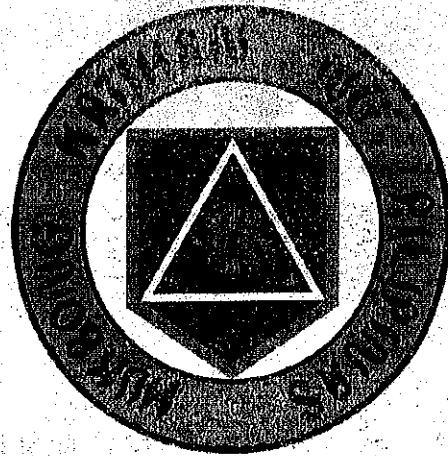


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15 February 2019

Friday

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DUTERTE MAKES PITCH FOR HIS CHOSEN 11

STORY BY JULIE M. AURELIO

The President hit the campaign trail on Thursday for his administration's senatorial candidates, including five from the ruling PDP-Laban party led by reelectionist Sen. Koko Pimentel, and six guests.

A8

VOTE 2019
#ELECTION 2019

FROM A1

By Julie M. Aurelio
@JMAurelioINQ

CITY OF SAN JOSE DEL MONTE—President Duterte on Thursday rallied support for 11 senatorial candidates he finally endorsed in May's midterm elections, after a pruning of the administration slate that saw the removal of former Sen. Jinggoy Estrada from the lineup.

Mr. Duterte confirmed that Estrada had been dropped from the administration ticket by saying his candidates were only those he endorsed during the proclamation rally here.

"Yes, because I have to be true to myself. What I said here, that's it," he said in a talk with reporters after the rally.

Estrada, who is facing trial on graft and plunder charges over the P10-billion pork barrel scam allegedly masterminded by businesswoman Janet Lim-Napoles, was dropped from the administration slate last week but it was not immediately announced.

A friend

Mr. Duterte said he felt awkward not to mention Estrada, who was at an event in Legazpi City where he spoke last week.

"He was there. How can I not [mention him]. . . Even for just one single day, you can tell all 13 candidates that they are your bets," Mr. Duterte said.

"What is that to a friend? We know that he has suffered. We know that he was in prison," he added.

The President joined the candidates at the launch of the campaign of the Partido Demokratiko Pilipino-Lakas ng Bayan (PDP-Laban) led by the party president, Sen. Koko Pimentel, who has been cleared to run for reelection by the Comelec.

With his disqualification case out of the way, Pimentel said his campaign could now focus on his credentials, achievements and advocacies as a lawmaker.

Damocles sword

The Comelec ruled that since he had not fully served his first term, he could run in the midterm polls this year.

"I am very happy that the Comelec has finally decided on the cases which have served as a Damocles sword over my candidacy," he said.

Pimentel first ran in 2007. Losing the polls, he filed an electoral protest against 12th placer Sen. Juan Miguel Zubiri.

The Senate Electoral Tribunal eventually ruled in his fa-

vor and he took his oath as senator in 2011, allowing him to serve only one and a half years of his first term. He won in the 2013 election and is now running for a second term.

The PDP-Laban's other senatorial candidates are former presidential political adviser Francis Tolentino, former Bureau of Corrections Director General Ronald dela Rosa, Maguindanao Rep. Zajid Mangudadatu and former Special Assistant to the President Bong Go.

At the Bulacan campaign rally, the ruling party's campaign manager, Sen. Manny Pacquiao, introduced their guest candidates: reelectionist Senators Cynthia Villar, Sonny Angara and JV Ejercito, Taguig Rep. Pia

Cayetano, Ilocos Norte Gov. Imee Marcos and singer Freddie Aguilar.

Qualifications

Mr. Duterte, the PDP-Laban national chair, spoke at length about each of the candidates' qualifications except Aguilar, his favorite folk singer.

He hailed Dela Rosa as a "brave, patriotic and fundamentally honest" public servant who was "ready to die for his country."

He said Go, his longtime aide, "only wants to serve. He only wants to work, he wants to know everybody."

"That's why even the communists will vote for him," Mr. Duterte said.

Pimentel, a bar topnotcher,

is "bright, honest and not difficult to work with," the President said.

'Mother to the nation'

Villar is a minimalist "mother to the nation" who "keeps everything in order," he said.

"She has been a very dedicated public servant ... She is very industrious and rich," he added.

Senate President Vicente Sotto III on Thursday promised to bat for all seven senators seeking reelection, including opposition Sen. Bam Aquino.

The other reelectionists are Senators Grace Poe, Nancy Binay, Pimentel, Angara, Ejercito and Villar.

If invited, Sotto said he would join their rallies. On Wednesday, he went to Tondo, Manila, for

Poe's campaign kickoff rally.

Joining him there were Pimentel, Angara, Binay, Ejercito, Villar and a representative for Aquino.

"You can see the trust and confidence of the people now in the Senate. The trust rating of the Senate has never been this high. This means it's not just because of the leadership, but also because of my colleagues," Sotto told reporters.

Poe sees advantage

Sotto attributed this kind of unity to good ties among his colleagues.

"I think it's because of the camaraderie and the work we do in the Senate.... We have unity," he said.

Poe said one advantage of not having the President's endorsement is that she could freely express her thoughts.

Among the senators in the majority, only Poe and Binay were the ones with no backing from the administration.

"I won't deny that if you're endorsed by the administration, it's different. It would be easier on your resources, but I can't force [an endorsement]," Poe said.

Poe, who ran against Mr. Duterte in the 2016 polls, said the focus of her campaign this time was her anticorruption agenda.

"I will continue watching the corrupt in government," she said.

Poe would also push for the passage of a freedom of information law.

Palace warns vs scammers

In Malacañang, presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo warned against scammers who were reported to be using the President's name without authority to solicit funds and campaign materials for the administration candidates.

"For everyone's information and guidance, the President has not authorized anyone in either the private or public sector, including government agencies like the Bureau of Customs, to resort to such illegal undertakings," he said. —WITH REPORTS

FROM CHRISTINE O. AVENDAÑO AND
LEILA B. SALAVERRIA INQ

34 candidates warned over illegal posters

At least 34 or more than half of the 62 senatorial candidates running in the May elections are in trouble for illegal posting of campaign materials, according to the Commission on Elections.

Comelec Commissioner Rowena Guanzon said the poll body has ordered the 34 candidates to take down their illegal posters.

"We used to inform them in writing about their illegally posted posters without revealing it to the media. If they ignore this three-day notice rule and they won't remove these posters, the Comelec will presume that it's theirs. They can't deny that," Guanzon said yesterday.

She said the Comelec has repeatedly reminded all candidates to take down the illegal

campaign period for local elections has yet to start on March 29.

The Comelec will deploy teams today to take down the illegal campaign posters and documents.

Failure of the candidates to comply with the rules will be investigated and acted upon by the Comelec legal department.

The Comelec is looking forward to clean elections as it linked up with the Presidential

Anti-Crime Commission (PACC) in efforts to stop government officials and employees from using public funds in the elections.

"Many have been prosecuted for using government funds for elections purposes, mostly local candidates. This time, hopefully they will be discouraged from doing it considering the President said it, the PACC said it and the Comelec said it," Jimenez said.

He said government officials and employees could express their preference, but cannot impose this on others.

"Any report concerning government official or employee engaging in partisan politics will be investigated and acted upon," he said.

"We will not spare anyone, President Duterte gave me an order that there will be no sacred cows," Jimenez said.

He said the PACC would hold liable any government official or employee found guilty of using government resources for certain candidates.

Turn to Page 10

posters.

Comelec spokesman James Jimenez said the poll body has notified all senatorial candidates to take down their illegal posters.

"We have sent general notice for everyone, senatorial and party-list, to take down the illegal posters," Jimenez said.

He said the candidates were given until yesterday to remove the illegal posters, adding they have yet to notify local candidates as the

The PACC has signed an agreement with the Comelec, Commission on Audit, Anti-Money Laundering Council and Security and Exchange Commission as well as other concerned government agencies to fully enforce the Omnibus Election Code.

"Take the President's word seriously. Do not use government resources for any partisan politics," Jimenez said.

PACC official Eduardo Bringas said they would work with non-government agencies and other non-partisan groups in looking out for government officials and employees who will engage in partisan politics.

Peace covenant

With the election-related violence intensifying, the Comelec has urged local government units to initiate peace covenants.

Jimenez said peace covenants could help prevent election-related killings.

"This early in the game, I believe we have outstripped the deadliness of the barangay elections, which is historically more hotly contested," Jimenez said.

Data from the Philippine National Police showed the number of election "hotspots" rose to 701, which is nearly half or 42 percent of the country's 1,634 cities and municipalities.

Jimenez said the rise in election-related violence could be due to the implementation of electoral reforms that prevents candidates from tampering with the results of the elections.

'No dancers, green jokes'

Party-list group Partido Lakas ng Masa (PLM) yesterday urged the Comelec to ban female dancers and "green jokes" in the political campaign.

"We urge all women, specially Comelec Commissioner Rowena Gumanzon, to put an end to the continued degradation of women. We appeal to female journalists covering the sorties to write articles about candidates who gyrate with female dancers on stage during campaign sorties. Help us inform those who view women as second class citizens," PLM nominee Flora Santos-Assidao said.

She urged female candidates to stand up to their colleagues and to call them out even in public if the situation demands it.

Assidao urged candidates to refrain from using misogynistic or sexually charged remarks.

Meanwhile, police officers will help the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) remove campaign posters from areas prohibited by the Comelec.

National Capital Region Police Office chief Director Guillermo Eleazar ordered the five police district directors and 38 station commanders to help the MMDA in removing these illegal campaign posters.

Eleazar also ordered his men to prevent supporters of politicians from posting campaign materials in trees, flyovers, lampposts and other prohibited areas.

Monitor measles outbreak, NDRRMC offices ordered

By JAIME LAUDE

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), through the Office of Civil Defense (OCD), has ordered all its regional disaster offices to convene their respective response clusters to help monitor possible measles outbreaks in their respective areas.

NDRRMC executive director and OCD administrator Ricardo Jalad issued the directive on Wednesday following an NDRRMC response cluster meeting presided over by Health Secretary Francisco Duque III.

The meeting last Monday was specifically called to coordinate the government's plan of action in light of the measles outbreak declaration in the National Capital Region (NCR), Central Luzon, Southern Tagalog (Calabarzon and Mimaropa) and Eastern Visayas.

Representatives from NDRRMC-attached agencies, including the Departments of Social Welfare and Development, Education, Interior and Local Government, and Foreign Affairs; Commission on Higher Education; Philippine Coast Guard; Armed Forces of the Philippines; Philippine National Police; Bureau of Fire Protection and Philippine Information Agency attended the meeting.

"The NDRRMC through the OCD as its executive arm, issued a memorandum to OCD regional offices to convene their respective RDRRMC response clusters to monitor efforts and activities of the relevant national agencies pertaining to delivery of services and to ensure preventive measures and implement necessary response actions when needed," Jalad said.

He also appealed to parents to have their unvaccinated kids get a measles vaccine shot. He likewise urged unvaccinated adults to have themselves vaccinated.

Citing records of the Department of Health (DOH), Jalad said that as of Jan. 26, some 1,813 measles cases have been reported, with 28 verified casualties.

"Further reports are being verified and updated. The public is advised to be on alert, avail of immunization shots for unvaccinated children and adults and to seek medical at-

tention once symptoms show," Jalad said.

Vaccination centers in malls, fastfoods

Meanwhile, the DOH has opted to set up vaccination centers at selected fastfood chains and malls in a bid to immunize many children against measles.

The DOH is also planning to establish vaccination centers outside churches in the region, according to DOH-Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, Quezon) regional director Eduardo Janairo.

"We requested our religious leaders to read a letter to the parents to have their children vaccinated in their masses and worships and other convergence activities," Janairo disclosed.

He said they have established vaccination centers at selected fastfood chains and malls in the region in support of the government's massive immunization drive.

Yesterday, the DOH also sought the help of barangay captains in Metro Manila in encouraging parents to have their children vaccinated against measles and other infectious diseases.

Duque met with barangay officials to seek their help for the government's immunization drive.

The establishment of alternative immunization sites, according to Duque, is parallel to their house-to-house program and the extension of vaccination activities after 5 p.m. and during weekends.

The public, he added, has no more reason to shy away from getting measles shots since the DOH is already providing free and accessible immunization.

"Vaccination is the only prevention and there is no cure for the disease since it is self-limiting. We advise all parents and guardians to have their children vaccinated. It is free," Janairo stressed.

He pointed out that measles vaccines are different from the controversial Dengvaxia.

"Parents need not worry because it is very safe, effective and is the best defense against measles," Janairo said.

As of Feb. 11, a total of 1,434 cases have been recorded in Calabarzon.

- With Mayen Jaymalin

PMA alumni bar 'pol-mistahs' from homecoming

By ARTEMIO DURLAO

BAGUIO CITY - Adopted members of the Philippine Military Academy (PMA) will not be parading with their "mistahs" (classmates) at the Borromeo Field during the annual alumni homecoming tomorrow.

The PMA Alumni Association Inc. (PMAAAI) has discouraged honorary members, some of whom are candidates in the May 2019 elections, from marching during the pass and review of the different PMA classes.

Jaime delos Santos, PMAAAI chairman and former Army commanding general, said PMA graduates and honorary members are welcome to attend the alumni festivities but are not allowed to use the event for political purposes. Special seats have been reserved for adopted politicians at the PMA grandstand.

This is the first time the group imposed such restriction in an election year, as the adopted politicians have always been allowed to march with their classmates in the past.

Among the politician honorary members of PMA classes running in the midterm elec-

tions are former senator and foreign secretary Alan Peter Cayetano and former special presidential assistant Christopher Go, both of Tanglaw Diwa Class of 1992; Sen. Grace Poe, Sambigkis Class of 1991; Sen. Francis Escudero, Hini-rang Class of 1987; and former interior secretary Manuel Roxas II, Maharlika Class of 1984.

Presidential daughter Sara Duterte, who is seeking re-election as Davao City mayor, is also an honorary member of PMA Class 1984.

President Duterte, who is said to be skipping this year's alumni homecoming, is an adopted member of PMA Class 1967.

Former Philippine National Police chief Ronald dela Rosa of Sinagtala Class of 1986 and Magdalo party-list Rep. Gary Alejano of Marilag Class of 1995 are among the PMA alumni running in the mid-term polls.

Around 2,000 PMA alumni and their families are expected to participate in this year's homecoming, which has former AFP chief and now Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu as guest of honor and speaker.

Teachers back out of poll duty; peace covenants urged to stop election-related violence

By LESLIE ANN AQUINO
and LESLEY CAMINADE VESTIL

The Commission on Elections (Comelec) on Thursday urged the forging of peace covenants among candidates in the May midterm elections to prevent the escalation of election-related violence.

The poll-related violence has prompted some 30 public school teachers to back out from serving in the incoming elections in San Fernando town, Southern Cebu. The teachers cited the killings of local officials in San Fernando last month.

"We encourage our local officials to institute peace covenants among the different candidates," Comelec spokesman James Jimenez said in a forum in Manila.

"It might not be legally binding. But, at the very least, we could have moral suasion over the candidates and encourage them to keep the elections safe for everyone," he added.

Jimenez expressed concern over the election violence taking place in various parts of the country.

"This early in the game, I believe, we have already out- ▶6

Teachers back out...

◀1

stripped the deadline of the barangay elections, which is, historically, more hotly contested," he said.

"It reflects the sense of how bad it is getting," he added.

Earlier, the Philippine National Police (PNP) raised the number of election "hotspots" to 701.

According to Jimenez, one possible reason for the rise in election "hotspots" is the desperation of some politicians to win in the polls especially under an automated system.

"They are running out of place to influence the outcome. They will be starting to think that maybe it is easier to eliminate the competition. That is one possible reason," he said.

No poll duty

Renante Angcos, San Fernando election officer, said the public school teachers recently visited his office to express their refusal to no longer serve during 2019 midterm elections this May.

Public school teachers began to start express their refusal after the ambush on San Fernando Mayor Lakambini Reluya and six of her companions in Talisay City on January 22.

The mayor survived the ambush but her husband, San Fernando Association of Barangay Councils (ABC) president Ricardo Reluya Jr. and two

of her staff members were killed.

Angcos said they were able to complete the list of teachers that will compose the Board of Election Inspectors (BEIs) for the incoming elections last December or just two months before some of the teachers started backing out.

He admitted that he never thought some teachers would back out after local police assured that they will be heavily secured during the elections following the declaration of the Regional Joint Security Control Center (RJSCC) to declare the town under a Red alert level due to the killings against aspiring elective officials there.

Angcos said they need at least 177 school teachers to assist in the local elections in San Fernando.

Cebu Provincial Police Office (CPPO) director Manuel Abrugena assured they will be deploying additional police and military personnel to San Fernando to ensure that the elections there will be peaceful and orderly.

Following the ambush attempt in her life, Reluya accused her political rivals of allegedly masterminding the incident which resulted in her husband's death.

Her lone rival, businessman Ruben Feliciano, has vehemently denied that he masterminded the assassination attempt on the mayor.

24 loose firearms isinurender sa Ampatuan

Isinurender ng mga residente ang 26 matataas at malikling mga kalibre ng armas sa tropa ng militar sa bayan ng Ampatuan, Maguindanao kahapon ng umaga kaugnay ng pinaigting na kampanya kontra loose firearms upang matiyak ang mapayapang midterm elections sa Mayo ng taong ito.

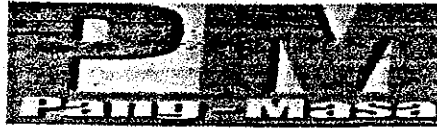
Ayon kay Major Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, Commander ng Joint Task Force (JTF) Central at Army's 6th Infantry Division (ID) ang 26 matataas at malikling kalibre ng armas ay mula sa mga lokal na residente ng 11 barangay sa nasabing bayan.

Nabatid na ang pagta-turnover ng mga ar-

mas ay pinangunahan ni Ampatuan Mayor Rasul sa ginanap na seremonya sa Ampatuan Municipal Hall.

Kabilang sa mga isinurender ay 12 gauge shotgun, apat na cal 38 revolver, isang M203 grenade launcher, dalawang cal 45 pistol, isang 12 gauge pistol, dalawang M79 grenade launcher, isang M1 garand rifle at isang 60 MM mortar.

Samantalang hini-kayat ni Sobejana ang lahat ng mga residente sa mga munisipalidad sa kaniyang nasasakupan na isurender ang mga baril na walang lisensya sa Central Mindanao. (Joy Santos) 9



Mga baril isinuko ng mga residente ng Ampatuan

Nasas 26 mahaba at maiikling baril ang isinuko kahapon ng mga residente sa bayan ng Ampatuan, Maguindanao kaugnay ng pinaigting na kampanya kontra loose firearms upang matiyak ang mapayapang midterm elections sa Mayo ng taong ito.

Ayon kay Major Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, Commander ng Joint Task Force (JTF) Central at Army's 6th Infantry Division (ID) ang 26 matataas at maiikling kalibre ng armas mula sa mga lokal na residente ng 11 barangays sa nasabing bayan.

Kabilang sa mga isinurender ay 12 gauge shotgun, apat na cal 38 revolver, isang M203 grenade launcher, dalawang cal 45 pistol, isang 12 gauge pistol, dalawang M79 grenade launcher, isang M1 garand rifle at isang 60 MM mortar. - *Joy Cantos-1*

46 W. Visayas towns, cities in PNP's poll watchlist

By GILBERT BAYORAN

BACOLOD CITY – At least 46 towns and cities in Western Visayas should be included in the poll watchlist, according to the regional police office.

Superintendent Joem Malong, Central Visayas police spokesperson, said election-related violence, intense political rivalries and threats posed by New People's Army rebels were

monitored in the areas.

Malong said a town in Iloilo is considered an election area of grave concern, 39, with immediate concerns, and six, election areas of concern.

She said 28 areas in Negros

Occidental are classified as areas with immediate concerns.

Malong did not identify the areas pending validation of the Regional Joint Security Coordinating Center, which is composed of representatives of the Commission on Elections, Philippine National Police and Armed Forces of the Philippines.

She said the areas recommended as poll hotspots

could still change when the campaign period starts.

Senior Superintendent Romeo Baleros of the Negros Occidental police said Salvador Benedicto, Isabela, Calatrava, EB Magalona and Moises Padilla town, which were earlier identified as possible election areas of concerns, are still being validated by the Provincial Joint Security Coordinating Center.

Duterte to place Ecija under land reform

BY CATHERINE S. VALENTE

LAUR, Nueva Ecija: In a bid to counter the communist insurgency in the province, President Rodrigo Duterte has vowed to place Nueva Ecija in Central Luzon under the government's agrarian land reform program.

In his speech during the inauguration of a drug treatment facility in Laur, Nueva Ecija, Duterte said he would deploy concerned officials next week to implement the land reform in the province.

The President added that he had met with some community members who were concerned about the problem of land and water in the province.

"Kaya mga NPA [rebels], nakikinig diyan ngayon. Hoy mga NPA, alam kong problema ninyo. Na kung hindi ako nag-

pupunta dito, hindi ko alam. Kaya may papupuntahin ako Lunes dito, huwag ninyong, hayaan ninyo (To members of the NPA if you're listening, hey NPA, I know your problem. If I did not come here, I wouldn't know. That's why I will ask somebody to come here on Monday, please allow them)... I will declare land reform in this area next week," Duterte said.

He was referring to New People's Army, the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines,

which regards genuine land reform program as a cornerstone in any peace deal with the government.

"At this time of our national life, I would even say that I've been telling the military and the police that unless we solve this age-old problem of getting the lands to the people, we can never end the insurgency problem in this country," the President said.

Duterte explained that he wanted to distribute lands, initially idle government lands, to agrarian reform beneficiaries so they can cultivate the land and improve their plight.

He said so far he had distributed 60,000 land titles to land reform beneficiaries.

"So, 10 years from now, mga anak ninyo makatikim ng pera (your children would have money). At least sa buhay nila (in their lifetime), 'yung generation

niya makatikim ng milyon [their generation would have millions]," Duterte added.

"I do not work for the... I work for the people. I do not work for... I serve no master. I am a worker of government. The military and the police are workers of the government and we work for the people," he said.

In the same speech, the President disclosed plans to visit Sagay, Negros Occidental, soon for another agrarian reform event.

He said the government had been wrongly blamed for the death of some farmers in Sagay.

"Ito ubusin ko talaga ito and then Sagay, doon 'yung pinagpatayan ng mga... itong mga komunistang nag-aaway-away doon at kami naman ang pinagbibintangan (I will finish this land distribution program and then in Sagay, the farmer were being killed, it was

the communists who are fighting there and they're blaming us)," the President noted.

Duterte made the remark nearly four months after the massacre of nine farmers in Sagay, Negros Occidental, last October 20, who allegedly tried to occupy parts of Hacienda Nene in Barangay Bulanon.

The President tagged the communist rebels in the killing of the sugar farmers, saying it was the "style" of the NPA to kill their own members and put the blame on the government.

The communist rebels see free distribution of agricultural land

as a basic principle of genuine agrarian reform.

This was among issues tackled by the government and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines peace panels before peace talks collapsed in November 2017.

Duterte earlier promised that he would place available land in the country under land reform within the remaining three years of his term. *AJ*

He had also implemented land reform in Boracay and other areas in Aklan during the six-month closure of the world-famous tourist destination.

Gov't agents score hits vs. NPA

By Francisco Tuyay

A NEW People's Army fighter tagged as one of the people who torched private construction equipment in Quezon province was killed in an encounter in Laguna while an alleged NPA extortionist was arrested by police and military personnel in Butuan City on Thursday.

Maj. Gen. Rhoderick Parayno, commander of the Army's 2nd Infantry Division, said the still unidentified rebel was killed in an encounter with troops of the 1st Infantry Battalion in Sitio Pinamin-tian, San Buenaventura village in Luisi-ana, Laguna, on Thursday morning.

Meanwhile, an official said the efforts of the New People's Army to recruit minors is a gross violation of the UNICEF

Convention on the Rights of Children.

"It is a gross violation of the provisions of UNICEF's Convention on the Rights of Children, which specifically states that children below the age of 18 must be accorded their basic rights to include the right from exploitation," Armed Forces of the Philippines public affairs office chief Noel Detoyato said in a text message to the Philippine News

Agency when sought for a comment.

Parayno said the slain terrorist was among the 15 rebels who last week burned three backhoes and one bulldozer being used in the road widening construction at the Kaliwa Dam project by the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System owned by Northern Builder Corp. in Magsaysay village in Infanta, Quezon.

Brig. Gen. Arnulfo Marcelo Burgos, head of the 202nd Brigade, said the communists fled toward the boundary of Quezon and Laguna to escape the pursuing troops from the 80th Infantry Battalion and the dragnet put up by the 1st IB to intercept them.

However, the rebels were eventually intercepted by troops in Kalangay village

in Lucban, Quezon, sparking a 15-minute firefight that left one rebel dead while the rest scampered in different directions, dragging their wounded comrades.

The NPA burning was condemned the officials of Infanta and General Narak towns in Quezon.

Mayor Filipina Grace America of Infanta was quoted as saying the terror act perpetrated by the NPA was not the proper way to address the issues surrounding the project.

Mayor Eliseo Ruzon of General Narak viewed the act by the NPA as a hindrance to the development in his town and in Infanta, noting that the incident would lead to their constituents losing their jobs needed to support their families. With PNA *fr*



1 NPA rebel todas sa engkuwentro

Isang miyembro ng rebeldeng New People's Army (NPA) ang napatay nang lusubin ng tropa ng militar ang pinagkukutaan ng mga ito kahapon sa Brgy. San Buenaventura, Luisina, Laguna.

Sa ulat ni Captain Jay Patrick Retumban, Spokesman ng Army's 2nd Infantry Division (ID), dakong alas-9:00 ng umaga nang lusubin ng tropa ng Army's 1st Infantry Battalion (IB) ang pinagkukutaan ng NPA rebels sa Sitio Pinamintian ng nasabing barangay na kung saan ay inookupahan ng 20 rebelde.

Agad nagkaroon ng mainitang palitan ng putok sa pagitan ng magkabilang panig na ikinasawi ng isang rebelde at maraming nasugatan.

Ang operasyon ng militar ay isinagawa ang laban sa grupo ng mga rebeldeng NPA na responsable sa panununog ng mga heavy equipment sa isinagawa ng mga itong pagsalakay sa isang construction site sa Quezon noong nakaraang linggo.

Agad namang nagsitakas ang mga rebeldeng komunista na inabandona ang napatay nilang kasamahan. Wala namang naiulat na nasawi sa panig ng tropa ng pamahalaan.

Natagpuan din sa lugar ang isang tents, 8 cellular phone, isang Baofeng radio, isang watawat ng NPA terrorists, mga gamot, tatlong bag, mga materyales sa pagsasanay at mga subersibong dokumento. - Joy Cantos-2

US Navy officer cites AFP's counterterror efforts

By JAIME LAUDE

A senior US Navy official lauded the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) for maintaining pressure on Islamic State (IS) militant groups after the siege of Marawi City in 2017.

Admiral Philip Davidson, chief the US Navy's Indo-Pacific Command, said Filipino forces sustained anti-terror operations in Mindanao that have already resulted in a number of arrests since last year.

"Counterterrorism operations on the Philippine island of Jolo against IS-supporting elements of the Abu Sayyaf group succeeded in disrupting kidnap-for-ransom operations," Davidson said in a statement Tuesday before the US Senate Armed Services Committee on US Indo-Pacific Command.

Davidson said the IS claimed credit for multiple small-scale attacks in the Philippines, including a car bomb attack at an

Army checkpoint in Basilan last year.

Davidson noted the growing influence of the IS in the region.

"Over 1,000 foreign terrorists fighters have traveled to Iraq and Syria from Indo-Pacific region, and at least 170 have returned," Davidson said.

The United Nations Office of Counterterrorism (UNOCT) warned the IS remains a global threat, despite evolving into a "covert" terrorism network, with countries continuing to face challenges from the growing scourge of violent terrorism. — With Pia Lee-Brage

Soldier killed, 3 hurt in Sulu clash with Abus

By ROEL PAREÑO

ZAMBOANGA CITY – A soldier was killed while three other government troopers were wounded in an encounter with Abu Sayyaf bandits in Patikul, Sulu yesterday.

The military said soldiers of the 6th Special Forces Battalion clashed with the bandits in Barangay Igasan at around 11:30 a.m. The firefight lasted for around 20 minutes.

The identities of the victims were withheld pending notification of their family members.

Col. Gerry Besana, Western Mindanao Command spokesman, said the wounded were brought to a military hospital at Camp Teodulfo Bautista.

Besana said the bandits also suffered an undetermined number of casualties.

"Our forces have yet to determine if the group they encountered was with Hatib

Hajan Sawadjaan... There is no information yet as to the Abu Sayyaf group our forces encountered," Besana said.

He said air strikes targeting the direction where the bandits

escaped were launched.

Meanwhile, in Laguna, a New People's Army rebel suspected of burning construction equipment in Quezon last week was killed in a firefight

with soldiers in Sitio Pinamin-tian, Barangay Buenaventura, Luisiana yesterday.

Two improvised bombs, bomb materials, magazines for M16 and eight cell phones

were among those recovered at the scene. *ad*

Pursuit operation for the rebel are ongoing.

– With Michelle Zoleta, Ed Amoroso, Jaime Laude

No mercy for drug traffickers, terrorists

By GENALYN D. KABILING

LAUR, Nueva Ecija – There will be no mercy shown to drug traffickers and terrorists threatening to destroy the country, President Duterte vowed last Wednesday after warning about the rise of criminals across the world.

The President said he was prepared to “return the courtesy” to the enemies of the state and become evil against

them “100 times over.”

“There seems to be a blossoming of criminals globally and we are fighting a global war against drug. Hindi kita papatawarin [I will not forgive you],” he said during the inauguration of the Moscati Meadows residential treatment facility in Nueva Ecija Wednesday.

“Just like terrorism, I’ll return the courtesy. So it’s just a matter of letting them understand that even if you are on the other side, you do not monopolize

evil in your mind. We have ours and I can do better than what you can, 100 times over,” he said.

Duterte, who has launched a relentless crackdown on the narcotics trade, claimed that illegal drugs were being produced “everywhere” and were being imported into the country through land, air, and sea. He noted that the Sinaloa drug cartel of Mexico and the Bamboo Triad of Asia have joined forces in drug trafficking in the

country.

Faced with such threat from drug cartels, the President said he has directed government forces to try to put an end to the drug menace during his term.

“Pumapasok sila lahat. Ngayon, gusto nilang subukan, sige (They are coming in and trying to test us), we are prepared. My soldiers and my police, we are ready to meet the challenge. At sinabi ko sa kanila, tapusin na natin ‘to habang ako pa (I told them, we have to finish this while I’m still in power),” he said.

In pursuing the anti-drug campaign, Duterte has also ignored criticisms from human rights groups, saying they were only concerned about the rights of the drug offenders and not their

victims.

He bewailed that three million Filipinos have become slaves to shabu, saying “when their brain shrinks, they are reduced to inutility.”

“Three million addicts is no joke to me. I can cut you to pieces a thousand times. I hate drugs because you do not f*ck with my countrymen,” he said.

Duterte also affirmed that he works for the people and serves “no master.”

“I am a worker of government. The military and the police are workers of the government and we work for the people,” he said.

“I give you my solemn promise. Hindi talaga ako papayag na maski sinong – maski pumasok silang lahat. P***** inyo, papatayin ko talaga kayo,” he added. 6

Ninoy offered to drop Sabah

By Perseus Echeminada

The late former Sen. Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino Jr., father of former President Benigno Aquino III, had offered to drop the Philippine claim to Sabah to get Malaysian support in ousting former President Ferdinand Marcos and to put him in Marcos' place, an official of the Sultanate of Sulu said yesterday.

The younger Aquino was also accused by the Sultanate of conniving with Malaysia and abandoning the Sabah

claim that led to the Lahad Datu siege after Aquino excluded the Sulu leaders from the Bangsamoro peace agreement.

Abraham Idjirani, Sultanate of Sulu secretary general and spokesman, told the *Daily Tribune* that a former foreign affairs official revealed during a forum he attended at the University of the Philippines in March 2013 that Ninoy offered to work for the dropping of the Philippine claim over Sabah in exchange for Malaysian support of the move to oust Marcos.

Turn to page 2

Ninoy offered to work for the dropping of the Philippine claim over Sabah in exchange for Malaysian support of the move to oust Marcos

From page 1

He said Hermes Dorado, former national territory division head of the Department of Foreign Affairs, said during the forum that Aquino met with then Malaysian Prime Minister Mohammad Mahathir, who is also now the incumbent leader after a successful political comeback.

Secret alliance

The discussion with Malaysia allegedly happened shortly before Ninoy went back to the Philippines and was assassinated on 21 August 1983, he said.

"There was a commitment to help oust Marcos and if Aquino assumes power, the claim on Sabah will be dropped," Idjirani said.

Aquino met with then Malaysian Prime Minister Mohammad Mahathir shortly before Ninoy went back to the Philippines and was assassinated.

He said, however, the alliance between Aquino and Malaysia in the effort to oust Marcos began in 1968 when Ninoy exposed the Jabidah massacre to get the attention of the Malaysian government. The senator then revealed a secret plan of Marcos to send guerrillas to Sabah.

They succeeded in forcing the Constitutional Commission to drop the Philippine Sabah claim, hands down.

Ninoy was already eyeing the presidency at that time. His exposé on the massacre prompted Malaysia to initiate counter actions against Marcos by agitating young Muslim activists in Manila to rebel against the government.

Ubiquitous Malaysia

Among the activists at that time was Nur Misuari who, with the help of Malaysia, founded the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) which seeks to create an independent state to secede from the Philippines.

The support of Malaysia was very evident when it provided camp and sanctuary to the MNLF guerrillas who were fighting against Marcos at that time, Idjirani said.

He added the MNLF-Malaysian alliance soured when Misuari allegedly refused to sign a commitment not to include Sabah in the declaration of an independent Bangsamoro state.

The alliance between Aquino and Malaysia in the effort to oust Marcos began in 1968 when Ninoy exposed the Jabidah massacre.

Former President Corazon "Cory" Aquino made as her priority ensuring that the 1987 Constitution revised the definition of Philippine territory and deleted Sabah as part of the country based on historic claim.

Cory with her political allies allegedly tried to pass a joint resolution dropping the claim to Sabah, but it failed to secure support from members of

Congress, he said.

"Malaysian hardball diplomacy and guerrilla war maneuverings, backed by shrewd use of economic leverage, sourced from huge revenues from oil extracted in Sabah, were completed by 1987," Idjirani quoted Dorado as saying.

"They succeeded in forcing the Constitutional Commission to drop the Philippine Sabah claim, hands down," Dorado added.

Idjirani said the amended Baselines Law approved in March 2009 resulted in the exclusion of Sabah from the Philippine territory.

He added the amended law removed Section 2 of the 1968 law that included the phrase, "... the territory of Sabah, situated in North Borneo, over which the Republic of the Philippines has acquired dominion and sovereignty."

"Removal of the specific reference to Sabah represented a disastrous outcome to the claims of the sultanate of Sulu," Dorado said.

The Sultanate had lately lost the annual compensation from Malaysia of P75,000 a year after the Lahad Datu siege in 2013 which was launched to enforce the claim on Sabah after Aquino offered to abandon the claim in favor of Malaysia's support to the Bangsamoro Basic Law.

Soldier dead, 3 others hurt in clash with Abu Sayyaf

BY VICTOR REYES

A SOLDIER was killed in Sulu while three others were injured in a firefight with Abu Sayyaf members linked to the January 27 twin bombings at a church in Jolo, Sulu.

The encountered Abu Sayyaf group is under Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan, said Col. Gerry Besana, spokesman of the military's Western Mindanao Command.

Sawadjaan is tagged mastermind of the suicide attack at the Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Cathedral, which killed 23 persons and injured over a hundred others.

Officials have said the improvised bombs used in the attack were detonated by an Indonesian couple associated with the group of Sawadjaan, who has reportedly taken over as leader of Islamic of State of Iraq and Syria in the Philippines.

Besana said troops from the elite 6th Special Forces Battalion of the Army clashed with about 30 Abu Sayyaf members at around 11:30

a.m. in Barangay Igasan in Patikul town, for around 20 minutes.

Yesterday's encounter was the second major clash between the military and Sawadjaan's group since the Jolo bombings.

The first was on February 2, involving elite Scout Ranger soldiers, also in Patikul town. The firefight resulted in the death of five soldiers and three Abu Sayyaf men, and wounding of 18 soldiers and 13 Abu Sayyaf members.

Besana said initial information indicated there were casualties on the side of the Abu Sayyaf during yesterday's encounter.

"The number (of casualties) is still undetermined. Our troops are still scouring the area," he said.

Wesmincom chief Lt. Gen. Arnel dela Vega said pursuit operations were ongoing as of yesterday afternoon.

"Ground units are also prepositioned to deliver fire support and block withdrawal routes of the militants," he said.

Sundalo patay sa bakbakan sa Sulu

Isang magiting na sundalo ang nagbuwis ng buhay habang tatlo pa sa tropang gobyerno ang nasugatan makaraang makasagupa ang mga bandidong Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) sa lalawigan ng Sulu nitong Huwebes.

Ayon kay Col. Gerry Besana, tagapagsalita ng AFP Western Mindanao Command, dakong alas-11:30 ng umaga nang makasagupa ng 6th Special Forces Battalion (SFB0)

ng Philippine Army ang mga bandido sa kagubatan ng Brgy. Igasan, Patikul, Sulu.

Sinabi ng opisyal na nasa 30 bandido ang nakasagupa ng mga sundalo sa nasabing lugar. Ang palitan ng putok ay tumagal ng 20 minuto bago mablis na nagsitakas ang grupo ng mga lokal na terorista bitbit ang mga sugatan sa kanilang hanay.

Sa nasabing insidente ay nasawi ang isang sundalo ha-

bang tatlo naman sa kanilang mga kasamahan ang nasugatan na mablis na isinugod sa pagamutan.

"As we speak, military troops are in pursuit of the evading militants. Ground units are also prepositioned to deliver fire support and block withdrawal routes of the militants," pahayag naman ni Lt. Gen. Arnel Dela Vega, Commander ng AFP Western Mindanao Command. (Joy Cantos) 01

Rody may launch Bangsamoro transition body next week

By JOHN UNSON

COTABATO CITY – President Duterte is likely to launch the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) on Feb. 21, officials hinted yesterday.

The BTA will oversee the transition from the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao to the incoming Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, or BARMM.

Senior government officials said preparations are underway for next week's symbolic launching of the BTA in Malacaniang.

The BTA will oversee the operation of BARMM, a product of more than 20 years of peace talks between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, pending the election of its pioneering set

of officials.

The BTA shall be comprised of representatives from the MILF and the government, among them officials of the now outgoing ARMM.

The figurehead of the MILF, Hadji Murad Ebrahim, will lead the BTA, to include other officials of their central committee.

Residents of Lamitan City are urging Murad, Presidential Peace Adviser Carlito Galvez Jr. and Duterte to consider designating one of them as BTA member.

Christian residents in Lamitan City, the capital of Basilan province, voted for BOL's ratification during the Jan. 21 plebiscite in all of ARMM's five provinces.

The ARMM also covers Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi.

Local officials said commu-

nity leaders in Lamitan City want their Sangguniang Panlungsod to pass a resolution urging Malacaniang, the MILF and the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process to consider their desire to have a representative in the BTA.

Lamitan City Vice Mayor Roderick Furigay confirmed on Thursday the clamor of the 45 barangay chairmen.

Christian barangay officials in Lamitan City told reporters that senior MILF officials have assured them of representation in the BTA during their plebiscite campaign sorties in the city.

Furigay said Muslim and Christian barangay captains in Lamitan City were together in campaigning for an affirmative vote for the BOL, resulting in the overwhelming approval of the measure.

– With Mayen Jaymalin

BANGSAMORO REGION

63 COTABATO BARANGAYS NOW PART OF BARMM

By Tina G. Santos
@santostinaINQ

The Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) will include 63 barangays in Cotabato, following a double majority yes votes in these areas and their respective towns during the Feb. 6 plebiscite.

The Commission on Elections, sitting as the National Plebiscite Board of Canvassers, announced on Thursday the results of the referendum in seven towns in Cotabato and Lanao del Norte.

The 63 Cotabato barangays are located in the towns of Aleosan (Dunguan, Tapodoc); Carmen (Kibayao, Kitulaan, Langogan, Manarapan, Nasapian, Pebpoloan, Tupig); Kabacan (Butuan, Nanga-an, Peditad, Sanggadong, Simbuhay, Simone, Tamped).

Midsayap (Damatulan, Kadigasan, Kadingilan, Kapinipilan, Kudarangan, Central Labas, Malingao, Mudseng, Nabalawag, Olandang, Sambulawan, Tugal, Tumbras).

Pigkawayan (Lower Ba-

guer, Balacayon, Buricain, Datu Binasing, Datu Mantil, Kadingilan, Libungan Torreta, Matilac, Lower Pangangkalan, Upper Pangangkalan, Patot, Simsiman) and Pikit (Bagoinged, S. Balong, S. Balongis, Barungis, Batulawan, Bualan, Bullok, Bulol, Fort Pikit, Gligil, Gokotan, Kabasalan, Lagunde, Macabual, Macasendeg, Manaulanan, Nabundas, Nalapaan, Nunguan, Pamalian, Panicupan and Rajamuda).

Lanao del Norte votes no

"[These barangays] shall form part of the BARMM, considering that they voted favorably for their inclusion in the BARMM and that the majority of the votes cast in the municipalities to which these barangays belong is in favor of their inclusion in the BARMM," the canvassing board said.

The towns of Balo-i, Munai, Nunungan, Pantar, Tagoloan and Tangkal in Lanao del Norte also all agreed to be included in the BARMM.

But all the other towns in the province voted against the inclusion of the six towns. **#3**

"While the majority of votes cast in the [six] municipalities are in favor of the inclusion, the majority of votes cast in Lanao del Norte is not in favor of ... inclusion [in] the BARMM," the board said.

The Bangsamoro Organic Law was ratified by the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao in the Jan. 21 plebiscite. In the same referendum, Cotabato City decided to join the BARMM. INQ

63 NCotabato villages to join Bangsamoro

BY WILLIAM B. DEPASUPIL

THE Commission on Elections (Comelec) *en banc*, sitting as the National Plebiscite Board of Canvassers (NPBC), on Thursday officially proclaimed the exclusion of six municipalities of Lanao del Norte and the inclusion of 63 *barangay* (villages) in seven towns of North Cotabato in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

Excluded were the municipalities of Baloi, Monai, Nunungan, Pantar, Tagilowan and Pangkal, all in Lanao del Norte.

Commissioner Al Parreño, chairman of the BARMM Plebiscite Committee, said that while all six towns voted favorably for their inclusion, "the majority of the votes cast in the province of Lanao del Norte, however, is not in favor of their inclusion in the BARMM."

The NPBC also proclaimed the

inclusion in the BARMM of 63 out of 67 *barangay* in seven municipalities of North Cotabato.

The four *barangay* that were excluded from the BARMM were Lower Mingandin and Pangangan, both in Aleosan; Galidan in Tolonan; and Baltican in Pikit.

Parreño said the villages in the towns of Aleosan and Tolonan were excluded even if these villages voted favorably for inclusion, because the majority of voters in the towns to which they belong

did not favor inclusion.

As for Baltican in Pikit, village residents rejected inclusion in the BARMM, while the votes cast for the whole of Pikit favored inclusion.

Parreño explained that for a *barangay* to be included in the BARMM, there should be a double majority of favorable votes from the *barangay* and the municipality it belongs.

With the official proclamation, the 63 *barangay* in the seven towns of North Cotabato will now form part of the BARMM, together with Cotabato City and the provinces comprising the existing Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), namely: Basilan, Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi.

The just concluded second plebiscite, held February 6, was solely to determine the inclusion of the municipalities of Baloi, Monai, Nunungan, Pantar, Taguilowan and Pangka in Lanao del Norte and the 67 *barangay* in the towns of Aleosan, Carmen, Kabacan, Midsayap, Pikit, Pigkawayan and

Tolanan, all from North Cotabato.

These areas submitted to the Comelec petitions for inclusion in the BARMM, thus the plebiscite.

The first plebiscite held on January 21 was for the ratification of Republic Act (RA) 11054 or the "Organic Law for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao" by voters of the five provinces comprising the ARMM voting as one, the inclusion of Cotabato City and Isabela City, and for Basilan province if it wanted Isabela City to be part of the BARMM.

The first plebiscite ratified RA 11054 after garnering majority of the votes cast in the ARMM. The NPBC also proclaimed Cotabato City to be part of the BARMM, while Isabela City was proclaimed not part of the BARMM.

With the ratification of the BARMM, the ARMM is technically abolished. *h2*

The BARMM's territorial jurisdiction covers the whole ARMM, including Cotabato City and the 63 *barangay* in North Cotabato.

ROTC—when we're being thrown 'taho'?

The logic behind the reinstitution of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) is too simple, too Dutertean, that it's not difficult to see why it's popular and widely accepted. Aligned with this administration's rhetoric of "*kung wala kang masamang ginagawa, wala kang dapat ikatakot*," ROTC railroads the active instruction for students to be subservient to the state. And, instead of fearing authority, cadets would be trained to be implementers of the law and hold a gun. Or, in our case, the ancient M1 Garand rifle.

The ROTC's primary aim is to prepare reserves—college students—for instances when the national defense needs more men and women in the armed forces. Minus the euphemisms, this means that the ROTC is government's way to train foot soldiers in order to make up for what our military lacks, should we face the eventuality of war. Our government placed heavy funding and emphasis on the ROTC program in previous decades as part of a national defense program; these days, congressmen and the old guard harp on the ROTC chiefly as a means to "instill discipline."

So, considering that President Duterte concedes to pretty much everything that China wants to do, is bringing back the ROTC even necessary?

An inconvenienced Chinese national, Jiale Zhang, 23, threw her "taho" at PO1 William Cristobal, 39, on Saturday, causing a tidal wave of hate on social media. In the viral photo, Cristobal could be seen standing firmly, practicing maximum tolerance, while Zhang stood in front of him with both her hands on her hips.

COMMENTARY

DLS PINEDA

National Capital Region Police Office Director Guillermo Eleazar was immediately ordered by Philippine National Police Director General Oscar Albayalde to take the necessary steps to have Zhang booked and possibly deported. Cristobal received a medal on Monday morning, and the PNP enjoyed more press time than the senatorial debates. The police, often framed as the villains in this time of "Tokhang," finally achieved some hint of heroism.

Online, many saw the incident as an opportunity to comment on the increasing presence of Chinese migrants in the Philippines. Others labeled the incident as a metaphor of our skewed relations with China. The comments have ranged from the racist and xenophobic to the profound. Cooped-up emotions about Mr. Duterte's impotent stand on the West Philippine Sea and Chinese laborers "stealing" the jobs meant for Filipinos finally found a crack in the wall and burst through.

But one of the revelations offered to us by this incident is how many of us are still pretty much racists, clueless of the forces of globalization, and unaware of ourselves and of the fact that millions of our fellow Filipinos work abroad. Zhang, who has resided here for six years as a fashion design student, likely traveled here to go to our cheaper, higher-quality schools than those they have in mainland China.

And as a people too prone to cyberbully,

very few asked questions about how the events unfolded. Could Zhang have misunderstood Cristobal's instructions? Was there any way for her to understand the rule? Does the rule of no liquids at the train even make sense, or can commuters prove, instead, that the drinks they bring do not explode? Visiting Manila last week, I had to down a liter of water right in front of the police on duty at the Taft Avenue station, because "rules were rules."

Were the moves made by Albayalde and Eleazar, for that matter, proportionate to the incident's gravity? Did Zhang's tantrums merit the attention of the institution's highest officials? Even harder to weigh, what is Zhang's taho-throwing compared to the murder of innocents perpetrated by the police? And why the lack of uproar and action toward the latter?

If the government would go to the trouble of reviving the ROTC "to instill discipline," I suggest we intensify as well, or prefer instead, the teaching of literature and the humanities. The way we reacted to Zhang's case shows us that what we lack is critical thinking skills. Unfortunately, critical thinking is precisely what the ROTC, or mandatory patriotism, hopes to erase. Should Zhang's case continue to snowball and the ROTC brand of "disciplining" pushes through, then we'd be raising fascists in no time. *AD*

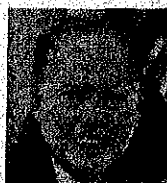
DLS Pineda teaches at Father Saturnino Urios University, Butuan City. After finishing his undergraduate and master's degrees in UP Diliman, he decided to reside in his father's hometown in Agusan del Norte. Tweet the author @dls_pineda.

Lei-La Pasionaria; Maharlika?

SEN. Leila de Lima reminds me of that tough Basque heroine, Dolores Ibarruri, *La Pasionaria*. They may have differing ideologies but when it comes to courage, principle, work ethic and eloquence, Leila more than qualifies as our own *La Pasionaria*, who cried during the Spanish civil war *No Pasaran!* They shall not pass, manifesting undiscourageable resolute resistance.

Bedan bar topnotcher (No. 8) *Lei-La Pasionaria* needs our support and prayers in the face of seemingly creeping militarization, where even the DSWD (Department of Social Welfare & Development) is now oddly headed by a retired general. The military is now equal, if not superior, to civilian authority, not the original understanding under the Constitution, as I perceive it.

Superior, at least, in terms of more benefits, which all public servants of course deserve, to accentuate the unnecessary; however, it seems the President continues to feel insecure. But, for him not to worry, in this land of party animals, we'd rather party, text and selfie/*Kodakan*. Digong continues to be fond of the Nazi salute, with the clenched right fist thrust forward,



T.G.I.F.

**RENE
SAGUISAG**

identified with Hitler, and aped by fawning frightened or innocent/ignorant guests.

A coup is not in the cards, from where I sit. Ninoy Aquino likened the *Pinoy* to the carabao, slow to anger (but once it does, watch out, as in 1986, after nearly 14 years, with Digong's mother a prime mover in Davao).

If Leila had been quiet, or even "prudently" voiced support for the regime, she should not be in a small cage now, but with us, the dissenters asking foolish questions, in a wider cage in which to roam. It has been said that those who begin the coercive elimination of dissent soon find themselves exterminating dissenters; the compulsory unification of opinion only leads to the unanimity of the graveyard. (Justice Robert Jackson) Take a bow, Maria Ressa, another gutsy victim of coercive elimination of dissent.

True, Leila is an addict, a human rights addict, like *Ka Pepe* Diokno

— whose son, Dean Chel, belongs in the Senate. He, along with Erin Tañada, Pilo Hilbay, Neri Colmenares, Samira Gutoc, et al., holds the passed torch of human rights advocacy, at which the President sadly looks askance. *Ka Pepe* was not even charged despite being detained for two years. She is charged and caged (*ibon mang may layang lumipad*) for an implausible nonexistent offense. *Kenkoy* case, I submit, as in the case of Hubert Webb, where druggie Jessica Alfaro, in NBI custody, could be, and was, made to sing any song for her supper.

Hubert & Co. wasted more than 15 years in jail given the pervasive prejudicial publicity we had to contend with; as his original temporary lawyer, I cried from the start that I'd carry to my grave that Hubert was thousands of miles away when the Vizconde Massacre occurred on June 30, 1991. (Here, Mon Tulfo, Winnie Monsod, Teddy Benigno and I formed an unlikely barbershop quartet.) Mario Ongkiko (late), the Webbs' first choice as counsel but who was then tied up, and Met Custodio, tirelessly carried and soldiered on — to a fair and right conclusion. But, unjust detention even for a second, is

torment beyond compare.

Lei-La Pasionaria was arrested on Feb. 24, 2017 and will mark her second anniversary in a cage next week.

Hail Leila. *No pasaran!* — of which I am also reminded when dealing with our traffic which seems to get worse every day. We hardly move and cannot pass (unlike motorcycles in the millions, it seems, like ants).

Last Sunday, I, driver-less, walked about half a kilometer from our Bigasan, Palanan, Makati home to pay my last respects to Msgr. Antero Aure Sarmiento, at the St. Joseph the Worker Church, where he had served. He always found the time for small talk after the services as my late wife, Dulce, and I, would attend the 6 p.m. daily Mass every chance we got. May I also extend my condolences to the family of iconic Armida Siguion Reyna, who I'd see ballroom dancing in the Bahia at Intercon, now demolished.

After Mass last Sunday, I took two tricycles (the first quit) to go to Cash N Carry to take a cab for Resorts World. A Dance Instructor (DI) I had booked texted that at 4 p.m. she started waiting for a bus in Bacoor, Cavite but gave up at six cuz she could not

Ry ➤ Saguisag A5

■ SAGUISAG FROM A4

Lei-La

get a ride. That is the transport situation today for commuters and others even if the weather is fair. Absolutely nothing to gloat about here.

For another instance, last Friday, I left the Office of the City Prosecutor in Parañaque at 1:30 p.m. but got to the NLRC (National Labor Relations Commission) on Banawe, Quezon City more than two hours later. Yup, the situation today, gridlock in Nagtahan, same in España, etc. When I got there, I was told that the arbiter concerned had been taken ill.

Traffic sickens, a fave excuse of my tardy students, which may even be occasionally true.

Lei-La-Pasionaria has a lot to gripe about, along with millions of commuters, wasting/spending a quarter or more of their daily lives traveling. Metro Manila might soon stand still. Does Malacañang care? It seems to agree that traffic is like the weather, per Mark Twain, everyone talks about it but does little or nothing *sa bansang matisin* aside from administration bragging.

As Ninoy Aquino would repeatedly intone, better to die on one's feet, than live in shame on bended knees. In various forms it is attributed to Benito Juarez and Emiliano Zapata of Mexico and Spain's La Pasionaria, who said: "*Antes morir de pie que vivir de rodillas.*" Their preference: to die proudly on one's feet to living in shame on bended knees, my own embroidered recasting.

Lei-La Pasionaria's dispatch from Crame last Saturday, on the ordeal of Col. Ferdinand Marcelino, said she was glad that he had "found the courage

to speak out and assert anew his innocence on the drug charges previously filed against him...I know exactly, without any exaggeration, how it feels to be falsely accused. Perhaps what many people do not know is the previously dismissed charges against Col. Marcelino were then revived in order to pressure him to falsely testify against me...[A long line of convicted criminals was recruited as perjured] witnesses against me in exchange for privileges and special treatment, and for them to stay alive..."

Better to suffer and die on one's feet than live in shame on bended knees. Col. Marcelino refused to be a Jessica Alfaro but the Palace found many jailbirds, canaries willing to sing its song, its own Jessicas.

Digong has another maleficent obsession, renaming our country after Maharlika, to honor fake war hero Marcos and his phony guerilla unit. Scholarship should conclusively establish first beyond cavil that Maharlika does not in fact stand for a giant phallus.

Is Digong serious about renaming our country? Can the Pinoy live up to its supposed meaning and rise to the occasion? As may be seen in UP's annual Oblation run? Do we need reminding that Macoy was a fake hero whose supposed exploits were made out of whole cloth?

North and South America do not seem to mind having been named after Italian Amerigo Vespucci. But, given the reported P99-billion pork of lawmakers, why not rename our whole archipelago as the Babuyan Islands? Ladrones Islands is spoken for (now Marianas). And we can rename LMB as Libingan ng Isang Mandarambong at Bergugo, at mga Bayani (LIMBB).

The trauma of the Battle of Manila

CURRENTLY in town making the rounds of universities is James Scott, the author of *Rampage: MacArthur, Yamashita and the Battle of Manila*, a book that was launched late last year in the US.

The Battle of Manila took place in February 1945, 74 years ago. Its details are some of the most painful war records of modern times. It caused a morbid wave of massacres, rapes, starvation, torture so extensive and so difficult to comprehend that it continues to haunt present-day readers. Whoever survived was permanently scarred mentally and psychologically, even if not physically. But many were physically obliterated, causing an estimated 100,000 civilian deaths, and about 18,000 combined military deaths. Materially, it destroyed Manila, a city with a historic past as a trading center, a pioneer of 20th century modernity, a gracious tropical urban area, a thriving cultural capital. This city never came back whole in the same way.

Any war is so destructive, mostly of the spirit. Values, morals, traditional civilized rituals break up under the pressure of suffering and death. Social Darwinism wins under the circumstances of war as survival will be the endgame using whatever it takes. There will be heroes and heroic actions but human nature cannot produce them overwhelmingly against the battle for survival where there are no heroes.

There have been many accounts



AMBIENT
VOICES

MA. ISABEL
ONGPIN

of the battle for Manila (a misnomer was the term "liberation" which the true facts belied because it brought unspeakable tragedy). Some can be such a litany of man's inhumanity to man that few can take it in, or become desensitized as matter of self-defense. Most are eyewitness accounts by people on the ground who saw, who suffered, and who were able to recount. The first accounts taken right after were the ones used for the military trial of the defeated enemy led by General Yamashita. But the major part of the narratives came decades later when the survivors who had repressed their dreadful memories became strong enough to revisit them and put them in writing.

James Scott's book is more comprehensive, laying the groundwork for what was the final chapter of World War 2 in the Philippines. It uses a lot of military sources, many news and personal accounts of journalists who were present, or who had longtime observers of the war clouds that had been building up in Europe and Asia. It sketches the personalities who directed the war — MacArthur, Roosevelt, the American generals like Krueger, Eichelberger, the Japanese protagonists Yamashita, Tojo, Okucho, Muto, Iwabachi. It

is silent on guerrilla leaders and Filipino political figures, probably because they did not figure in the American contemporary news reports. It also brings to light Japanese documents with military orders of what to do which are damning. And, most devastatingly, Scott gives the personal accounts of survivors who were there, who were affected by the orgy of death and destruction, cruelty and inhumanity.

The concentration camp that was Santo Tomas, the university in Manila founded in 1611, is detailed. Almost 4,000 citizens from the Allied countries were incarcerated for close to four years. Conditions steadily deteriorated, from an organized prison community allowed to have supplies brought in by friends, family or help, with a school for children, housing and sanitation facilities, all to the credit of the prisoners, to days of starvation, sickness, scarcity of medical care, daily deaths, to the credit of the jailers when the tide turned against them.

Methodical killing and burning were the lot of the rest of Manila. It started north of the Pasig River and reached its bloody climax south of the river. In the annals of war crimes, the massacres in St. Paul, De La Salle, Singalong, Intramuros, Fort Santiago are just a few of many.

Why did this happen? When the Japanese invasion came in 1941, MacArthur declared Manila an Open City, so reluctantly but peacefully it stood by as the

Japanese entered the city. But at the end the debacles that the enemy suffered first in naval battles (The Philippine Sea, Midway) and then in Leyte when it tried to make a stand to prevent the return of American forces, must have brought to the fore their belief that to surrender was dishonorable. So, while orders were to destroy supplies and bridges and then withdraw outside to the forces in the mountains, contrary orders came ordering the killing of civilians concentrated in large buildings to be set on fire with gasoline (to save on ammunition). That might explain the use of bayonets much more than bullets (to be used only for those who tried to flee). Also, it was very clear from the last orders that they had no exit plan.

Rampage ends with the capture and trial of Yamashita, the mayhem that took over Manila i.e. looting, lawlessness, homelessness, beggars, the seriously sick, orphans, followed by prostitution, a general decline in civility, morality, humanity. Not everyone was guilty of the latter but many were. The gracious city was no more.

This is a huge book. Scott has used many primary sources, has gone over contemporary news accounts, personal diaries, logs, photo archives, battle reports, court records, cables, letters. It is a definitive account of the Battle of Manila.

Some of us do not want to remember it; some of us are obliged to. The rest must know it happened the way it did.

Editorial

Finally, some real steps to cut high power costs

It has taken nearly eight months, but the most substantial proposal to lower consumer electricity bills to be offered in years now seems all but certain to become law within the next few weeks.

The "*Murang Kuryente* [affordable electricity] Act" was first proposed by Sen. Ralph Recto in July of last year with his filing of Senate Bill 924. The bill sought to use the Malampaya Fund, the pool of government royalties from the Malampaya gas field off Palawan, to cover the so-called "universal charges" that appear on every consumer's electric bill, as well as missionary fund charges, and the feed-in tariff that subsidizes renewable energy.

As it stands now, both SB 924 and a counterpart version from the House of Representatives have been passed by their respective plenaries, and are awaiting action by a bicameral conference committee to produce a single compromise version to be forwarded to President Rodrigo Duterte for his signature. The main difference between the two measures is that the Senate version proposes to use the entire Malampaya Fund, which currently totals about P207 billion, while the House version sets aside P120 billion from the fund.

Senate Economic Affairs Committee Chairman Sen. Sherwin Gatchalian told the media earlier this week he was anticipating that the bicameral committee would be able to tackle the two versions of the *Murang Kuryente* measure "in about a week." Congress is currently in recess ahead of the May 19 elections, but Gatchalian said legislators are using the time to complete some committee work.

The *Murang Kuryente* Act offers some significant relief to two significant problems, the first and most obvious of which is the high cost of electricity borne by consumers and

businesses. Under the Epira (Electric Power Industry Reform Act) Law of 2001, universal charges to recover stranded debt and stranded contract costs of the National Power Corp. (Napocor) were imposed on consumers, along with missionary charges (subsidies to provide electricity in economically unviable areas) and contributions to an environmental fund. Later, feed-in tariff charges were also added to help subsidize the development of renewable energy sources.

For a household using 200 kilowatt-hours of electricity per month, these charges add about P0.64 per kWh, or a little more than P127 to the monthly bill. Removing them represents a substantial reduction in cost.

The second benefit of the *Murang Kuryente* Act is that it will greatly improve the productivity of the Malampaya Fund, which until now has been prone to waste and misuse. The Fund was originally intended to finance energy resource exploration and development, but instead, has been used for a variety of non-energy related expenditures, such as disaster relief, rice sufficiency programs and the Armed Forces of the Philippines modernization program. The use of the Malampaya accounts has been hounded by controversy for years; about P900 million allegedly diverted to fake nongovernmental organizations as part of the infamous "pork barrel" scandal are currently the subject of numerous indictments handed down by the Office of the Ombudsman.

Diverting the funds instead to a limited number of line items on consumers' electric bills is a transparent and easily manageable way to handle the money, and is in keeping with the Fund's original "energy-related" intent. More importantly than that, it is a way for nearly every Filipino household and business to tangibly benefit from the country's own limited natural resources. This is obviously much more appealing than the present sad circumstances of being compelled to pay the penalty for past governments' mismanagement of electricity supply.

Our senators and congressional representatives should be given credit for shepherding the *Murang Kuryente* Act this far. We urge them to take the final step to send it to President Rodrigo Duterte for his approval as quickly as possible.

Stoking fire of animosity

Now we know why there can never be peace in Mindanao.

Despite the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) recently, peace, we believe, would continue to be elusive in Morolandia if there are ill-advised leaders who make decisions without really knowing the intricacies of the Muslim problem.

Documents obtained by one of our reporters show that no less than former President Benigno Aquino III actually rejected a resolution from the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to synchronize the peace agreements of the government with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

The OIC, which has 57 members, 47 of which are Muslim majority countries with a collective population of 1.6 billion, brokered the 1996 final peace accord between the Philippine government and the MNLF during the time of President Fidel Ramos. Malaysia, on the other hand, brokered the MILF peace agreement.

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The OIC claimed... that the peace accord with the MILF was a betrayal of the 1996 final peace agreement because it deals with the same people and territory.

In a strongly-worded explanatory note dated 21 March 2013, requesting closure of tripartite talks for the review of 1996 peace accord, Aquino, through his peace panel, practically told the OIC to disregard the MNLF and its leader Nur Misuari as they no longer represent the Bangsamoro People in the Philippines.

The note also pointed out the 1996 peace accord was already being implemented and that the OIC should have nothing to do anymore with the MNLF as it is already an internal issue of the country.

“The only logical and practical step is to end the tripartite review process,” Aquino’s note said.

The OIC, in a resolution during the foreign ministers meeting in Conakry, Africa has approved a resolution calling for the resumption of the tripartite talks between the government, MNLF and the OIC to discuss the final implementation of the peace agreement signed in 2014.

The OIC proposed that the Comprehensive Agreement of Bangsamoro be tied to the MNLF peace agreement but, instead of heeding the OIC resolution, the government panel, probably on orders of Aquino, issued a request to put closure to the tripartite review of the 1996 peace accord.

insisting the peace accord with the MILF will fill the remaining unresolved issues with MNLF.

The OIC claimed, however, the peace accord with the MILF was a betrayal of the 1996 final peace agreement because it deals with the same people and territory.

The explanatory note of the Aquino peace panel, however, said the MNLF of Misuari is no longer the sole representative of Bangsamoro in the Philippines and that the OIC must acknowledge that fact.

It said the framework agreement on the Bangsamoro signed with the MILF on 15 October 2012 provides an opportunity to bring about comprehensive peace and development in Mindanao.

Putting Misuari and the other stakeholders in Bangsamoro out of the picture, we would like to think, is tantamount to handing another grave injustice to the very people who have been, historically, waging a decades-long struggle for self-identity.

Favoring one group to the detriment of the others defeats the very purpose of the BOL which is to unify all the stakeholders and give them a chance to establish self-rule.

It's like stoking the fire of animosity between the MNLF and the MILF.

The OIC has played a key role in persuading the MNLF to talk peace as early as 1976 under the Marcos regime. Being the first Muslim rebel movement in the Philippines, the MNLF had a head start in getting OIC legitimacy; the MILF was always considered a poor cousin — until now.

Is it far-fetched then to suspect that when Misuari's loyalists occupied villages in Zamboanga City on September 2013 it was staged to spite the poor cousin?

Rommel Banlaoi, executive director of the Philippine Institute for Peace, Violence and Terrorism Research, said the Zamboanga attack was meant to sabotage the peace talks then between the Aquino government and the MILF.

"Misuari's motive is to convey a message... (that) the signing of the peace agreement between the government and the MILF will no longer guarantee the end of war," Banlaoi said.



Sinu-sino ang sakop kung ibalik ang ROTC

NASA konstitusyon na tungkulin ng estado na ipagtanggol ang kasarinlan at kaayusan ng bansa. Halimbawa, laban sa manlulupig, o kontra kriminalidad, at kapag may sakuna. Kaya maaaring sapilitang pagsilbihan ang mga mamamayan sa Sandatahang Lakas. Isang paraan dito ay ang pagsasanay sa mga nasa kolehiyo sa serbisyo militar, at paghahandang mamuno sa pamamagitan ng ROTC (Reserve Officers Training Corps).

Dati ay obligado ang lahat ng lalaki sa first at second-year college na mag-ROTC. Merong exemptions -- sa mga may hika, kapansanan, at flat-footed -- pero 'yon

ang pinagmumulan ng katiwalian. Nagpapasuhol ang opisyal militar para i-exempt ang ayaw magupitan nang tsato, utus-utosan, at pagmartsahin sa ilalim ng ulan at araw.

Nu'ng 2003 pinatay ng opisyal ng militar ang cadet officer sa University of Santo Tomas na nagbunyag ng katiwalian. Dapat hinayaan ang pulis na lutasin ang krimen at ang Hudikatura na parusahan ang salarin. Pero nakialam si noo'y President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo at ginawang optional na lang ang ROTC. Kumonti ang sumasapi -- karamihan pa'y mga babaeng pinahintulutan at nais mag-training.

Panukala ngayon ng Sandatahang Lakas na ibalik ang ROTC -- pero sa mga estudyante sa Grades 11 at 12, o high school. Hindi 'yon epektibo. Labag sa batas at international agreements na isama sa military reserves ang mga menor-de-edad. Kailangan ang mga nasa kolehiyo na edad-18 at mas matanda na.

May ibang panukala, suportado ngayon ni Speaker Arroyo, na ibalik ang sapilitang ROTC sa first at second-year college. Hindi lang lalaki kundi pati babae. Wala nang exemption: maski persons with disability ay kasali; hindi man sila isama sa martsa ay tuturuan pa rin sila ng mga ang-

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kop na trabahong militar; halimbawa, communications, coding, signals, atbp. Sa gan'ung paraan, lahat ng nagkolehiyo ay maaaring ipatawag kung may manlulupig, gulo, o sakuna.

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Soldier die, 3 others hurt as troops, ASG clash in Sulu

By Teofilo Garcia, Jr

ZAMBOANGA CITY -- Troops have clashed anew with Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) bandits in Sulu province on Thursday, resulting in the death of a soldier and the wounding of three others.

Lt. Gen. Arnel Dela Vega, Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom) chief, said the firefight broke out around 11:30 a.m. in Barangay Igasan, Patikul, Sulu, when the troops chanced upon a group of ASG bandits while on combat operation.

Dela Vega said the firefight lasted for about 20 minutes, after which the ASG bandits withdrew to different directions.

"As we speak, military troops are in pursuit of the evading militants. Ground units are also prepositioned to deliver fire support and block withdrawal routes of the militants," dela Vega said on Thursday afternoon.

The identities of the slain and three injured soldiers were not made known, except that they belong to the Army's 6th Special Forces Battalion.

Dela Vega said that the troops managed to extract the wounded soldiers from the area and transported them to Kuta Heneral Teodulfo Bautista Hospital in Barangay Bus-bus, Jolo, Sulu.

He said immediate assistance will be provided to the families of the dead and wounded soldiers.

"Our tactical and intelligence operations targeting the neutralization of the militants and the penetration of the enemy's strategic strongholds will be bolstered," the Army official added.

"We will relentlessly pursue Abu Sayyaf fighters, weaken their will to fight, and crush groups propagating terrorism in Mindanao," he said. **(PNA)**

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Westmincom commanders told to 'stay focused' vs. terrorists

ZAMBOANGA CITY -- The head of the Joint Task Forces and component units of the Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom) have been ordered to "remain focused" as the campaign against terrorist elements in its area of operation continues.

This was the directive of Lt. Gen. Arnel dela Vega, Westmincom chief, to the unit commanders during the command conference on Tuesday in Camp Navarro, this city, according to Col. Gerry Besana, Westmincom information officer.

"We should remain focused on the task at hand. We should act promptly and decisively for any action that we intend to do and sustain the momentum," Besana said Thursday, quoting dela Vega's directive.

Westmincom's areas of operation are in the Western and Central Mindanao regions.

"We have the momentum as far as our campaign is concerned. It only goes to show that we are focused on our mandate, in as far as our focused military operation is concerned, and that would not have been possible if you did not heed my calling that all our focused military operations will be intelligence operations-based," dela Vega added.

Besana said dela Vega told the joint task forces to enhance "information operations efforts" to maximize their accomplishments.

"The respective services headquarters and brigades, in particular, have been very generous in extending to us all the funds and the logistics support. So I would enjoin everyone to be prudent and judicious in the utilization of our resources," dela Vega was quoted to have told the unit commanders.

Those who attended the command conference included Maj. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, Joint Task Force (JTF) Central commander; Rear Adm. Rene Medina, Naval Forces Western Mindanao commander; Brig. Gen. Roberto Ancan, JTF ZamPeLan (Zamboanga Peninsula and Lanao provinces) commander; and, Col. Fernando Reyeg, JTF Basilan commander. **(PNA)**

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Area security up for candidates threatened by rebels

ILOILO CITY -- The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) will provide an area security in the places of engagement of politicians who received threats from rebels.

Lt. Col. Sisenando Magbalot Jr., commanding officer of the army's 611B, said in an interview on Wednesday that three candidates have received extortion letters from the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA).

"This is not a new issue. Every time elections come, we receive news about the extortion activities of the rebels. The information that they are being extorted reaches us," Magbalot said, as he presented a copy of the letter to the local media.

Magbalot added they are deploying their troops to the areas where there are reports of extortion by the CPP-NPA.

"We are not providing security to anybody. That's the PNP's (Philippine National Police) job. We just continue on deploying our troops," he added.

He said they assume that the CPP-NPA's ultimate goal is to threaten the candidates for them to give in.

Also, apart from extortion letters, some candidates were even summoned by the rebels in the mountains for a negotiation.

"We heard about news of politicians going to the mountains to do some negotiation. They have meeting places and we have identified some meeting places. We put the presence of our army for them to look for another place," the commander said.

Candidates found to be negotiating with the rebels will be met with appropriate sanctions.

"The DILG (Department of the Interior and Local Government) and the President (Rodrigo Duterte) himself said he will not tolerate politicians who support NPAs. So eventually we will validate these reports. We are actually required by the national headquarters to submit names," he said.

Attached to the extortion letter are documents and photos to prove the legitimacy of the rebel group.

The AFP also identified five candidates surrounded by inactive members of the CPP-NPA but refused to name them.

"They can still use these lie-lowed members and they can use the contacts of these members," he said.

The amount being extorted from the candidates are not fixed and may vary depending on the rebel commander's will.

The United States and the European Union have declared the CPP-NPA as a terrorist group. (**PNA**)