.

The CPP-NPA is listed as a terrorist organization by the Unites States and EU. **(PNA)**