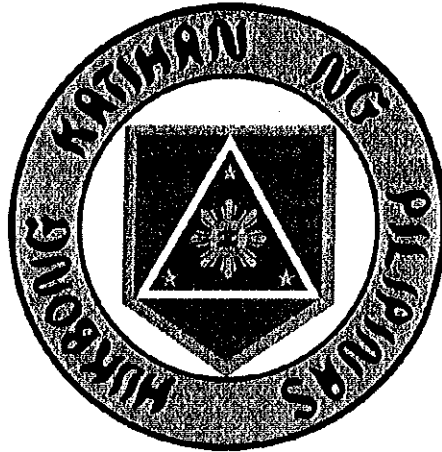


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**OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

## **NEWS CLIPPINGS**

**20 February 2019**

**Wednesday**



*Honor. Patriotism. Duty.*

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# Sara in 2022: Why not?

## *Senators assess Sara's prospects*

By PAOLO ROMERO

**BALER** – While it is too early to make predictions on the 2022 presidential race, some senators find nothing objectionable in Davao City Mayor Sara Duterte succeeding her father.

Re-electionist Sen. Sonny Angara said Sara has “the makings of a good president” and Filipinos are looking for young leaders who have experience in governance.

“I think she’s one of the potential future leaders of the country because she has the qualifications – a lawyer, has heart for the masses and, of course, she has a mentor – who better to mentor her than President Duterte?” Angara told reporters here in his family’s home province of Aurora.

The senator said it was possible that Sara could succeed her father, who has gone from

being a mayor straight to the presidency.

“I think nothing’s impossible now. Because President Duterte broke the barrier. He was the first mayor to go straight to president. Usually, you pass through the Senate first. So it’s not unheard of for a local official to become president,” he said.

Asked whether he would support the younger Duterte if she decides to run for president, he said: “Why not?”

Turn to Page 4

## Sara

From Page 1

Angara is one of 13 senatorial candidates endorsed by the Hugpong ng Pagbabago (HNP), a Mindanao-based political party led by Sara.

Senate President Vicente Sotto III said it was understandable if Sara was still reluctant to seek the presidency as the presidential elections is still more than three years away.

"Many things can still happen. The political landscape sees major changes after the midterm elections. So, it's better if the issue will be ventilated after the (May) 2019 (senatorial and local elections)," Sotto told reporters.

He declined to comment further on what he said was a personal matter for the President's daughter.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson recalled his comments to the media early into the Duterte presidency that Sara was one of the emerging leaders the nation should watch out for.

Sen. Joseph Victor Ejercito, whom Sara is also endorsing for re-election, described the mayor as "principled, intelligent and firm."

"These are good qualities of a great leader. Not to mention she has the charm," Ejercito said.

# SC HIT FOR APPROVING MARTIAL LAW EXTENSION

STORY BY MELVIN GASCON

**Militant party-list groups on Tuesday flayed the Supreme Court for upholding the third extension of military rule in Mindanao. They said the decision showed the court had become Malacañang's 'rubber stamp.'**

A4

FROM A1

By Melvin Gascon  
@melvingasconINQ

Militant party-list groups on Tuesday denounced the Supreme Court ruling affirming the legality of the third extension of martial law in Mindanao, expressing fears the decision would result in more violence on the island.

The justices voted 9-4 on Tuesday to dismiss four petitions challenging the yearlong extension, which was approved by Congress on Dec. 12 last year.

As of press time on Tuesday, however, the court had not released a resolution explaining its ruling.

Supreme Court public information chief Brian Hosaka announced the results of the vote at a news conference called after the weekly session of the full court.

## Marawi siege

President Duterte issued Proclamation No. 216 on May 23, 2017, placing the entire island of Mindanao under martial law to allow the military to crush a terrorist siege of Marawi City.

The siege lasted for five months, but Mr. Duterte extended military rule in Mindanao up to the end of 2017 and then up to the end of 2018 to enable the military to finish the remnants of the terror groups that seized Marawi.

Congress approved both extensions, and in December last year allowed a third extension that Mr. Duterte had requested, adding the communist insurgency to the fight against terrorism for justification.

Opposition lawmakers challenged the constitutionality of the first extension but lost, with 11 of the justices on the Supreme Court voting for the government in July 2017.

In February 2018, the court, ruling on the challenge to the second extension, voted 10-5 for the government.

## How they voted

Four groups had brought the challenge to the third extension: opposition lawmakers led by Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman; the Makabayan bloc of party-list groups in the House of Representatives; lawyers led by former Election Commissioner Christian Monsod; and a group of "Iumad" (indigenous) teachers and students represented by the Free Legal Assistance Group.

They lost the case, with Chief Justice Lucas Bersamin and Associate Justices Diosdado Peralta, Mariano del Castillo, Estela Perlas-Bernabe, Andres Reyes Jr., Alexander Gesmundo, Jose Reyes Jr., Ramon Hernando and Rosmari Carandang siding with the government.

Senior Associate Justice Antonio Carpio and Associate Justices Marvic Leonen, Francis Jardeleza and Benjamin Caguioa voted against the third exten-

sion, as they did in the second.

In separate statements issued after the announcement of the result, the party-list groups Bayan Muna, Gabriela, Kabataan, Magdalo and Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) lamented how the Supreme Court had reduced itself into a "rubber stamp" for Malacañang, upholding the extension despite the lack of grounds for justification.

"The Supreme Court has once again stretched the boundaries of judicial interpretation by upholding Congress' approval of President Duterte's extension of martial law in Mindanao. It paves the way for imposing martial law nationwide

even if there is no threat to public safety," said Neri Colmenares, chair of Bayan Muna.

Gabriela said the Supreme Court had once again proven that it had submitted itself to the whims of the Duterte administration.

#### AFP appendage

"Where will Filipino women and the people turn to for justice and accountability during these dark times of impunity if the Supreme Court itself is already an appendage of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and its Commander in Chief?" said Gabriela Rep. Arlene Brosas.

"Once again, the [Supreme

Court] as the rubber stamp of Duterte's antipeople tyranny has declared the constitutionality of a third martial law extension in Mindanao, no matter how more and more absurd it is getting," Kabataan said.

Magdalo took a shot at the Supreme Court for "bowing down to the whims of Malacañang."

"Where is the independence of the Supreme Court?" Magdalo Rep. Gary Alejano said. "Instead of being a vanguard of justice and rationality, the Supreme Court has shown otherwise."

ACT said the Supreme Court had no basis to declare the third extension constitutional.

"The only terrorism still lurking in [Mindanao] is state terrorism, brought by elements of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, paramilitary forces and the Philippine National Police who drive lumad children out of their schools, illegally detain people without warrants of arrest, charge them with trumped-up cases and tag them as terrorists," the group's Rep. Antonio Tinio said.

#### Palace 'pleased'

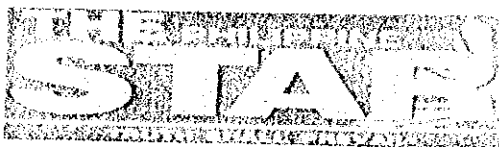
Malacañang said it was "pleased" with the ruling, which showed that the three branches of government were "on the same page" in seeking an end to violence in Mindanao.

"As we fast-track the rehabilitation of the war-torn Marawi and promote security and peace and order in Mindanao, we ask the Filipino nation not to waver in their support for our Republic's defenders," said presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo.

"Let us remain vigilant and prevail against these antidemocratic forces," he added.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana thanked the Supreme Court for agreeing with the government.

"[Martial law] has and will continue to greatly help our counterterrorism [operations] and fight against rebellious forces in Mindanao," Lorenzana said. —WITH REPORTS FROM DONA Z. PAZZIBUGAN, CHRISTINE O. AVENDAÑO AND JEANNETTE I. ANDRADE INQ



## 'US-Phil alliance key to regional security'

By JAIME LAUDE

In the wake of the developing security landscape in the South and East China Seas, a visiting US Marine commander emphasized the importance of US-Philippine relations to the Indo-Pacific region.

Lt. Gen. Lewis Craparotta, US Marine Forces Pacific (MARFORPAC) commander, pointed this out during his series of meetings with key military and security officials.

The US embassy said Craparotta had a meeting with Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief Gen. Benjamin Madrigal and Philippine Marine commander Maj. Gen. Alvin Parreno.

They discussed the partnership of the US Marine Corps and the AFP.

"This week we are here to focus on training, readiness and interoperability, not just for today and 2020, but really for the future... This is a long

and lasting critical partnership for the region," Craparotta said.

He said discussions also centered on future launching of joint Marine exercises in the country.

Parreno, for his part, assured Craparotta the Philippine Marines have always been ready and responsive to address the defense and security challenges of the Pacific region.

"Discussed topics also

strengthened the trust and confidence that we have and promote mutual security interests as well as contributing to global and security, peace security and stability," Parreno said.

Craparotta's visit to the Philippines, his first since taking command of the MARFORPAC in August last year, is also to frame future engagements of US and Philippine Marines in the country.

- With Pia Lee-Brago



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# Country has no masters – Locsin

By Mario J. Mallari

No inch given, no inch taken.

That is how Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. described the Philippines' management of its territorial dispute with China even as both countries consistently try to forge effective partnerships in other areas.

Locsin yesterday reiterated the Philippines managed its maritime dispute

with China without compromising an inch of its territory during a lecture he gave regarding President Rodrigo Duterte's independent foreign policy in Germany.

In a speech during the inauguration of the New Chancery of the Philippine Embassy in Berlin, Locsin maintained the Duterte leadership is committed to addressing disputes based on rule of law.

"We have managed our disagreements

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These disputes may settle themselves with time or they may never be resolved, like our claim to Sabah

From page

with China over maritime features recognized as ours by international law," Locsin said.

**An independent foreign policy means getting off your knees and on your feet – and standing up for your country.**

"But we do so without retreating an inch from our rightful and inalienable ownership of everything within the widest extent of our sovereign reach in history and international law," he added.

The Philippines is entangled in tense dispute over the West Philippine Sea (WPS) with China, Malaysia, Taiwan, Brunei and Vietnam.

Manila and Beijing have overlapping claims over several reefs in the WPS or South China Sea.

Earlier, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana had stressed the government, particularly the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), had been active in protecting the country's interest in the disputed region.

**As I said standing beside the Chinese foreign minister, these differences need not stand in the way of mutually beneficial cooperation in other areas of common endeavor.**

Lorenzana said the AFP has maintained its presence in the occupied areas in the WPS.

Locsin reiterated he refined the Duterte administration's policy from "friend to all, enemy to none" to "friend to friends, enemy to enemies and

a worse enemy to false friends."

"It is not independent foreign policy if you simply switch the master before whom you are kneeling. You are still on your knees before another master," Locsin said.

**Locsin reiterated that the Philippines managed its maritime dispute with China without compromising an inch of its territory.**

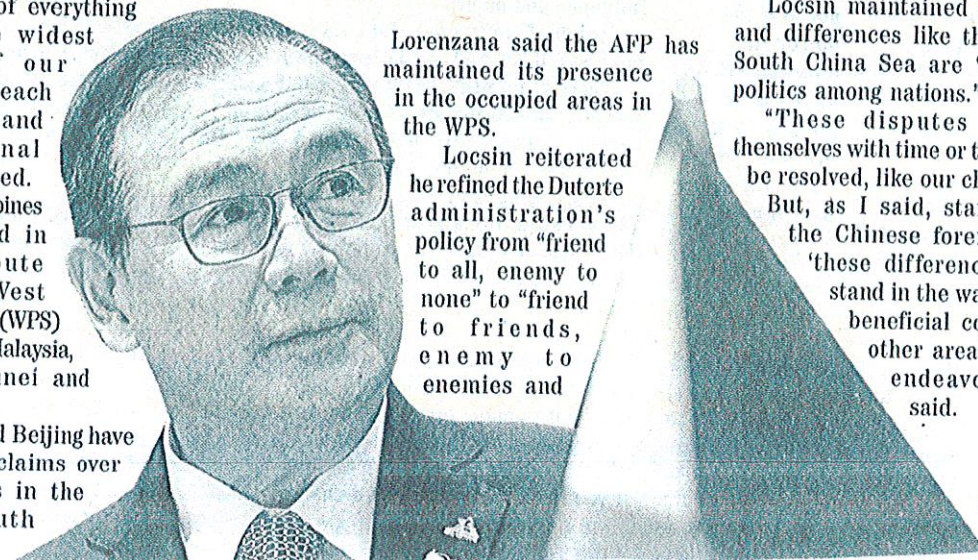
"An independent foreign policy means getting off your knees and on your feet – and standing up for your country. That is true independence," he added.

Locsin maintained that disputes and differences like the one in the South China Sea are "inevitable in politics among nations."

"These disputes may settle themselves with time or they may never be resolved, like our claim to Sabah.

But, as I said, standing beside the Chinese foreign minister, 'these differences need not stand in the way of mutually beneficial cooperation in other areas of common endeavor,'" Locsin said.

LOCSIN





NEW ACADEMIC CYCLE

# PMA GRADUATION MOVED TO MAY

FORT DEL PILAR, BAGUIO CITY—This year's graduation of the Philippine Military Academy (PMA) has been moved to May, after it adjusted its school calendar with the schedules of high schools and colleges from where it gets its recruits.

Members of the graduating PMA "Mabalasik" Class of 2019, who were incorporated into the corps of cadets in 2015, would still be completing their courses in March (the previous graduation month) as well as April and parts of May, after they began classes in August last year, said Lt. Col. Harry Baliaga Jr., PMA spokesperson.

## K-12 impact

PMA had not yet finalized the new schedule for its commencement exercises when the latest batch of first class cadets—the equivalent of college seniors—would earn their commissions as junior officers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, he said.

Mabalasik stands for

Mandirigma ng Bayan, Iaalay ang Sarili, Lakas at Tapang, para sa Kapayapaan.

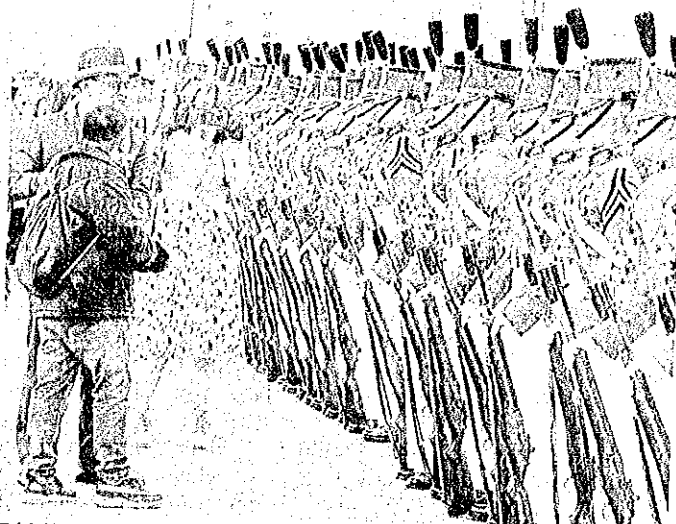
PMA made the adjustment after officials realized that changes made by other schools to accommodate the K-12 basic education program had affected recruitment.

## Curriculum change

Many aspiring cadets, who passed the entrance examinations as well as other basic tests, failed to attend the PMA Reception Day on April 1 because they had yet to graduate from their schools.

"These potential cadets choose to go elsewhere and we lose good candidates," said a PMA professor.

Earlier, academy officials had said they believed the K-12 program would not disrupt the recruitment of students for the cadet program, many of whom were sophomore college students although it had actively invited graduates from top performing high schools as well.



**FAMILY AFFAIR** A Philippine Military Academy graduate and his family take souvenir photos with cadets during the academy's recent alumni homecoming in Baguio City. —EV ESPERITU

PMA initially undertook a curriculum overhaul, excluding 36 general education subjects that had been absorbed in senior high school programs.

Baliaga discussed the graduation on the sidelines of this year's PMA alumni homecoming on Saturday, which was focused on 10 alumni who had been appointed to the Cabinet

of President Duterte. *A9*

Stressing that their performance helped the military reap high public confidence, PMA superintendent, Lt. Gen. Ronnie Evangelista, cited the alumni who had become "decision makers" in the Cabinet, among them Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu (Class 1970), as well as those in politics. —VINCENT CABREZA INQ

## SC votes 9-4 to uphold third ML extension

By EDU PUNAY

The Supreme Court (SC) has upheld the legality of the third extension of the martial law declaration in Mindanao.

Voting 9-4 in session yesterday, justices of the high court decided to dismiss four petitions challenging the constitutionality of the extension of Proclamation No. 216 for

another year or until December 2019.

In a press conference, new SC spokesman Brian Keith Hosaka said the nine magistrates who voted for the dismissal of the petitions were Chief Justice Lucas Bersamin and Associate Justices Diosdado Peralta, Mariano del Castillo, Estela Perlas-Bernabe, Andres Reyes

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## SC From Page 1

Jr., Alexander Gesmundo, Jose Reyes Jr., Ramon Paul Hernando and Rosmari Carandang.

He said Carandang penned the ruling, which was not immediately released pending submission of other opinions of justices.

Hosaka said the four dissenters were Senior Associate Justice Antonio Carpio and Associate Justices Marvic Leonen, Francis Jardeleza and Alfredo Benjamin Caguioa.

Maguindanao Gov. Esmel Mangudadatu and Mayor Ramon Piang of the *lunad* town of Upi in Maguindanao welcomed the martial law extension.

"We have not been seeing politicians bringing with them so many security escorts when they go around since it was first declared in May 2017," Mangudadatu said.

"From the very start we in

Maguindanao have been very supportive of that. We have militant groups in the province that the police and military are trying to address and martial law is one measure that can hasten their security efforts," he added.

"That is for the good of all so we have to support that ML extension," Piang said.

Hosaka could not say yet the basis for the dismissal of the petitions filed by Albay 1st district Rep. Edcel Lagman, the Makabayan bloc led by Bayan Muna party-list rep. Carlos Zarate, the group led by former Commission on Elections chair Christian Monsod and the group of *lunad* teachers and students represented by the Free Legal Assistance Group, which he said would be known in the Court's decision. The Court made the ruling after holding oral arguments last Jan. 29.

In their petitions, all four

groups alleged that there was no factual basis to justify the extension of martial law in Mindanao as required by the 1987 Constitution.

They argued that the attacks by terror groups and violent incidents that took place in Mindanao last year, including four bombings cited in the report of the Armed Forces, were acts of terrorism and not rebellion as required by law in declaration of martial law.

And despite the recent twin bombings at the Jolo Cathedral in Sulu that killed at least 21 people, petitioners insisted that public safety in Mindanao is not imperiled.

Petitioners also reiterated that the Court may review the factual basis of martial law proclamation, which is a task specifically assigned by the Constitution to Congress.

On the other hand, Solicitor General Jose Calida cited several attacks attributed to the New People's Army in

Mindanao, which he stressed were clearly acts of rebellion.

He reiterated that the Jolo Cathedral bombing is proof of the ongoing threat to public safety in Mindanao posed by local terrorist groups.

The solicitor general also cited data of the Armed Forces that there are still 424 active members of the Abu Sayyaf terrorist group in 138 barangays in Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi and Zamboanga; 264 members of Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters in 50 barangays; 59 members of Saulah Islamiyah; six members of Maguid group and 85 members of Turaifie group.

He also reiterated the influx of foreign terrorists in the country "who are responsible for training local terrorist fighters," citing the entry of four foreign terrorist fighters last year while 60 others are on AFP's watchlist.

Calida also argued that the decision of Congress to approve the President's request

is beyond judicial review.

He also cited the high court's earlier ruling that upheld the previous extension of martial law, which held that there are sufficient legal safeguards against human rights abuses raised by petitioners.

With these arguments, he asked the Court to dismiss four similar petitions for lack of merit.

The SC already upheld the constitutionality of Proclamation No. 216 in July 2017 and its initial one-year extension in February last year.

The Court held that the extension had sufficient factual basis, as "the rebellion that spawned the Marawi incident persists."

It said "public safety requires the extension, as shown by facts presented by the (Armed Forces of the Philippines)."

The SC also said that the two houses of Congress have the "full discretionary au-

thority" to promulgate their own rules, and this power is exempt from judicial review and interference, "except on a clear showing of such arbitrary and improvident use of the power such as would constitute a denial of due process."

The high court also noted that there is no provision in the Constitution that prescribes how many times the proclamation of martial law may be extended or how long the extended period may be.

Duterte first declared martial law in Mindanao on May 23, 2017 after the ISIS-inspired Maute group laid siege to Marawi City. Five months later, Duterte, in a rousing speech to his troops, announced the liberation of Marawi City.

But the AFP revealed that communist rebels continued their logistical buildup and extortion activities, which he said hinder government development efforts.

- With John Unson

W

February 2019

## SC declares constitutional 3rd martial law extension in Mindanao

By REY G. PANALIGAN

The Supreme Court (SC), voting 9-4, upheld on Tuesday the constitutionality of the third extension of martial law and the suspension of the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus in Mindanao until Dec. 31, 2019.

With the ruling, the SC's public information office (PIO) said four petitions challenging the constitutionality of the extension were dismissed by the High Court during its full court session.

The press statement issued by the PIO did not state the reasons for the dismissal of the petitions. A copy of the decision was not available.

The PIO said dismissed were the petitions filed by the groups of Albay Rep. Edcel C. Lagman, Bayan Muna Party-List Rep. Carlos Isagani T. Zarate, Christian S. Monsod, and Rius Valle.

Those who voted in favor of the constitutionality of the extension were Chief Justice Lucas P. Bersamin and Associate Justices Diosdado M. Peralta, Mariano C. del Castillo, Estela M. Perlas Bernabe, Andres B. Reyes Jr., Alexander G. Gesmundo, Jose C. Reyes Jr., Ramon Paul L. Hernandez and Rosamari D. Carandang.

Those who voted to grant the petitions were Senior Associate

►4

## SC declares constitutional... ◀1

Justice Antonio T. Carpio and Associate Justices Marvic Mario Victor F. Leonen, Francis H. Jardeleza, and Alfredo Benjamin S. Caguioa.

Speaker Gloria Macapagal Arroyo welcomed the decision of the Supreme Court.

"It's good, we're very happy because we voted to extend it," Arroyo told reporters in an interview after attending the House oversight hearing on the Department of Public Works and Highways' (DPWH) flood control projects.

The Dec. 31, 2019 extension was the third since martial law and the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus were first imposed by President

Duterte on May 23, 2017 for 60 days through Proclamation No. 216 as a result of the attack in Marawi City by the terrorist Maute Group, and its followers.

When challenged before the SC, the High Court ruled in July 2017 that the martial law declaration of President Duterte had sufficient factual bases.

In February last year, the SC declared constitutional President Duterte's extension of martial law and the suspension of the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus in Mindanao until Dec. 31, 2018.

The SC ruled: "The President and Congress had sufficient factual

bases to extend Proclamation No. 216. The rebellion that spawned the Marawi incident persists. Public safety requires the extension, as shown by facts presented by the AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines)."

The SC held oral arguments last January 29 on the four petitions that challenged the third extension of martial law in Mindanao.

The bombing of the Jolo cathedral that resulted in the deaths of 23 persons and injuries to more than 100 other churchgoers was highlighted during the arguments.

"The Jolo cathedral bombing was part of the ongoing rebellion. But even without the Jolo bombing we already have factual basis for the extension of martial law," Solicitor

fp

General Jose C. Calida said during the oral arguments in behalf of the Executive and Legislative departments of government.

"There is still need to extend martial law because of the ongoing threats to public safety and menace of rebellion not only by communist groups but as well as the local terrorist groups, especially those Daesh-inspired groups," he said.

#### **Persisting rebellion**

Earlier in his comment on the four petitions, Calida had told the SC that the persistence of rebellion in Mindanao justifies the extension of martial law and the suspension of the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus.

Calida said that contrary to the allegations in the petitions, rebellion—a key requirement for declaration of martial law under the Constitution—persists in Mindanao.

He cited official reports of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) on "ongoing rebellion of the Daesh-inspired groups and their local and foreign allies, particularly the Daulah Islamiyah (DI) and also of the Communist Party of the Philippines - New People's Army (CPP-NPA) forces in Mindanao."

He said the "Daesh-inspired groups have shifted their strategy from establishing a Wilayat to global insurgency or rebellion" and that "they continue their recruitment and radicalization activities teaching their new members how to launch deadlier attacks and to sow chaos and instability that will extremely endanger the

public."

"This is on top of the ongoing rebellion by the CPP-NPA and their attacks in Mindanao last year," he said.

"In the present case, it is apparent that the NPA continues to rise publicly and take up arms against the government. From January 1 to December 31, 2018, there have been a total of 369 NPA-initiated violent incidents. 193 of these were committed in Mindanao alone," he said.

Thus, he said, the extension of martial law and the suspension of the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus for another year "is necessary to provide public safety in Mindanao," he added.

He pointed out that the cessation of the Marawi siege and the liberation of the city from terrorists cannot be the sole basis to lift martial law in Mindanao.

The petitioners in the four cases claimed that the attacks by terror groups and violent incidents that took place in Mindanao last year were acts of terrorism and not rebellion as required by law in declaration of martial law.

"The following acts of terrorism and lawless violence mentioned in the letter dated 06 December 2018 of the President do not per se evince the existence of rebellion and the President failed to connect or relate said acts to rebellion or furtherance of rebellion," they said.

"Terrorism is not equivalent to rebellion because they differ in motive, target and scope: While terrorism has the purpose of sowing fear and panic among the populace, rebellion is an armed uprising against the government for the culpable purpose of removing the country or a portion thereof from allegiance to the Republic or preventing the President or the Congress from exercising their respective powers," they added. (With a report from Charissa M. Luciatienza)



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The Manila Times

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# Third martial law extension legal – SC

BY JOMAR CANLAS

**T**HE Supreme Court (SC) on Tuesday declared as legal and constitutional the third extension of martial law in Mindanao sought by President Rodrigo Duterte and approved by Congress.

The decision of the court en banc confirmed Tuesday's *The Manila Times* exclusive that majority of the justices wanted to uphold the extension of martial law and the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus, first imposed by the President in May 2017 in response to a terrorist attack on Marawi City.

Voting stood at 9-4 to junk all petitions questioning the martial law extension, said lawyer Brian Keith Hosaka, the court's new Public Information Office chief.

Malacañan Palace said the high court's decision showed unity among the three branches of government in addressing national problems.

"We are also pleased to note that the Executive, Legislative and the Judiciary are on the same page in quelling the rebellion as well as combatting and dissipating terroristic acts destructive to lives and properties unleashed by ruthless and

► Legal/A2

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barbaric local and foreign armed lawless elements," Palace spokesman Salvador Panelo said.

"As we fast-track the rehabilitation of the war-torn Marawi and promote security and peace and order in Mindanao, we ask the Filipino nation not to waver in their support for our Republic's defenders," he added.

### **Ponente overruled**

The *ponente* or justice in charge of drafting the ruling, Associate Justice Benjamin Caguioa, was outvoted by the majority of magistrates.

The nine justices who voted to uphold the extension of martial law were Chief Justice Lucas Bersamin and Associate Justices Diosdado Peralta, Mariano del Castillo, Estela Perlas Bernabe, Andres Reyes Jr., Alexander Gesmundo, Jose Reyes, Ramon Paul Hernando and Rosmari Declaro

Carandang.

Those who voted in favor of the petitions and against martial law extension were Caguioa, Senior Associate Justice Antonio Carpio, and Associate Justices Marvic Leonen and Francis Jardeleza.

The petitioners were Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman, a group of Lumad or indigenous peoples in Mindanao represented by the Free Legal Assistance Group (FLAG) and Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP), former elections chairman Christian Monsod and the Bayan Muna party-list group.

The high tribunal gave credence to the contention of the Office of the Solicitor General that terrorism and rebellion in Mindanao continued to ensue and were factual grounds for extension.

The government cited the presence of communist rebels and Muslim extremists in Mindanao.

Solicitor General Jose Calida

also argued that Congress had the power to determine the sufficiency of the factual basis for the extension of martial law.

Moreover, the need for martial law under Proclamation 216 did not become *functus officio* (expired) by the cessation of the Marawi siege, because terrorism continued to haunt Mindanao, he argued.

Calida also held that the declaration of President Duterte of martial law, concurred in by Congress, is not subject of judicial review because it is considered a political question under the 1987 Constitution.

### **Arroyo elated**

House Speaker Gloria Macapagal Arroyo said she was "very happy" with the high court's decision.

However, members of the "Magnificent 7" opposition in Congress

were disappointed with the ruling.

"The dismissal by the Supreme Court of the case questioning the third martial law extension is judicial subservience to executive overreach," said Akbayan party-list Rep. Tom Villarin.

According to Villarin, the Court's decision was not made "on the basis of actual, admissible evidence," but rather on speculation that rebellion still exists in Mindanao.

Magdalo Rep. Gary Alejano said the Supreme Court "bowed down to the whims of the Executive branch" and decided to disregard the Philippine Constitution.

"Where is our independent Supreme Court? Instead of being a vanguard of justice and rationality, the Supreme Court has shown otherwise," he added.

Villarin and Alejano joined Lagman's petition against the third martial law extension in

Mindanao.

Lagman blasted the inordinate implementation of martial law and suspension of the writ of habeas corpus in Mindanao, pointing out that President Duterte's request for another extension "failed to link violent incidents committed by local terrorists and communist groups to rebellion."

The other members of Magnificent 7 bloc who supported the Lagman-led petition were Ifugao Rep. Teodoro Baguilat Jr., Caloocan Rep. Edgar Erice, and Liberal Party members Quezon City Rep. Christopher Belmonte and Dinagat Islands Rep. Arlene Bag-ao.

Article 7, Section 18 of the Constitution says that the President may only declare martial law in any part of the country "in case of invasion or rebellion, when the public safety requires it."

**WITH GLEE JALEA**

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**Malaya**  
The National Newspaper

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## SC upholds legality of martial law extension

**BY ASHZEL HACHERO**

THE Supreme Court yesterday affirmed the legality of the third extension of the implementation of martial law in Mindanao, dismissing petitions filed by four different groups.

Congress, in a joint session in December, voted 235-28-1 in favor of extending martial law in Mindanao for the third time, until the end of this year.

The Supreme Court justices, in yesterday's en banc session,

voted 9-4 to uphold the martial law extension, said Brian Keith Hosaka, chief of the court's public information office, during a press briefing.

Those who voted in favor of the extension were Chief Justice Lucas Bersamin and Associate Justices Diosdado Peralta, Mariano del Castillo, Estela Perlas-Bernabe, Andres Reyes Jr., Alexander Gesmundo, Jose Reyes Jr., Ramon Paul Hernando, and Rosmari Carandang.

The four who dissented were

Senior Associate Justice Antonio Carpio and Associate Justices Marvic Leonen, Francis Jardeleza, and Alfredo Benjamin Caguioa.

Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Salvador Panelo said the decision only showed the three branches of government are united in the efforts to quell rebellion and combat terrorist acts.

Panelo, concurrent presidential spokesman, said: "We are pleased to note that the three separate

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## SC UPHOLDS

and independent branches of government, the primordial duty of which is to protect the state and secure public safety, have forged a unified stand against the forces of rebellion and terrorism. We are also pleased to note that the Executive, Legislative and the Judiciary are on the same page in quelling the rebellion as well as combating and dissipating terroristic acts destructive to lives and properties unleashed by ruthless and barbaric local and foreign armed lawless elements."

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, the martial law administrator in Mindanao, said the decision will help in the government's campaign against terrorists.

"This has and will continue to greatly help our counter-terrorism and fight against rebellious forces Mindanao," he said.

Armed Forces spokesman Brig. Gen. Edgard Arevalo said the SC decision is an affirmation "of the existence of serious threats that attempt to rise publicly and take arms against government."

Arevalo said the ruling is also an

affirmation of the military's "unwavering commitment to suppress and defeat all such threats."

President Duterte placed the entire Mindanao under martial law in May 2017 hours after the Maute terror group attacked Marawi City and occupied several barangays. Government forces defeat the group after five months.

The petitioners were opposition lawmakers led by Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman, militant party-list lawmakers led by Bayan Muna Rep. Carlos Isagani Zarate, a group led by former Elections chair Christian Monsod, and a group of indigenous people from Mindanao assisted by the Free Legal Assistance Group.

The petitioners asserted in their arguments and during the oral arguments on the case that another extension of martial law in Mindanao has no factual legal basis and that violent incidents, including four bombings stated by the military in its report were not acts of rebellion but acts of terrorism that can be addressed without resorting to martial law.

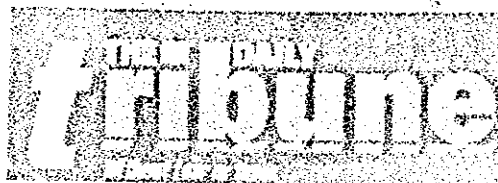
They stressed that while terrorism has the purpose of sowing fear and panic among the populace, re-

bellion is an armed uprising against the government for the purpose of removing the country or a portion thereof from allegiance to the Republic or preventing the President or the Congress from exercising their respective powers.

They also said the recent bombing of a cathedral in Jolo, Sulu last month, which killed 23 persons and injured about 100 others, were not enough reason to extend martial law.

Solicitor General Jose Calida has insisted that the extension has more than enough basis, pointing to the Jolo bombings and attacks by the communist New People's Army, which he said are clearly acts of rebellion against duly-constituted authorities.

Calida also cited data from the military saying that there are 424 active members of Abu Sayyaf group in 138 barangays in Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi and Zamboanga; 264 members of Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters in 50 barangays; 59 members of Saulah Islamiyah; six members of Maguid Group; and 85 members of Turaisie Group. — *With Jocelyn Montemayor and Victor Reyes*



# SC upholds ML extension anew

By Alvin Murela

The Supreme Court (SC) en banc yesterday upheld the constitutionality of the third extension of martial law and the suspension of the privilege of the writ of *habeas corpus* in Mindanao until yearend.

Voting 9-4, the justices dismissed the four consolidated petitions filed by groups of lawmakers, lawyers and Mindanaoans under Section 18, Article 7 of the Constitution.

Those who voted for the granting of the third martial law extension were Chief Justice Lucas Bersamin, Associate Justices Diosdado Peralta, Mariano del Castillo, Estela Perlas Bernabe, Andres Reyes Jr., Alexander Gesmundo, Jose Reyes Jr., Ramon Paul Hernandez and Rosmari Carandang.

Associate Justices Antonio Carpio, Francis Jardeleza, Alfredo Benjamin Caguioa and

Marvic Leonen dissented.

Malacañang welcomed the SC decision, saying the Executive and Legislative branches have "forged a unified stand against the forces of rebellion and terrorism."

"We are pleased to note that the three separate and independent branches of government, the primordial duty of which is to protect the state and secure public safety, have forged a unified stand against the forces of rebellion and terrorism," presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said in a statement.

"We are also pleased to note that the Executive, Legislative and the Judiciary are on the same page in quelling the rebellion as well as combating and dissipating terroristic acts destructive to lives and properties unleashed by ruthless and barbaric local and foreign armed lawless elements," he added.

The third extension proposed by President

Rodrigo Duterte was approved by Congress.

However, opposition congressmen along with other stakeholders filed separate petitions before the High Court which was consolidated.

**Voting 9-4, the justices dismissed the four consolidated petitions filed by groups of lawmakers, lawyers and Mindanaoans.**

Ruling for the said petition was until Friday, 22 February but during the en banc session yesterday, the justices resolved the matter and dismissed the petition questioning the constitutionality of the declaration of the extension.

In defending the extension, the Office of the Solicitor General (OSG) stressed the presence of communists and Muslim extremists in Mindanao.

The OSG stressed that if terrorism and rebellion continue, such would be a factual ground for its extension.

The military, in data presented before the SC, said the Abu Sayyaf Group had a total of 424 members with 473 firearms.

These extremists groups are operating in Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi and Zamboanga, while the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters has 264 members with 254 firearms.

During the oral argument, Solicitor General Jose Calida argued that it was within the powers of Congress to determine the sufficiency of the factual basis for the extension of martial law.

Calida said martial law under Proclamation 216 did not become *functus officio* (expired) because of the cessation of the Marawi siege, since terrorism continues in Mindanao, particularly the bombings.

With Kristina Maralit

## Martial law extension upheld by SC

**By Rey E. Requejo, Nat Mariano and Maricel V. Cruz**

THE Supreme Court on Tuesday dismissed the petitions filed by four different groups and affirmed the legality of the third extension of martial law in Mindanao.

"The Supreme Court ruled to uphold the constitutionality of the extension of the declaration of martial law and suspension of the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus in Mindanao until December 31, 2019," new Supreme Court spokesman Brian Keith Hosaka told reporters after the high court met as a group.

Malacañang hailed the decision, saying the executive, legislative and judiciary branches of the government are "on the same page" in fending off the rebellion with the implementation of martial law in Mindanao.

"We are pleased to note that the three separate and independent branches of government, the primordial duty of which is to protect the state and secure public safety, have forged a unified stand against the forces of rebellion and terrorism," Presidential Spokesman Salvador Panelo said in a statement.

"As we fast-track the rehabilitation of the war-torn Marawi and promote security and peace and order in Mindanao, we ask the Filipino nation not to waver in their support for our Republic's defenders," he said.

"Let us remain vigilant and prevail against these anti-democratic forces."

Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo welcomed the decision and said it proved that the House was correct in approving the request from President Duterte.

"It's good. We [are] happy [about it] because we voted to extend it," Arroyo told reporters at the House of Representatives Tuesday.

Surigao del Sur Rep. Johnny Pimentel echoed Arroyo.

"That was good news for us Mindanaoans because we have a problem of insurgency and this hinders our development," Pimentel said.

But Representatives Antonio Tinio and France Castro of ACT Teachers, members of the Makabayan Bloc, condemned the decision.

The Defense department also welcomed the Supreme Court's decision. *R*

The department said the public could rest assured the authorities would remain steadfast in their duty to safeguard the communities from the threats of rebellion, terrorism and violent extremism.

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# SC backs martial law extension

By REY PANALIGAN

The Supreme Court (SC) yesterday upheld the constitutionality of the third extension of martial law and the suspension of the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus in Mindanao until Dec. 31, 2019.

With the ruling, the SC's public information office (PIO) said four petitions challenging the constitutionality of the extension were dismissed by the High Court during

its full court session.

The press statement issued by the PIO did not state the reasons for the dismissal of the petitions. A copy of the decision was not available.

The PIO said dismissed were the petitions filed by the groups of Albay Rep. Edcel C. Lagman, Bayan Muna Party-List Rep. Carlos Isagani T. Zarate, Christian S. Monsod, and Rius Valle.

It said the petitions were dis-

missed on a 9-4 vote of the SC justices.

Those who voted in favor of the constitutionality of the extension were Chief Justice Lucas P. Bersamin and Associate Justices Diosdado M. Peralta, Mariano C. del Castillo, Estela M. Perlas Bernabe, Andres B. Reyes Jr., Alexander G. Gesmundo, Jose C. Reyes Jr., Ramon Paul L. Hernandez and Rosamari D. Carandang.

Those who voted to grant the

petitions were Senior Associate Justice Antonio T. Carpio and Associate Justices Marvic Mario Victor F. Leonen, Francis H. Jardeleza, and Alfredo Benjamin S. Caguloa.

The Dec. 31, 2019 extension was the third since martial law and the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus were first imposed by President Duterte on May 23, 2017 for 60 days through Proclamation No. 216 as a result of the attack in Marawi City by the Maute Group

and its followers.

When challenged before the SC, the High Court ruled in July 2017 on the constitutionality of the President's proclamation with a declaration that Proclamation No. 216 has sufficient factual bases.

In February last year, the SC declared constitutional President Duterte's extension of martial law and the suspension of the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus in Mindanao until Dec. 31, 2018.

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### **3rd Martial Law extension sa Mindanao pinagtibay ng SC**

Pinagtibay ng Korte Suprema ang pagpapalawig ng Martial Law sa ikatlong pagkakataon sa Mindanao hanggang Disyembre 31, 2019.

Sa bolong 9-4, ibinasura ng SC ang consolidated petitions na kumukwestyon sa legalidad ng extension ng Martial Law.

Noong 2017, nang idineklara ni Pangulong Duterte ang Martial Law sa Mindanao, sa kasagsagan ng sagupaan ng tropa ng pamahalaan at Maute group sa Marawi City, Lanao del Sur.

Naghain ng petisyon ang Makabayan bloc, minor-ya ng Kamara, Atty. Christian Monsod at grupong Lumad para kwestiyon sa legalidad ng batas militar.

Giit ng mga ito na ang nangyaring karahasan sa Mindanao ay terorismo at hindi rebelyon na kailangan ang deklarasyon ng Martial Law. (Doris Franche)

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### SC pinagtibay ang legalidad ng ikatlong Martial Law extension

Pinagtibay ng Korte Suprema ang legalidad ng ikatlong pagpapalawig ng Martial Law extension sa Mindanao.

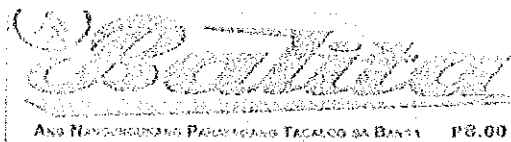
Sa botong 9-4, pabor sa pagbasura ng consolidated petitions laban sa extension ng Martial Law sina Chief Justice Lucas Bersamin, Justices Diosdado Peralta, Mariano del Castillo, Estela Perlas-Bernabe, Andres Reyes Jr., Alexander Gesmundo, Jose Reyes Jr., Ramon Paul Hernando, at Rosmari Carandang.

Habang pabor naman sa petisyong kumukuwestiyon na palawakin ang Martial Law ay sina Justices Antonio Carpio, Marvic Leonen, Francis Jardeleza at Alfredo Benjamin Caguioa.

Noong 2017, nang idineklara ni Pangulong Duterte ang Martial Law sa Mindanao, sa kasagsagan ng sagupaan ng tropa ng pamahalaan at Maute group sa Marawi City, Lanao del Sur. *Doris Franche-Borja*

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## Ikatlong ML extension, OK sa SC

Nina REY G. PANALIGAN at BETH CAMIA

Pinagtibay kahapon ng Supreme Court (SC) ang constitutionality ng ikatlong pagpapalawig sa martial law at suspensiyon ng privilege of the writ of habeas corpus sa Mindanao hanggang sa Disyembre 31, 2019.

Sa kapasyahang ito, sinabi ng public information office (PIO) ng SC na ang apat na petisyon na humahamon sa constitutionality ng extension ay ibinasura ng Mataas na Korte sa isinagawang full court session.

Hindi nakasaad sa press statement na inisyu ng PIO ang mga rason sa pagbasura ng mga petisyon. Wala pang inilalabas na kopya ng desisyon.

Ibinasura ng PIO ang mga petisyon na inihain ng mga grupo nina Albay Rep. Edecel C. Lagman, Bayan Muna Party-List Rep. Carlos Isagani T. Zarate, Christian S. Monsod, at Rius Valle.

Ayon dito, ang mga petisyon ay ibinasura sa botong 9-4 ng SC justices.

Bumoto pabor sa constitutionality ng extension sina Chief Justice Lucas P. Bersamin at Associate Justices Diosdado M. Peralta, Mariano C. del Castillo, Estela M. Perlas Bernabe, Andres B. Reyes Jr., Alexander G. Gesmundo, Jose C. Reyes Jr., Ramon Paul L. Hernando at Rosamari D. Carandang.

Bumoto naman para pagbigyan ang petisyon sina Senior Associate Justice Antonio T. Carpio at Associate Justices Marvic Mario Victor F. Leonen, Francis H. Jardeleza, at Alfredo Benjamin S. Caguioa.

Ang pagpapalawig hanggang sa Disyembre 31, 2019 ay ang ikatlo simula nang unang ipatupad ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte ang martial law at suspensiyon ng writ of habeas corpus noong Mayo 23, 2017 sa loob ng 60 araw sa pamamagitan ng Proclamation No. 216 dahil sa pag-atake sa Marawi City ng Maute Group at mga tagasunod nito.

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## More cocaine worth P54M found in Quezon

BY VICTOR REYES

PHILIPPINE Drug Enforcement Agency chief Aaron Aquino yesterday said 10 more kilos of cocaine worth P54 million were recovered by fishermen in Quezon on Monday night, raising to P581.8 million the total worth of cocaine recovered since last week in various provinces.

Aquino said the latest haul was set to be turned over to the PIDPA in Atimonan town later yesterday.

About 80 kilos of cocaine have been recovered in Dinagat Island, Surigao del Norte, Camarines Norte, Camarines Sur and Quezon since last Feb. 10. The market value for a kilo of cocaine is P5.4 million.

Aquino has requested the Armed Forces to utilize Navy ships and Air Force aircraft to guard against the smuggling of illegal drugs into the country and recovery of cocaine at sea.

Aquino said he sent a letter to AFP chief Benjamin Madrigal Jr. on Monday to seek its help about the influx of cocaine.

"Hopefully they can give more information and intervention about the floating cocaine," said Aquino.

"We asked them for intervention, recovery and seizure of drugs, if they can help us address the problem," Aquino added.

He said drug syndicates may have resorted to "shipside" smuggling because authorities have stepped up anti-narcotics operations in ports and airports.

"The only modus operandi that they can use to bring in drugs into the country is through shipside smuggling. They are using the sea to smuggle drugs into the Philippines," said Aquino.

"We will continue to coordi-

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### MORE

nate with the AFP, with the Coast Guard and the PNP Maritime Group, for assessment and to have intervention... We have a vast coastline which is difficult to guard and it's easy to smuggle in drugs compared to other countries," he said.

Aquino reiterated the cocaine may be a diversionary tactic to enable the entry of shabu, the more popular drug among users in the country.

RAGE VS GOV'T MOVE

# 'RIGHTS ABUSE TO WORSEN IF UN DELISTS DISAPPEARED'

By the Inquirer Staff  
@Team\_Inquirer

Relatives and supporters of people who had involuntarily disappeared since the Marcos dictatorship were enraged by the Duterte administration's move to delist 625 cases of enforced disappearances from the records of a United Nations agency, as they warned that this human rights violation would worsen if the UN body agreed.

They joined human rights groups on Tuesday in urging the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances to keep the cases open and to look into others that have not been reported.

"I strongly object to the Philippine government's motion to delist cases of enforced disappearance, which include my daughter, Sherlyn," 72-year-old Asher Cadapan told the Inquirer on Tuesday.

Sherlyn Cadapan and Karen Empeño were two

University of the Philippines students who were abducted by soldiers in the coastal town of Hagonoy, Bulacan province, in June 2006 and later tortured and sexually assaulted, according to court records.

The Malolos Regional Trial Court found former Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan Jr. guilty of kidnapping and illegally detaining the two students and sentenced him to up to 40 years in prison along with Lt. Col. Felipe Anotado Jr. and Staff Sgt. Edgardo Osorio.

The two students remain missing.

"This [delisting of cases] will not help the victims. [Up to] now justice hasn't been served because we still can't embrace our missing daughter," Cadapan said.

"Abductions perpetrated by government agencies will only turn to worse if these cases will be delisted," he said.

## PHRC justification

Senior officials led by Undersecretary Severo Catura of the Presidential Human Rights Committee (PHRC) formally moved to delist 625 cases of enforced and involuntary disappearances "mostly attributed to government forces between

1975 and 2012" during a meeting with the UN body in Sarajevo, capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, on Thursday.

It justified the action by saying that the government had already "put in place a strong legal framework and institutional mechanisms to address this issue."

Concepcion Empeño, mother of Karen Empeño, said "we have to protest" against the

"grave injustice" and "sheer stupidity" of the PHRC.

"This is so infuriating," she told the Inquirer by phone.

The conviction of Palparan and the other soldiers "concretely showed that they were the perpetrators of [Sherlyn and Karen's] disappearance," Empeño said.

"What reasons could the Philippine government still fabri-

cate to delist the cases?" she said.

In Iloilo City, May Wan Dominado, whose family had filed a complaint with the UN body over the abduction of her mother nearly 12 years ago, also opposed the government move.

Former political detainee Ma. Luisa Posa-Dominado has been missing since armed men abducted her and fellow activist Nilo Arado on April 12, 2007, in



Oton town, Iloilo province.

She was arrested four times and detained for a total of seven years under dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

"Our family does not believe the sincerity of the present administration to give due justice to the victims of enforced disappearance. In fact we see the delisting as a sign of its disingenuity," Dominado said.

"The only reply of the government is that Luisa is a member of the (New People's Army), as if such claim would justify any human rights violation that she may suffer," she said.

#### **Alleged insurgents**

Dominado said her mother and farmer Michael Celeste, who had also gone missing, were included in a list of alleged insurgents that the Department of Justice sought to be declared as terrorists in February last year, or after more than a decade since Luisa's abduction.

Cristina Guevarra, secretary general of Desaparecidos, a group of families of the disappeared, appealed to the UN agency to look further into the cases of enforced disappearances and their alleged cover-up under the Duterte administration.

"The Duterte government should not be believed in its claims that the mere presence

of so-called legal mechanisms, or even recognition, is equivalent to providing space for respite for the victims. This move of delisting desaparecidos is a malicious scheme to hide its own crimes of disappearances and impunity," Guevarra said.

#### **'Travesty'**

Kristina Conti, a lawyer for the Empeño and Cadapan families, described the attempt to delist the cases as a "travesty."

"Note that most of the cases that will be delisted are in many ways connected to the state. Like in the case of Jonas Burgos, where circumstances have pointed to the military as his abductors," Conti said.

Burgos, son of the late press freedom icon Jose Burgos Jr., has been missing since he was abducted by suspected military men at a Quezon City shopping mall on April 28, 2007.

Lawyer Edre Olalia, president of National Union of Peoples' Lawyers, said the government's move made the disappeared persons "disappear twice over."

"They want to erase from our collective historical memory the indelible mark of victims of authoritarianism and repression," Olalia said.

—WITH REPORTS FROM  
CARMELA REYES-ESTROPE, MARICAR  
CINCO AND NESTOR P. BURGOS JR. INQ

# UPLB student hailed as rebellion martyr

By Maricar Cinco  
@maricarcincoINQ

SAN PEDRO CITY--Student activists at the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) hailed as a martyr John Carlo Alberto, who was killed in a recent clash between New People's Army (NPA) rebels and the Philippine Army in Laguna province.

Alberto, 22, and an undergraduate student of the College of Veterinary Medicine at UPLB, was the lone fatality in the Feb. 14 clash in Luisiana town.

Government soldiers were pursuing a group of rebels, responsible for burning construction equipment in Infanta, Quezon, last week, until they ran into an NPA camp in the village of San Buenaventura, Luisiana.

The Army's 2nd Infantry Division commander, Maj. Gen. Rhoderick Parayno, said the soldiers clashed with at least 15 rebels, among them Alberto.

## Catanduanes native

Senior Insp. Fernando Credo, Luisiana police chief, and Capt. Patrick Jay Retumban, 2nd Infantry Division spokesperson, confirmed Alberto's identity.

Credo said Alberto's father went to the police station to claim his son's remains.

Alberto, who entered UPLB in 2013, was a graduate of the Pandan School of Arts and Trades in Pandan, a fourth class



INCOGNITO A member of the New People's Army visits the wake of UPLB student John Carlo Alberto, who was killed in a clash with the military in Laguna province. --CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

and remote town in Catanduanes province.

In 2015, he was arrested along with fellow youth activists in a rally staged during the Independence Day rites in Kawit, Cavite.

"Let's pay homage to our martyr John Carlo 'Ka Inocencio' Alberto," read a message sent out by a youth sector alliance at UPLB.

It said a march and a tribute were being readied for Alberto.

Parayno said two more female rebels were believed to be heavily wounded from the clash citing blood trail found in the encounter site.

The women guerrillas, too, were described as young by residents near the clash site, Parayno said.

## Recruitment ground?

The Army said soldiers recovered at the clash site two improvised explosives, detonators, magazines, 10 tents, eight mobile phones and a computer tablet, which were believed to be rebels' training materials.

Parayno said the Army believed there had been a "massive recruitment" by the NPA, particularly, at UPLB in recent years.

Parayno said documents found by soldiers in the NPA

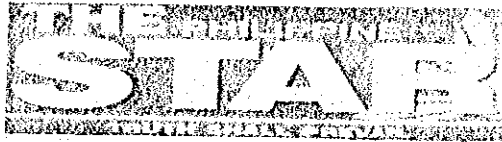
camps and clash sites pointed to UPLB as recruitment ground for rebels.

He said the military planned to discuss the matter with university officials soon.

He said he believed Alberto and those involved in the latest clash were on a tour of duty for the NPA, which could be a brief immersion period for new recruits in guerilla zones.

One indication that Alberto's group was just on immersion was that it fired a "few shots but did not really engage the soldiers." A7

"Normally, the NPA would engage," Parayno said. INQ



## Negros Occidental execs supporting NPA rebels — AFP

By GILBERT BAYORAN

BACOLOD CITY — More than 30 local government officials in Negros Occidental have been supporting New People's Army (NPA) rebels, an official said yesterday.

Col. Benedict Arevalo, 303rd Infantry Brigade commander, did not identify the local officials, whom he said include mayors and vice mayors, with a majority of them councilors.

Arevalo said these local

government officials are giving financial and logistical support to NPA guerrillas in exchange for their services as private armed groups, especially during elections.

"If our reports are strong enough, we will forward

these to the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) for investigation," Arevalo said.

He reminded local government officials of a memorandum circular that prohibits local officials from

supporting communist rebels.

DILG Secretary Eduardo Año had earlier warned local government officials and candidates in the May elections against giving any form of material and political

support to communist rebels.

Año said violators face life imprisonment and a fine of P1 million under Section 4 of Republic Act 10168 or the Terrorism Financing Prevention and Suppression Act. 12

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## Army officer says NPA attack a show of force

A military official on Tuesday branded as a vain show of force an attack on Monday by communist rebels on a militia base in Lake Sebu, South Cotabato. Lt. Col. Jones Otida, head of the Army's 27th Infantry Battalion, said at least 20 New People's Army (NPA) rebels attacked militiamen and soldiers guarding a road project in the village of Lamfugon in Lake Sebu. Otida said the military team repulsed the attack and suffered no casualty. Militiamen and soldiers also prevented the rebels from burning heavy equipment being used for the project, Otida said. He said he believed the attack was a prelude to more attacks in time for NPA's 50th anniversary on March 29. "They want to send the message they are still strong," he said. —BONG S. SARMIENTO

# AFP to Reds: Surrender now while there is still time

By MIKE U. CRISMUNDO

**C**AMP BANCASI, Butuan City — The area command chief of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in Mindanao on Tuesday urged the remaining members of the Communist Party of

the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA) to "surrender now while there is still time"

"Yield peacefully while there's a chance," said Maj. Gen. Felimon T. Santos, Jr., area command chief of the Eastern Mindanao Command (EastMincom).

The AFP EastMincom chief called on the remaining members of the CPP-NPA who are still running in the mountains of Agusan, Surigao and Compostela Valley provinces, including in some parts of Davao Region, Bukidnon and North and South Cotabato to surrender peacefully while there is still a chance for them to live normal lives.

"We call on our peace-loving communities also to continue to assist and help our field units by helping the NPAs who want to surrender and

be part of our quest for peace which everyone is longing for," stressed Maj. Gen. Santos.

The AFP EastMincom chief made this statement after seeing the exodus of CPP-NPA members and supporters who voluntarily gave up in Surigao del Norte, North Cotabato last week.

The AFP Eastmincom has already received 938 regular members of the NPA through its various field units.

Based on its records, Eastmincom already received a total of 1,217 Militia ng Bayan members and 434 Sangay ng Partido sa Lokalidad - NPA's community-based support groups - and 8,932 mass supporters, from January 2018 to early February this year.

Brig. Gen. Franco Nemesio M. Gacal, commanding general of the Army's Northeastern and Northern Mindanao

4th Infantry (Diamond) Division (4thID) also said on Tuesday that more former rebels are coming out and are being processed by the military and the local government units as the 4th ID embarked on a "peaceful war."

The 4th ID commander reiterated the army's "peaceful war" approach in addressing the multi-dimensional nature of communist terrorism. "This approach is aimed at 'combating' or solving the socio-economic issues in remote villages being exploited by the communist terrorists," he said.

"Peaceful war is not literally 'war' through the use of military weapons, but it is a unique form of warfare sans violence, through the delivery of social services by government and non-government entities," Brig. Gen. Gacal said.

# Army monitors 3 Negros mayors supporting NPA

BY EUGENE Y. ADIONG

**B**ACOLOD CITY: The military has monitored at least three Negros Occidental mayors who have been supporting the New People's Army (NPA), a top Philippine Army official said on Tuesday.

Col. Benedict Arevalo, commanding officer of the Philippine Army's 303rd Infantry Brigade based in Barangay Minoyan of Murcia town, said: "There is one mayor in the south, one in the central and another one in the north. At least three mayors, so there could be more including some other local officials."

But, he added, "I cannot name names because I also want to pro-

tect them. We will not judge them and we will not take it against them. It is not our jobs in the military to prove their guilt."

Arevalo said the Department of the Interior and Local Government had already warned the local officials against this because it was illegal.

"The persistent Intel report is that these politicians are giving or getting financial support, logistics, manpower, and private armed groups from the NPAs," Arevalo said, adding that foreign governments had also declared the NPA

as a terrorist group.

"So, I would also like to remind our officials to refrain from giving and getting support from the NPAs. Our role in the army is to maintain and ensure the conduct of peaceful elections," he said.

Gov. Alfredo Maranon Jr., however, said there was no need to remind the mayors and other local officials about this because they already knew that. A7

"Giving support and favors to the rebels means that they are going against the government," he said.



## Soldiers foil NPA bid to torch heavy equipment in Lake Sebu

GOVERNMENT forces yesterday foiled a plan by communist New People's Army rebels to burn heavy equipment being used in the government's road construction project in Lake Sebu town in South Cotabato on Monday night.

Troops from the Army's 27th Infantry Battalion were sent to Barangay Lamfugon on Monday after the military received intelligence reports that rebels were planning to burn equipment belonging to the Gemma Construction firm.

Lt. Col. Ezra Balagtey, spokesman of the military's Eastern Mindanao Command based in Davao City, said soldiers caught up with about 20 rebels in Sitio Lamfinik at around 8 p.m., leading

to a 20-minute firefight.

Balagtey said the rebel group, composed of about 20 men, withdrew and are the subject of pursuit operation. No one was reported killed or injured on both sides.

Balagtey said the rebels were planning to torch the heavy equipment of Gemma Construction because the firm refused to heed the communist movement's to pay revolutionary tax, a euphemism for extortion.

"That's why we conducted patrols in the area," said Balagtey.

Eastmincom commander Maj. Gen. Felimon Santos Jr., meanwhile, vowed to secure all government flagship projects in Eastern Mindanao. — **Victor Reyes** by

## Duterte okays return of NDFP exec

BY JOCELYN MONTEMAYOR

PRESIDENT Duterte yesterday instructed the police and the military to "allow" communist leader Fidel Agcaoili to return to the country to discuss with government the possibility of restarting peace negotiations.

He also asked Jose Maria Sison, founding chair of the Communist Party of the Philippines and consultant of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), to "find time to talk sensible peace."

"I think Attorney Agcaoili has sounded off -- he was coming

again to talk and I told the military and the police just allow him. For after all it's just on a -- we're on a waiting period about the appropriate time to talk about peace. I am not that cruel," Duterte said in ceremonies for the ninth anniversary

See DUTERTE > Page B3

### DUTERTE

of the Mindanao Development Authority (MindA) and the 25th anniversary of the Brunei Darussalam-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA) held in Davao City.

Sison, Agcaoili, and NDFP consultant Luis Jalandoni are all based in the Netherlands.

Agcaoili, chair of the NDFP panel in peace talks with government, and Jalandoni were supposed to return to Manila late last year for some informal meetings with government officials. They have requested a meeting with the President, who instead relegated the meeting to his Cabinet.

The informal meeting did not push through after Agcaoili and Jalandoni expressed concern they would be arrested if they return to Manila.

The President, in the same event, stressed the importance of peace not just in Mindanao but also with the CPP-NDFP-New People's Army, saying the

war between government and the communists has been going on for more than 50 years.

Duterte also hinted that he is amenable to Sison's return to the country.

Sison has been on self-exile in the Netherlands since the late 80s.

"Unless we somehow reduce to the barest minimum their sentiment, their hunger for justice, social justice, there will be no peace in the land. I am not saying that I am now in agreement with Sison. I don't like his style but I do not hate him. We are friends and we can be friends. Some other time they say I would kill for money. But since Sison is my professor, I will kill him for nothing. Except that before he goes to the blue yonder, kindly find time to talk sensible peace. We have been at it 53 years," he said.

The President said it would be best if neither party would make any demand when the government and the communists return to the negotiating table.

"I suggest that we do not make

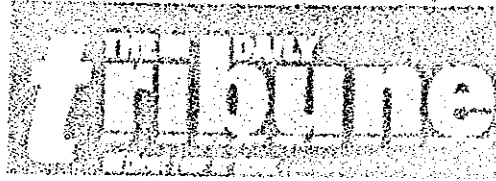
any demands. We go to the table and to talk about it. And if he approaches something which is not acceptable and I would say, 'No, I cannot accept that.' And if I propose something and he does not relish it, then maybe he can go back to Netherlands," he said.

The President last year ordered the cancellation of peace talks at the national level and said localized negotiations would be pursued instead.

Duterte initially ordered a review of all the agreements and arrangements that have been agreed on by the government and the communist group before instructing the State's negotiating panels not to pursue the talks.

During Tuesday night's event, the President reiterated his plan to talk with Nur Misuari, founding chair of the Moro National Liberation Front, about peace and possibly to "craft something more expansive in his area."

Government signed a peace agreement with the MNLF in 1996.



## Go, 'Baste' secure freed NPA hostages

AGUSAN DEL SUR – Former Special Assistant to the President Christopher Lawrence “Bong” Go, along with the President’s son Sebastian “Baste” Duterte, facilitated the release of the remaining eight hostages by the communist New People’s Army (NPA) on Tuesday here.

Go and Duterte traveled to Agusan del Sur Tuesday morning to receive the freed hostages who were among the 12 Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU) members and two soldiers abducted by the NPA.

They were seized by the Maoist rebels in

**Turn to page 2**

Go and Duterte traveled to Agusan del Sur Tuesday morning to receive the freed hostages who were among the 12 Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit members and two soldiers abducted by the NPA

**From page 1**

the vicinity of Barangay New Tubigon, Sibagat, Agusan del Sur last December.

“These were the remaining hostages (of the NPA),” Go said yesterday. “But they were turned over to us. That’s why we are to go there as soon as possible.”

The NPA in Mindanao has been keeping friendly relations with the Dutertes. It often welcomed then Davao Mayor Rodrigo Duterte in its camps before he sought the presidency in 2016.

On 14 February, six of the kidnapped CAFGU members were released by the NPA through a third-party facilitator. They were turned over to the Army’s 401st Brigade, Fourth Infantry Division while leaving the eight whom Go and Duterte also asked to be released without conditions.

**They were turned over to the 402nd Brigade of the Philippine Army based in Bancasi, Butuan City in the presence of Go and the young Duterte.**

The released hostages are Pfc. Darlino Carino Jr. and Cpl. Eric Manangan of the Army’s 3rd Special Forces. With them are CAFGU members Jimuel Acebedo, Rolando Quiao and James, Gabriel and Janjan, all surnamed Iligan. It was not clear at press time whether the last three are siblings.

They were turned over to the 402nd Brigade of the Philippine Army based in Bancasi, Butuan City in the presence of Go and the young Duterte.

The four others who were released earlier were with them.

Go said talks with the NPA did not stop since December last year. A friend of the young Duterte sought their help as he is a relative of one of the hostages.

“We can’t say no that request. It was a plea by a friend,” said Go, who pulled out of the campaign trail in Luzon for this immediate undertaking,

but as a private citizen.

“It helps to keep an open line to dialogue with the rebels,” he said. “I cannot bear seeing our countrymen dying, whether they are soldiers, policemen or rebels. We are Filipinos. War is painful to see.”

**The released hostages are Pfc. Darlino Carino Jr. and Cpl. Eric Manangan of the Army’s 3rd Special Forces. With them are CAFGU members Jimuel Acebedo, Rolando Quiao and James, Gabriel and Janjan, all surnamed Iligan.**

He appreciated the NPA’s release of the hostages, saying the rebels did not ask for anything from him. He said this act may bolster the possibility of another round of peace talks between the government and the Maoist group.

“This is goodwill on their (NPA rebels) part. Maybe the Left is willing to open new doors to peace. President Duterte is willing to talk to them, too,” he added.

Go has been consistently appealing to the NPA to take advantage of President Rodrigo Duterte’s offer of peace.

As part of his senatorial bid, he has prepared a legislative agenda that include localized peace talks, as he noted that the roots of the communist insurgency are oftentimes anchored on the unique situations in different areas of the country.

“I am in favor of localized peace talks,” he said.

In July 2018, Go also successfully facilitated the release from NPA hands of Insp. Menardo Cui Sr., deputy chief of police of President Roxas, North Cotabato.

His other legislative agenda include programs for improved health services, agriculture, anti-illegal drugs and criminality, housing, education, fire protection and prevention, anti-corruption, long-term sports development, creation of a Department of OFW, barangay welfare and improved benefits for senior citizens.

**CRP**

## Troops foil NPA from burning heavy equipment

By Francisco Tuyay

ARMY troops foiled an attempt by New People's Army terrorists to burn down heavy equipment being used in a road construction project following a clash in South Cotabato Tuesday evening even as an NPA rebel was killed in a separate skirmish in Misamis Occidental Monday.

Lt. Col. Ezra Balagtey, Information Officer of the Eastern Mindanao Command said the plan by the NPA to set fire to a heavy equipment was aborted after they were intercepted by soldiers from the 27th Infantry

Battalion in Sitio Lamfinik, Brgy Lamfugon, Lake Sebu town at about 8 p.m.

Balagtey said troops under Col. Adonis Bajao, commander of the 1002nd Infantry Brigade were securing an ongoing road construction project at the said area when they spotted about seven NPA rebels acting suspiciously.

A 20-minute gun battle erupted after which the NPA team scampered to different direction. The brief clash did not inflict any casualty on both sides.

On Feb. 14, an NPA rebel band torched four heavy construction equipment—three backhoes and a bulldozer being used in a road widening project at Kaliwa Dam in Infanta, Quezon.

After the burning, the NPAs fled towards the boundaries of Laguna and Quezon but were intercepted by pursuing army troopers from the 1st Infantry Bat-

talion, sparking a firefight which killed a rebel who turned out to be an undergraduate student of veterinary Medicine at the University of the Philippines Los Baños identified as John Carlo Capistrano Alberto.

Major. Gen. Felimon Santos Jr., commander of the Eastern Mindanao Command which has jurisdiction in South Cotabato said his troops are committed to guard government flagship program in his turf.

"Our security and military operations are committed to establishing a psychologically secured environment which allows the implementation of government projects in the hinterlands that will benefit our marginal and isolated communities," Santos said. 13

# NPA releases 2 militiamen

By MIKE CRISMUNDO

BUTUAN CITY—After two months in captivity, two militiamen were freed by their New People's Army (NPA) abductors in the hinterland of Remedios Trinidad Romualdez in Agusan del Norte province.

In his flash report to Police Regional Office 13 (PRO 13) regional headquarters at Camp Col. Rafael Rodriguez here and Agusan del Norte Police Provincial Office (PPO), RTR Chief of Police Senior Inspector Noel Galindoo identified the militiamen as AJ Reginal and Bernabe Salahay.

They were freed by their abductors at 1:30 p.m. on Monday in Sitio Kaunlaran, Barangay Tagbongabong, RTR, Agusan del Norte, he said.

The release of AJ Reginal and Bernabe Salahay brings down to eight—two soldiers and six Citizen Armed Forces Geographical Unit Active Auxiliary (CAA) members—

—the remaining captives still being held by the NPA somewhere in the hinterland of Diwata ranges in Caraga region.

Reginal and Salahay were captured in separate instances in Agusan del Sur and Agusan del Norte in Dec. 19.

The militiamen were turned over by the NPA to third party facilitators at about 1:30 p.m. Monday in Barangay Tagbongabong, RTR town.

Earlier, six other hostaged CAAs were released by their abductors in Barangay San Juan, Bayugan City, Agusan del Sur province on Feb. 14.

Meanwhile, Joaquin Jacinto, alleged spokesman of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines-Mindanao, said the release of the hostages proves that it is still open to resuming peace talks with the Duterte administration.

The release was a "gesture of goodwill" despite the government's failure to suspend military operations, he added.

## ACROSS THE COUNTRY

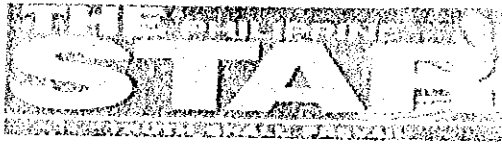
### MNLF men held over killing of MILF commander

NORTH COTABATO – Four men tagged in the killing of Jun Pananggulon, head of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front's 108th Base Command, in an ambush in M'lang town on Sunday were arrested on Monday.

Superintendent Aldrin Gonzalez, spokesman for the Soccsksargen police, said Akmad Abdul, 26; Bito Anog, 42; Nindie Sinumalong Dengkang, 27, and Tengan Tantong Anog, 52, members of the Moro National Liberation Front, were apprehended by personnel of the M'lang police and 7th Infantry Battalion in Barangay Gaunan.

Pannaggulon and his aide Toto Mangulayan were on their way to a banana farm when they were shot. Pananggulon died at the scene. Mangulayan was wounded and remains confined in a hospital. – John Unson





## Severed feet in Jolo blast site not from 23 fatalities

By EMMANUEL TUPAS

The two pairs of severed feet recovered at the site of the twin bombings in Jolo, Sulu last month do not belong to any of the 23 civilian and military fatalities, police said yesterday.

"Base sa interview nung mga relatives ng mga namatay, wala sa kanilang mga mahal sa buhay ang nawalan ng paa," Philippine National Police (PNP) spokesman Senior Superintendent Bernard Banac told reporters.

Authorities suspected the pairs of severed feet belong to an Indonesian couple who carried out the attacks.

Probers had earlier said suicide bombers perpetrated the attacks, which were coordinated with the group of Abu Sayyaf leader Hatib Sawadjaan.

The PNP Crime Laboratory is expected to release the results of the DNA test on the severed feet within the week.

Based on physical examination, Banac said the pairs of mutilated feet belong to a

man and a woman.

PNP Crime Laboratory director Chief Superintendent Rolando Hinanay said examination of the severed feet is ongoing.

### Aid for victims of bombings

Meanwhile, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) has released more than P300,000 in assistance to victims of the bombings in Jolo and Zamboanga City.

The DSWD said the Zamboanga peninsula regional office distributed food packs as well as hygiene and sleeping kits to survivors of the Jolo blasts.

The agency also provided medical assistance to those wounded in the explosions.

The families of those killed in the explosion in Zamboanga City received burial assistance of P5,000 each.

The DSWD said social workers are visiting the wounded to determine the other forms of assistance they might need.

— With Janvic Mateo

# PRRD to install 80-man BTA this week - OPAPP

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

The Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) on Tuesday said the 80-member Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) will take their oaths of office in Malacañang this week.

The BTA is the interim government of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) which replaced the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao following the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL).

The BARMM will have a parliamentary form of government.

But the Palace has yet to announce the names of BTA appointees.

The BTA will be led by a chief minister and two deputy chief ministers.

Aside from President Duterte, also expected to attend are the leadership of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), local government executives, legislators, and international partners.

Presidential Peace Adviser Secretary Carlito Galvez Jr., had earlier said majority of the BTA appointees are MILF members.

Galvez said President Duterte is counting on the BTA to ensure "effective governance" in the proposed new autonomous region and desires for BTA members to have "no record of corruption" and be "sincere public servants."

"The President said there should be good governance, effective governance. Even if the law is good but then we cannot implement it well so the President's

prerequisites are the persons must have no record of corruption and they are sincere public servants," Galvez said.

The MILF has reportedly nominated 41 representatives to the BTA; the government, 39. Nine nominees will come from the side of the MNLF.

"It will be multi-sectoral and there will be equitable representation from the different provinces," Galvez said.

"We are waiting for the authorization for the BTA and the appointment coming from the President. Once these are signed, we will commence with the period of transition," he said.

Incumbent officials of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) government will also be part of the interim body until their term of office ends on June 30, 2019.

"Mayroong significant tasking ang BTA tulad ng important legislations na dapat mapasa. Unang-una 'yong Bangsamoro Administrative Code, Bangsamoro Revenue Code, Bangsamoro Electoral Code, Bangsamoro Local Government Code, Bangsamoro Education Code (The BTA has important tasks one of which is passing important legislations like the Bangsamoro Administrative Code, Bangsamoro Revenue Code, Bangsamoro Electoral Code, Bangsamoro Local Government Code, and Bangsamoro Education Code)," Deputy Presidential Peace Adviser Nabil Tan had earlier said.

The BTA, he added, may also craft a Bangsamoro Civil Service Code but it will still be subject to the review and approval of the Civil Service Commission.

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### 3 Maute bandits surrender in Lanao del Sur

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

Three Maute members submitted themselves to the troops of the Army's 49th Infantry Battalion in Sultan Dumalondong, Lanao del Sur on Monday, February 18, 2019.

Lieutenant Colonel Edgar Allan Villanueva, commander of the Army's 49th Infantry Battalion, said the three were under sub-leader Mubarak Manalo, also known as alias Mubarak.

The three also turned over one M2 Carbine rifle and assorted magazines and ammunitions.

"The continuous surrender of Maute

members is a result of the collaboration with local government units (LGUs) in our area of responsibility," said Colonel Romeo Brawner, 103rd Infantry Brigade Commander.

The newly designated Joint Task Force ZamPelan (Zamboanga Peninsula, Lanao) commander, Brigadier General Roberto Ancan, commended the efforts of the troops and the LGU of Sultan Dumalondong.

"Peace and security are a shared responsibility. We acknowledge the efforts of the LGU and stakeholders of Sultan Dumalondong for the successful surrender of the Daesh-inspired

remnants," Ancan said.

"We also call for other remnants to surrender, lay down their arms and return to the folds of the law and work with us in attaining a peaceful and progressive province of Lanao del Sur," he added.

Armed Forces of the Philippines-Western Mindanao Command (AFP-WestMinCom) chief Lieutenant General Arnel B. Dela Vega lauded the troops of the Joint Task Force ZamPelan for their unrelenting conduct of operations against the terrorists in their area of operations which yielded positive results.

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February 2010

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### 3 Maute, sumuko sa Army

Sumuko ang tatlong miyembro ng Maute sa Army's 49th Infantry Battalion sa Sultan Dumalondong, Lanao del Sur, nitong Lunes.

Ayon kay Lieutenant Colonel Edgar Allan Villanueva, commander ng Army's 49th Infantry Battalion, ang

tatlo ay nasa ilalim ng pamamahala ni sub-leader Mubarak Manalo, na kilala rin sa alyas na Mubarak.

Itinurn over din ng tatlo ang isang M2 Carbine rifle at iba't ibang magazine at bala.

"The continuous surrender of

Maute members is a result of the collaboration with local government units (LGUs) in our area of responsibility," ayon kay Colonel Romeo Brawner, 103rd Infantry Brigade Commander.

Francis T. Wakefield

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## Gov't to turn Marawi City into prime tourist destination

By GENALYN D. KABILING

The government is aiming to transform war-torn Marawi City into one of the country's prime tourist destinations after its massive rehabilitation.

Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) chair Eduardo del Rosario said they intend to sustain the rebuilding of Marawi and keep peace and order in a bid to attract tourists in the future.

"Ang peaceful environment ay napakaimportanteng aspeto ng ating rehabilitation. Masasabi ko nga 50 percent lang ang infra, another 50 percent is to have a peaceful environment para iyong stigma ng Lanao Del Sur; ang Marawi City, kaya walang pumupuntang mga tourists ay natatakot, kailangan mawala po iyon. [A peaceful environment is an important aspect of our rehabilitation. I would say 50 percent for infrastructure, another 50 percent is to have a peaceful environment so the stigma of Lanao del Sur; of Marawi City must be removed. Tourists are not coming over since they are afraid]," Del Rosario said during a Palace press briefing.

"And our objective is to ensure that Marawi will be one of the best tourist attractions in Mindanao at the end of the rehabilitation," he added.

Del Rosario also said the government needs the cooperation of Marawi

residents to keep their communities safe and thwart the return of any Islamic State-linked lawless elements to their town.

"They should be one with us in ensuring that they will not allow the entry of the terrorists na mga ISIS-Maute Group na makapasok," he said.

"If the citizens themselves are active in telling the military once there are faces and they feel that they are terrorists, it's their responsibility now to immediately report to the military," he added.

In May, 2017, the Islamic State-linked Maute Group attacked Marawi City, leaving more than a hundred people dead and displacing thousands of families from their homes.

The conflict ended after a five-month intense battle between government troops and the rebels that left the city in ruins. A massive rehabilitation and recovery program has been put in place by the government to bring the Marawi community back on its feet.

Debris clearing operations in the most affected areas of Marawi started last year and are expected to be finished by August or September. Road networks and public utilities would also be built during the first stage of the rebuilding process.

The government aims to complete the multibillion-peso Marawi recovery program by December, 2021.

4p

## Marawi no 'ghost town' — task force

AN inter-agency task force leading rehabilitation efforts in war-torn Marawi City on Tuesday disputed a report that said the city remained a "ghost town" more than a year after it was liberated from terrorist influence.

Task Force Bangon Marawi Chairman Eduardo del Rosario described Marawi City as "alive and booming," contrary to a *Washington Post* article published

✶'Ghost town'A8

### ■ 'GHOST TOWN' FROM A1

## Marawi

February 1, which stated "Marawi looks almost as it did when the bombs and bullets stopped flying in October 2017."

*"Mukhang masyadong off-tangent ito sa katotohanan at kung anong nangyayari talaga sa Marawi City. Pag sinasabi kasi nating ghost city, ang papasok sa ating mind eh walang nangyayari at napapabayaan ng gobyerno, na wala pong katotohanan (It seems to be off-tangent from the truth, from what is happening in Marawi. If you say it's a ghost city, what comes to our mind is that nothing changed and the government did nothing, which is not true),"* del Rosario told reporters.

*"Ang Marawi City ngayon, if you will go there mahirapan kang makarating hanggang sa center of the city dahil napakagrabe ng traffic; business activity, economic activity and movement of people.*

So many vehicles *ang nagpupunta na sa Marawi City and this triggers economic activity (If you go to Marawi City, you'd find it hard to reach the center of the city because of the heavy traffic. [There's] business activity, economic activity and movement of the people. Many vehicles are already going to Marawi City, and this triggers economic activity),"* he added.

Del Rosario added that the *Washington Post* article "overly dramatized negatively" the current situation in Marawi City, the capital of

Lanao del Sur province in southern Mindanao.

He noted that the most affected area, which was leveled during a five-month battle between government troops and Islamic State-inspired Maute rebels in 2017, only comprised 250 hectares of Marawi's total land area of 8,000 hectares.

*"We'd just like to say the reality on the ground na ito ay walang katugmang nangyayari (that the story does not match anything here) na [it's] a ghost city, but instead it's full of economic activity and I think this can be attributed to the whole government approach, convergence efforts na ginagawa ng ating gobyerno (that is being done by our government)... Now city na talaga (it's really a city) and it is alive and booming,"* he added.

The task force head expressed confidence that the rehabilitation of Marawi would be completed in 2021.

*"The challenge now is the consent of the residents to give their willingness, their consent for their houses to be demolished. Four-hundred-fifty houses were demolished last week and we expect that others will follow,"* he said.

The government has set a P67.9-billion budget for the comprehensive rehabilitation.

Finance Assistant Secretary Antonio Joselito Lambino said around P41.8 billion has been raised through concessional financing as well as international grants.

He said the remaining portion of the budget would be raised through the offering of Marawi bonds. CATHERINE S. VALENTE

## 'Marawi is alive and booming'

BY JOCELYN MONTEMAYOR

THE Task Force Bangon Marawi yesterday said Marawi City is "alive and booming" as rehabilitation efforts and rebuilding of lives in the war-torn city continues.

Task force chairman Eduardo del Rosario issued the statement following Washington Post report that described Marawi City as a "ghost city" and which said it looks almost like it did after government forces defeated the Maute terror group in October 2017.

The Maute attacked and later occupied several barangays in the city in May 2017. The five-month armed conflict killed at least 1,000 terrorists and government troops.

Del Rosario said the Washington Post article was "off tangent" from the truth. He said when one says "ghost city," it means nothing is happening and government has neglected the area.

Del Rosario said there are business and economic activities

See MARAWI ► Page B3



## MARAWI

in the city, even causing heavy traffic.

"If you will go there, mahirapan kang makarating hanggang sa center of the city dahil napakagrabe ng traffic -- business activity, economic activity and movement of people. So many vehicles ang nagpupunta na sa Marawi City at this triggers economic activity. So wala pong katotohanan itong lumabas sa Washington Post, kasi lahat nang nakakausap natin natawaw nga. Bakit mo sasabihin na ghost city ("If you will go there, it would be difficult to reach the center of the city because traffic is very heavy -- business activity, economic activity and movement of people. So many vehicles are in Marawi City and this triggers economic activity. So there is no truth to the story that came out at the Washington Post. Those we talked with are even laughing. Why would you say it's a ghost city?)" he said.

The Washington Post's February article, titled "Philippine forces cleared this city of Islamist militants in 2017. It's still a ghost town," also showed photos and videos of deserted roads, and destroyed houses and mosques.

A part of the article said: "More than a year since Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte declared

the city liberated, Marawi looks almost as it did when the bombs and bullets stopped flying in October 2017, following five months of urban combat. Not a single new structure has been built. Almost none of the debris has been cleared. Snakes and mosquitoes infest the bright-green canopy of weeds engulfing the ruins. The odd stray dog has taken refuge inside battle-ravaged buildings."

It also said about 100,000 Marawi residents have not returned to their homes and are living with relatives or in camps.

Del Rosario said the report may have been "dramatized negatively" because the city is "alive and booming."

He said report may have been referring to the 250-hectare ground zero, which only accounts for 0.03 percent of Marawi's total area of 8,000 hectares.

Del Rosario said that land development in some areas in the city started as early as August 2017, or while the siege was still ongoing and at the risk of the lives and limbs of government forces.

He said this is why President Duterte, in January 2018, was able to distribute about 500 temporary shelter units to displaced families.

Del Rosario said as of January 2019, about 2,000 temporary shelters have been completed. About 2,500 temporary shelter

homes are targeted for completion by March and 4,500 by the end of the year.

The groundbreaking ceremony for the rehabilitation of Marawi was held on Oct. 30, 2018 or about two weeks from its original schedule, which was Oct. 17, 2018, the anniversary of President Duterte's declaration of the city's liberation.

Del Rosario said government is prioritizing projects on debris management and road network construction, which are expected to be completed either by August or September.

He said road construction work is expected to begin in June or July.

Among the infrastructure projects on the pipeline are rebuilding and expansion of bridges and roads.

Government said rehabilitation efforts are within the timeline, and that they expect to complete the rehabilitation by December 2021.

Finance Assistant Secretary Tony Lambino said government has set a P67.99-billion budget for the comprehensive rehabilitation, about P41.8 billion of which has been raised with the help of other countries and international organizations.

Lambino said government is planning to raise the remaining portion of the budget through the offering of Marawi bonds.

## Spain offers P2.6B for Marawi

DAVAO CITY – The government of Spain has offered \$50 million or roughly P2.617 billion to support the rehabilitation and recovery of the war-torn Marawi City, Mindanao Development Authority (MinDA) public relations head Adrian Tamayo said.

Tamayo said that Spain Ambassador to the Philippines Jorge Moragas made this announcement during his courtesy call on MinDA secretary Abul Khayr D. Alonto on Monday.

Aside from aid, Tamayo said Moragas discussed the various development efforts of the Spanish govern-

ment in Mindanao.

He said the aid for Marawi, destroyed by a five-month armed encounters between government forces and Islamic state-inspired militants in 2017, will be set aside for the infrastructure development and social services.

Also, Tamayo said both officials shared mutual interests on the possibility of governmental partnership on agro-economic zones, power infrastructure for Tawi-Tawi, education, and culture and language in the future. (Antonio Collina)

## Marawi rehab on track

The government is on track to complete the rehabilitation program of war-torn Marawi City, now known as "The Rise Plan," by December 2021.

Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) chair Eduardo del Rosario gave a progress report on the Marawi rebuilding program as he rejected allegations the city was still a "ghost town" months after 2017 deadly terror siege.

"If we have what we called the Marshall Plan in the rehabilitation of Europe after World War II, it was called the Marshall Plan. For Marawi we are calling it 'The Rise Plan' or the Duterte administration's 'Rise Plan' that stands for resiliency, identity, sustainability and evolution," he said during a Palace press briefing.

"We have been saying it will be completed by December 2021. We are still within our timeline," he added.

Del Rosario said they expect to finish the debris management in Marawi's most affected areas by August or September. Afterwards, the construction of roads, school buildings, barangay halls, the convention center and other infrastructure projects will begin.

Around 2,500 temporary shelters will also be built by March to be given to families displaced by the terror siege. The government aims to build 4,500 temporary houses by the end of the year, according to Del Rosario.

The government earlier pegged the total rehabilitation cost of Marawi at P67.9 billion, including P17 billion for the the most affected areas covering 24 barangays.

While rebuilding works are ongoing in ground zero, Del Rosario said the larger part of Marawi was actually "alive" and "booming" with economic activity. (Genalyn Kabiling)

## 40 ex-Abu Sayyaf men get houses

Forty former Abu Sayyaf members were given new houses in Tipo-Tipo, Basilan on Saturday.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines-Western Mindanao Command (AFP-WestMinCom), said the housing units were

turned over to the former Abu Sayyaf members by outgoing ARMM Governor Mujiv Hataman; Colonel Fernando Reyeg of the Joint Task Force (JTF) Basilan; and Soler Undug of the Basilan District Engineering Office.

Through the Program against Violent Extremism, the houses were constructed by the ARMM-Bangsamoro Regional Inclusive Development for Growth and Empowerment under the supervision of the BDEO.

Lieutenant General Arnel dela Vega, commander of the Western Mindanao Command, said the grant reflects the commitment of the government and other stakeholders in expediting the reintegration of Abu Sayyaf members who returned to the folds of the law.

The turnover was held at 12 noon on Saturday. (Francis T. Wakefield)

*Handwritten signature/initials*

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## Unwanted war and the MDT

**O**ur Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT) with the United States is in the limelight again, after Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana called for its review.

The objection to the MDT is the US treaty obligation. Most of us want a NATO-type guarantee that "an attack on one member is an attack on all," instead of the provision in the MDT that, in case of an armed attack, "x x x each party will act in accordance with its constitutional processes."

These discussions are based on the premise that treaties are sacrosanct. In World War I, the Germans stated that a treaty is a "mere scrap of paper" when it invaded Belgium, in violation of the treaty guaranteeing the neutrality of that country. Britain and France exploited the German statement by creating the fiction that treaty commitments are sacrosanct. Actually, treaties throughout history have never been sacrosanct.

During prolonged wars, like the Napoleonic, the Peloponnesian and the Hundred Years' wars, treaties were not merely ignored, members of an alliance also often switched sides. In World War II, at least six countries—Finland, Italy, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania—changed sides. In 1938, the British and the French dumped their treaty obligation and allowed Hitler to annex Czechoslovakia, thus confirming that what the Germans said in WWI was correct.

Since treaty commitments are not sacrosanct, there is a better explanation: that even without a treaty, a country will go to war if its national interest is at stake.

### COMMENTARY

HERMENEGILDO C. CRUZ

This is best explained by a comment in the United States after Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1991: "We will not intervene in Kuwait if it exports only tomatoes."

Consequently, a grand coalition was formed to liberate Kuwait in 1991. None of the coalition members had any defense treaty with Kuwait. The casus belli of the coalition was to uphold the UN Charter; the hidden agenda was to prevent Hussein from controlling the world oil market.

Thus, national interest and the historical record of a country are better indicators of how a country will react to a given crisis. In the case of the United States, freedom of navigation has been a cornerstone of its foreign policy. To uphold this principle, the United States had fought four wars: the war against the Barbary pirates in 1805, the war of 1812 versus Britain, and World Wars I and II.

In 1812, the United States was still a developing country. Nonetheless, it took on England, the superpower of that time, on the issue of freedom of navigation. The United States had prospered through trade and commerce, hence its commitment to uphold freedom of navigation.

If China can convert the West Philippine Sea (WPS) into a Chinese lake, it will have the ability to interdict not only world trade and commerce, but also the projection of US power overseas. The US naval

battle groups in the Pacific and in the Persian Gulf, for example, cannot mutually support each other in a crisis. If the United States allows this to happen, it will mean the end of Pax Americana. A superpower can remain thus only if it can freely navigate the seven seas and project its power to all parts of the globe.

Great Britain became so weakened by World War II that the Royal Navy ceased to rule the waves. Thus, it had to give up its world empire. It is highly unlikely that the United States will be the first superpower to abdicate its status by default, without going to war to uphold freedom of navigation. War will be the case if China interdicts freedom of navigation in the WPS.

In this regard, we may be looking the wrong way at the MDT. The imminent danger is that the United States may drag us into a war for which we are not prepared. Chinese hostile action against a US vessel conducting "freedom of navigation" trips in the WPS is covered by the MDT. The vessels and aircraft of both parties (the Philippines and the United States) is part of the "treaty area" in the MDT. This has been the case throughout history—the powerful member of an alliance dragging the weaker ally into an unwanted war. *M*

Hermenegildo C. Cruz was a career diplomat serving as our ambassador to the United Nations, the Soviet Union and to Chile and Bolivia. He holds the degree of master of arts in law and diplomacy from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy.

## The grand bargain

There was a brief spasm of soul-searching in the wake of the behavior of some nurses at Tuburan District Hospital. The behavior of the nurses—"shocking indifference to and deliberate neglect of" a man riddled with bullets from a supposed shoot-out with cops, as yesterday's Inquirer editorial put it—was at least acted upon by the authorities, leading to the nurses being fired. If the behavior of the nurses was appalling, then at least what seemed to be widespread outrage over their behavior is somewhat reassuring. We haven't fully lost our communal (and individual) ability to be shocked.

The soul-searching (along the lines of what kind of a society is this, that has its own health workers unmoved by suffering and seemingly disinclined to live up to the Hippocratic Oath) involved mulling over the long-term consequences of the President's so-called "war on drugs." An incident that happened the day before the shooting in Cebu reinforces my belief that there is a simple trade-off that's taken place, one I've described previously but which bears repeating. The trade-off is that the President gets to place himself above the law, by taking upon himself total responsibility for acts he has ordered his subordinates to undertake.

I leave it to academics to elaborate on the philosophical and other underpinnings of this development (start with "Führerprinzip," Weber and charismatic leadership, and Ian Ker-shaw's "Working Towards the Führer"). But, in practical terms, what we have at work in this simple, stark, all-encompassing arrogation unto himself of all responsibility—legal, spiritual, moral—for any and all effects of his policies, such as the "war on drugs," is combining our society's age-old passivity in the face of assertions



### THE LONG VIEW

MANUEL L. QUEZON III

of power with our version of the social compact—that obedience is premised on results, the most fundamental being instilling order.

From people who have conducted fieldwork among different sectors, a common observation seems to be that the President's policy of liquidations comes as no surprise, since the use of force to deadly effect is a common enough reality in local governments. The difference is that, instead of simply being for partisan or personal gain, here, in the national liquidation scheme, it is ostensibly being done for the public good—and there are surveys aplenty to underscore that it is a fact that the public accepts this basic assertion, though tempered by the fear that it may turn out otherwise, after all. Hence a public that applauds the policy of liquidation, while confessing fear over how those chosen for liquidation may not be rigorously vetted at all.

But again, it's the simple trade-off that upholds the President as not only supreme law enforcer, but also supreme in that one-word expression of that innermost desire of the population for order to come out of chaos: "Will,"

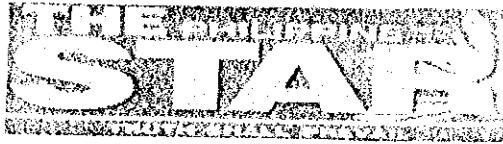
more often than not prefaced with "political," which whitewashes a desire for ruthlessness with a layer of democratic legitimacy, as to be political assumes it is done with consent.

It is significant that the day before the gruesome video was filmed in that provincial hospital, the President was reported to have thundered and shrilled yet again, saying he'd told officers in a command conference, "*Ta-pusin na natin ito sa panahon ko*, while I'm still here ready to assume singly. I will assume full legal responsibility for whatever it is. And they can hang me if they want. No problem."

The offer he made to the police still doesn't seem to have many takers among the military. And while the military shows signs of having made its own uneasy alliance with the President—by means of his not just nullifying but reversing his previous policy of collaboration with the communists, and replacing their slots in the administration with retired officers—it apparently continues to balk at being drafted into liquidating neighborhood individuals.

It may simply be a cold calculus of accountability at work here on the part of the military. The President himself has complained that his clear formula for evading legal repercussions from liquidations was flouted by incompetent or corrupt cops, or both; a professional soldier, faced with this (to them) typical Philippine National Police mess, wouldn't want to be associated with it in any way. On the other hand, the lines of authority, the room for maneuver, the rules of engagement, for liquidating the New People's Army or those suspected of enabling them—here, the Armed Forces of the Philippines can say it knows its business.

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## letters

### Expressions of appreciation

We ought to thank Admiral Philip Davidson, chief of the US Navy's Indo-Pacific Command for recognizing not only the effort of Filipino soldiers during the Marawi siege, but also the counter-terrorism operations of the Philippine government.

The continuing actions of our soldiers resulted to the arrest of a number of individuals involved in the Marawi incident. This only proves that the government is serious in ending this senseless mayhem.

The statement of Davidson gave an affirmation that the Filipino soldiers are on

the right track in countering terrorism.

With this developments, the Filipino people conveyed their support to our soldiers, sent letters to our heroes, others ordered food from a certain food chain. And I know that the Armed Forces of the Philippines appreciates these expressions of love from our countrymen.

May these expressions of appreciation for our troops continue not only during crisis but all the more every single day that these soldiers are in the battlefield. - EZEKIEL MANAOIS, kiel.manaois@yahoo.com



## The truth about Ressa and her vilification of Duterte

If not for Maria Ressa and Rappler's vilification



RIGOBERTO D. TIGLAO

campaign against President Duterte and the Philippines, and her success in getting foreign media entities to portray her as a heroine of press freedom, her journalism career would have crashed years ago.

► TiglaoA6

Ressa is therefore unlikely to give up her portrayal of herself as a victim of the suppression of the press in a country which she says has a media that have been cowed.

In the description of her in Rappler and in other foreign award-giving sites, she is portrayed as a distinguished journalist who was given more than seven awards by international media outfits, including one as *Time* magazine's "Person of the Year."

This were all given only in 2018 after Ressa, with the help of Yellow forces, managed to portray internationally as instances of Duterte's alleged authoritarianism the actions of two state agencies in upholding our rule of law.

First, the Securities and Exchange Commission's ruled that it had violated the constitutional ban on foreign money in media. And second, the National Bureau of Investigation decided to pursue a private citizens' libel charge against Ressa.

That is, in just a year of her efforts in portraying the Philippines as under authoritar-

ian rule, Ressa got at least seven awards and international acclaim (or sympathy). In contrast, she couldn't get a single such award in her 16 years with CNN.

(The Wikipedia entry on Ressa reports that she received an Overseas Press Club Award for Best Documentary and the National Headliner Award for Investigative Journalism, presumably before 2018. The two awards' websites though do not report her receiving such honors.)

### Three elephants

I had admired Ressa for her audacity in going into broadcast media which, especially in the US, has three elephants in their news studios, which would have quickly trampled her.

First is its bias against non-whites. Second is the bias for staff whose physical features conform to Anglo-Saxon notions of beauty. And third is the bias against women. A cursory research makes this point obvious. CNN has about 200 anchors and correspondents.

How many are black females? Two. How many of Asian descent? Three. How many aren't Anglo-Saxon lookers? None.

This is not my opinion but the result of numerous scholarly studies on US media and its biases. US media outfits' rush to defend Ressa, I suspect, is an instance of their hypocrisy and their collective guilt for their bigotry.

Ressa managed to stay long at CNN because a major concern of US and its media minions had emerged: The outbreak of Islamic terrorism in the Philippines and in Indonesia. CNN exploited her: Ressa's looks and her family links in the two coun-

tries (one parent is Indonesian, I was told, but cannot confirm) made it easy for her to access sources among terrorists and government.

Despite her coverage though, the three elephants in CNN's news studios eventually got to kick her out. I was told that she was given that "resign or be fired" kind of message by CNN early in 2003, when she was Jakarta bureau chief. And she thought she could be CNN's next Cristiane Amanpour, her career idol. Did you notice that CNN as an institution didn't issue a statement in support of its former staff?

### Resign or be fired

ABS-CBN recruited her in 2004 to head its news division, the idea of its president then, a purportedly marketing genius, Freddie Garcia, who argued that Ressa would give the oligarch-owned station the "CNN sheen" of excellence. Chairman Gabby Lopez was said to have been delighted that he would be seen as the Philippines' Ted Turner.

Ressa though proved to be a big headache for Lopez, insiders in the network reported. (See for instance <https://www.thedailysentry.net/2018/10/a-scandalous-mess-that-maria-ressa-of.html?m=1>)

Did you notice that neither ABS-CBN, nor its media bigwigs like its president Charo Santos, Luchie Cruz-Valdez, Karen Davila and Charie Villa have spoken a word in defense of their former colleague, a "kabaro" at that? Yel-



low leader Mar Roxas – if not for his wife Korina Sanchez – would have raised a howl over Ressa's "persecution," but didn't.

All these women despised Ressa, for various reasons, and bugged Lopez to fire her. Many in the network, even Lopez's conservative relatives, were allegedly also scandalized over Ressa's open lesbian relationship with Lilibeth Frondoso – married but separated – who became some kind of power in the network because of her closeness to the controversial news head. Gabby's mestizo executives and friends incessantly asked him: "Are you really comfortable with Ressa being the face of ABS-CBN?"

Gabby Lopez, I was told by insiders, got the excuse to give Ressa the "resign-or-be-fired" message when he got undeniable proof that she was moonlighting, that is, giving interviews, for a fee, on Philippine developments with CNN and other US media outfits (whom she would later tap to raise a howl against the libel charge against her). Her services to ABS-CBN was exclusive, according to her contract.

## End of career

That would have been the end of Ressa's career in broadcast media. The Philippine broadcast industry is a small, gossipy world, and no other media enterprise – even Manuel Pangilinan's new Channel 5 to whom she sent feelers to join – would take her in. Al-Jazeera, which had been pirating CNN broadcasters, was run by British executives and had the same three elephants of bigotry in their studies.

While her work in covering terrorists in the Philippines and Indonesia got her to be a consultant in academic and intelligence institutions in the US, her expertise in Islamic jihad became gradually doubted because of her exaggeration of the extent of the network of the Islamist jihadists in Southeast Asia, and her conclusion that these were all directed by al-Qaeda.

For instance, in her 2012 book *Seeds of Terror: An Eyewitness*

*Account of Al-Qaeda's Newest Center,* Ressa claimed that the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) was really a part of al-Qaeda, and that its Camp Abubakar was a sprawling training camp for the Bin Laden terrorist group.

She even stridently criticized former President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo for undertaking peace talks with the insurgent groups, and even reported claims that her military sold arms to the MILF. In a self-serving way since she had covered two countries in the region that had Muslim terrorists, Ressa's thesis was that Southeast Asia – because Indonesia had the biggest Muslim population while the Philippines was weak in fighting terrorists – would be the center of Islamic jihad in the world.

Obviously, subsequent events – the peace agreement with the MILF and the decline of al-Qaeda as well as Bin Laden's killing – made Ressa's expertise passé, if not inaccurate. The US and the West's main concern became the rise of the Islamic State, which was far, far beyond Ressa's world of Southeast Asian jihadists. Her narrow field of expertise in journalism, Islamic jihad in Southeast Asia, became useless.

## Devastating

That would have been the end of Ressa's journalistic career which would have been devastating for her immense ego which, going by accounts of those who have worked with her, compensated for her diminutive size and looks.

She found a new career when the Benigno Aquino 3rd camp, after he assumed power in 2010, had the brilliant idea of setting up a news website, in order to control the emerging world of social media, and to form a tag team with the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* the Yellows had their thumbs on.

The plan became urgent when Aquino decided to undertake the unprecedented project of removing the Chief Justice, Renato Corona. It was his clan's last-resort move to control the Supreme Court so it would rule that the

agrarian-reform compensation for his clan's Hacienda Luisita would be P10 billion, not the P200 million the Agrarian Reform department calculated it should be.

Rappler officially went online Jan. 1, 2012 a few days before Corona's impeachment trial started, with even its first major story – symbolically? – a false one that claimed that the Chief Justice cheated to get his PhD, which is still posted by the website.

As my colleague Yen Makabenta wrote yesterday: "Rappler served as cheerleader for every sordid turn in the impeachment trial up to the very end; it said nothing when the prosecution was caught manufacturing evidence, and when Aquino was exposed in his bribery of the senator-jurors."

## Vicious, false articles

Rappler competed in posting having vicious, false articles that demonized Corona with the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*.

It was in fact Rappler's enthusiasm in vilifying Corona to justify its existence to its Yellow overlords that got it into trouble. It reported in May 2012 that Corona was using an SUV owned by a Filipino businessmen involved in "human trafficking and drug smuggling." Of course, that angered the businessmen so much he has pursued a libel case against Rappler.

Ressa has cried to the world that it was just Duterte wanting to suppress Rappler.

Because of its huge technology expenses to build a big audience in cyberspace and its above-industry salaries for Ressa and his gang, Rappler got to the brink of bankruptcy, especially when the Yellows lost power in 2016. The Yellows had difficulties bankrolling it either covertly or overtly such as through contracts with the tourism department. (Because of its success in portraying Duterte as an authoritarian though, Rappler appears to have been recently infused with new Yellow money: Its two new board directors were with Cory Aquino's high officials, Solita Monsod

and Fulgencio Factoran.)

An American, Ressa tapped his contacts with the help of Yellow supporters in New York, and got two US outfits, Omidyar Network and North Base Media to invest P100 million in the website to save it from going under.

## SEC ruling

An American, Ressa probably had never read the Philippine Constitution with its ban on foreigners in media, or she had such a culture of impunity that she thought she could ignore the laws of this puny nation. The Securities and Exchange Commission ruled that indeed Rappler was in violation of the Constitution and must be dissolved.

Ressa panicked and claimed first, that the foreign money was donated to its managers. When that proved impossible (the managers told her they can't pay for the taxes for such gifts), she claimed that the investments were in the form of securities, the kind PLDT and ABS-CBN use to go around the constitutional ban on foreign money in media.

Oops! The Bureau of Internal Revenue read about her explanation, studied it for months, and ruled that Rappler's issuance of securities generated capital gains, which therefore must be taxed. Rappler evaded such payment of P133 million in taxes, the BIR concluded. The Justice department had to agree with the BIR and filed a tax evasion case against Ressa and her executives.

Ressa cried to the world that she is being persecuted. Ressa has vilified her country of birth for her egoistic ambitions.

American media are automatically biased against a Third World leader who doesn't pay obeisance to the US, and after all this puny country is not that important to fact-check the lies a fellow American tells them.

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## Bangsamoro interrupted

**“Reconciling these divergent interests is a daunting challenge for the yet-to-be convened Bangsamoro Transition Authority.”**

The second round of voting for the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) and the expanded territory of the autonomous region ended close to sunset last Tuesday.

For the National Plebiscite Board of Canvassers (NPBoC), a week would provide sufficient lead time for the transmittal of the certificates of canvass (CoC) to the Intramuros office of the Commission on Elections, specifically the provincial CoC from Lanao del Norte and municipal CoC from Alcosan, Carmen, Kabacan, Midsayap, Pigkawayan, Pikit and Tuhunan in North Cotabato.

Thus, the NPBoC had set 11 February as the start of the official canvass of the 6 February plebiscite votes. The required “double majority” resulted in outcomes disastrous for some, but heaven-sent for others, impeding the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) trajectory.



### MOORINGS

Salma Rasul

Unofficial counts from Lanao del Norte indicated the residents of the six towns voting for inclusion in the BARMM. Unfortunately, province mates from the remaining 21 towns refused to acquiesce to such aspirations by voting to retain the towns within the jurisdiction of the province.

In North Cotabato, of the 67 barangays, four opted to remain with their mother municipality.

Earlier, majority of Cotabato City voters had approved the city's inclusion. This despite its history of

rejecting inclusion in the region of autonomy in plebiscites held in 1989 and 2001.

Isabela City's constituents again rejected membership in the region of autonomy, following its negative voting record in plebiscites past.

Such contrasting results reflect the dynamics of local politics.

Cotabato City was a tough sell for pro-BOL/ BARMM advocates, with the city mayor

aggressively campaigning against inclusion. Ironically, of all LGU, Cotabato City reaped the most benefit from the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). With the current seat of the regional government located near the city environs, local businesses have been kept afloat by supplying the various regional offices with products and services. The boom in property development has seen the construction of hotels and malls, establishment of restaurants, car rental services and the consequent employment of locals — all catering to the needs of both the ARMM regional government and its regional assembly, as well as the Bangsamoro Transition Commission and Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro-derivative structures. The morphing of Cotabato City to a bustling metropolis can be directly attributed to its hosting the seat of ARMM government for a couple of decades.

Isabela City's negative vote was primarily anchored on the Catholic Church leadership's opposition to the inclusion, despite Basilan's native son, ARMM Gov. Mujiv Hataman's efforts

to gain support. Even as Basilan overwhelmingly voted for its inclusion, Isabela City continues to be part of Region 9. What a bizarre and unwieldy administrative arrangement.

**“The required “double majority” resulted in outcomes disastrous for some, but heaven-sent for others, impeding the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao trajectory.”**

The entrenched Dimaporo clan staunchly supported the exclusion of the six towns of Lanao del Norte, thus securing a “No” vote. This, despite the presence of Moro Islamic Liberation Front camps under Commander “Bravo” in the contested towns.

Reconciling these divergent interests is a daunting challenge for the yet-to-be convened Bangsamoro Transition Authority.

To those frustrated by the plebiscite results, take solace from Martin Luther King Jr.: “We must accept finite disappointment but not lose infinite hope.”

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## **ONLINE NEWS**

### **20 FEBRUARY 2019**

# **Army upgrades EOD units equipment**

By Priam Nepomuceno February 19, 2019, 2:41 pm

**MANILA** --- Explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) units of the Philippine Army (PA) are constantly upgrading their equipment to improve their capability, an official said Tuesday.

"Currently (the EOD units are) a fresh setup. Though the effort continues on aspect of upgrading its equipment," said Lt. Col. Louie Villanueva, Army spokesperson, in a message to the Philippine News Agency (PNA) when asked if there are plans to beef up its EOD units.

Each EOD company is composed of 50 personnel and are equipped with bomb suits, hooks, and lines, among others.

These units were formed to counter and neutralize threats posed by the continued usage of landmines and similar weapons by the New People's Army (NPA), the PA spokesperson earlier said.

Villanueva said these EOD units are usually deployed via detachments to each infantry divisions to defuse landmines.

The PA is composed of 11 infantry divisions, one mechanized infantry division and one artillery regiment.

A division is composed of between 6,000 to 10,000 officers and enlisted personnel.

"Currently, we have three EOD companies deployed in three main geographical areas (Luzon, Visayas, Mindanao) supporting Army combat units," Villanueva said. **(PNA)**

[www.pna.gov.ph](http://www.pna.gov.ph)

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## **AFP welcomes expanded training with PNP to neutralize threats**

By Priam Nepomuceno February 19, 2019, 2:20 pm

**MANILA** --- Cross-training between elite police and military units will result in the neutralization of threat groups in the country, an official of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) said on Monday.

The AFP issued the comment in the wake of reports that the Philippine National Police (PNP) plans to expand the cross-training of its elite units with the Philippine Army to improve their capability in internal security operations (ISO).

"The AFP and PNP have always been working hand-in-hand in terms of implementing internal security operations in the country," said Col. Noel Detoyato, AFP Public Affairs Office chief, in a message to the Philippine News Agency (PNA).

Aside from giving the PNP greater inter-operability with the military in running after communist rebels and terror groups, it also beefs up the intelligence networks of the AFP and PNP, Detoyato said.

"The AFP and PNP's strengthened ISO efforts have and will continue to benefit both forces in terms of neutralizing more threat group members, encouraging more surrenders, and strengthening the security forces' intelligence network," he added. **(PNA)**

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## **Reds responsible for death of UPLB student in Laguna clash**

By Priam Nepomuceno February 19, 2019, 12:32 pm

**MANILA** -- An official of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) said the New People's Army (NPA) is responsible for the death of a University of the Philippines-Los Baños student in last week's clash in Laguna province.

"The UPLB student is a victim of the CPP-NPA-NDF's (Communist Party of the Philippines-NPA-National Democratic Front) continuous deceit and brain-washing of the vulnerable youth," AFP public affairs office chief Col. Noel Detoyato said Monday.

The UPLB veterinary student was reportedly recruited by the NPA earlier this year and was killed in an encounter with Army troops last February 14.

"They are recruited, taught to wield arms, and eventually meet their untimely and unfortunate death fighting government security forces. The hands of these communist terrorists are stained with the blood of misled youths who could have been productive citizens that support the government's peace and development initiatives," he added.

Detoyato earlier said that such action by the NPA, a listed terrorist organization by the United States and the European Union, should be condemned.

"The schools are supposed to be places where patriotism, discipline and nation-building are being inculcated to our children but the CPP-NPA-NDF (are) exploit(ing) these places," he said. *(PNA)*

[www.pna.gov.ph](http://www.pna.gov.ph)