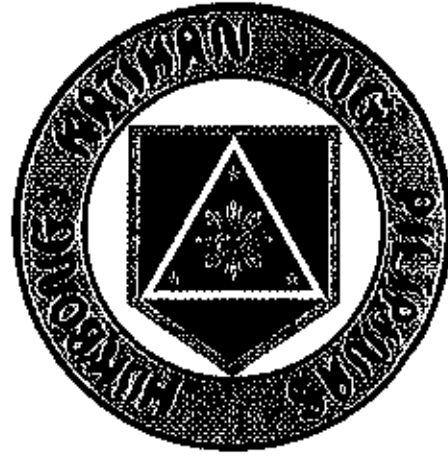


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NEWS CLIPPINGS

12 January 2019

Saturday

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DU30 RENEWS ATTACK ON CHURCH, BISHOPS

STORY BY JULIE M. AURELIO AND NESTOR CORRALES

The President tells street bums to rob and kill Catholic prelates who criticize his war on drugs, and dares the Church to refute sexual abuses of priests as alleged in a tell-all book.

FROM A1

By Julie M. Aurelio
and Nestor Corrales
@Team_Inquirer

President Duterte has lashed out anew at Catholic church leaders, denouncing them as "sons of bitches" and telling street bums to rob and kill bishops.

"Only I can say bishops are sons of bitches, damn you. That is true," Mr. Duterte said in a speech on Thursday night during the groundbreaking ceremony for a public high school in Bulakan, Bulacan.

In remarks he made during Gov. Antonio Koh's birthday party in Masbate a day earlier, the President urged the "tambay" to rob and kill bishops.

"Hey, you bums there when your bishop passes by, rob him. He has lots of money—the son of a bitch. Kill him!" he said.

There was no immediate reaction from the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines.

On his Facebook page on Friday, Manila Auxiliary Bishop Broderick Pabillo, one of the President's critics, posted a quote attributed to a 13th century Persian philosopher: "Silence is the language of God, all else is poor translation."

A similar "kill bishops" remark from Mr. Duterte last De-



UNDER FRESH ATTACK Bishops are expected to resent President Duterte's fresh remarks denouncing some of them as gays and "sons of bitches" for criticizing his bloody war on drugs. —EDWIN BACASMAS

cember was explained by presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo as just "hyperbole" for "dramatic effect."

Sensitivities, sensibilities

Francis Lucas, chief executive officer of Catholic Media Network, played down the President's attacks against the church and the clergy, saying all should show restraint.

"We have to be more sensitive to the sensitivities and sensibilities of others out of re-

spect," Lucas told Reuters.

At the Masbate governor's birthday celebration, Mr. Duterte slammed clergymen who accused him of extrajudicial killings.

He said he was particularly piqued by priests who attack him in church.

"Do not use the pulpit," Mr. Duterte said.

"Have yourself interviewed in your office, (and say) 'We do not like the way Duterte is handling the problem because there

are so many people, innocents, who are killed.' If it were that way, it's OK," he said.

Speaking to the crowd in Bulacan, which included teachers and schoolchildren, the President also said most bishops were gay.

"They should come out in the open, cancel celibacy and allow them to have boyfriends," Mr. Duterte said.

He had "nothing against gays," he said. But he added: "The problem is, who will be-



**[W]hen
your bishop
passes by, rob him.
He has lots
of money—the son
of a bitch. Kill him!**

President Duterte

lieve in you now?"

Mr. Duterte, who claims he was sexually abused by a priest when he was a schoolboy, has denounced the Catholic church as the most hypocritical institution in the country.

Clerical sexual abuse

The Roman Catholic Church is facing clerical sexual abuse scandals in various parts of the world, although there have been no major cases in the Philippines.

In previous speeches, Mr. Duterte called God "stupid" and described the doctrine of the Holy Trinity as "silly."

Holding up the book, "Altar of Secrets: Sex, Politics and Money in the Philippine Catholic Church" to his Bulacan au-

dience, Mr. Duterte dared clergymen to prove him wrong about his allegations against the church and priests.

Corrupt priests

The book by the late journalist Aries Ruffo is about wrongdoings and immorality, including sexual abuse and corruption, by some Catholic priests and bishops.

"If they answer this and say there is one false item here (in the book), wait for Holy Week. I will have myself nailed to the cross here in Bulacan," he said to the applause of his audience.

"But please, not too long. Maybe I can stand 30 minutes. I can bear it, no bragging," Mr. Duterte added.

His main complaint against many clergymen has been their criticisms of his brutal war on drugs and charges of extrajudicial killings.

The Philippine National Police has acknowledged that about 5,000 people, mostly poor people, have been killed in antidrug operations since Mr. Duterte took office in 2016. Human rights groups say the death toll was multiple times higher.

Police reject accusations that the killings were executions, saying drug peddlers and users were killed in shootouts, and officers only acted in self-defense.

—WITH REPORTS FROM REUTERS INQ

DFA passport maker runs off with all data

Passport renewal affected

By HELEN FLORES

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) is requiring some of those renewing their passports to bring their birth certificates as its previous outsourced passport maker "took away" all its applicants' data, Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. said.

"We are rebuilding our files from scratch because previous outsourced passport maker took all the data when contract (was) terminated," Locsin said in his personal Twitter account on Wednesday in response to queries of some netizens.

"Because previous contractor got pissed when terminated it made off with data. We did nothing about it or couldn't because we were in the wrong. It won't happen again. Passports pose national security issues and cannot be kept back by private entities. Data belongs to the state," he said in another post.

DFA Assistant Secretary Elmer Cato said applicants renewing brown or green passports or maroon machine-readable passports are required to submit birth certificates.

"We need to capture and store the document in our database as we no longer have the physical copy of the document," Cato said.

Before the country transitioned to the e-passport, the DFA required the submission of physical copies of birth certificates and marriage

DFA passport

contracts, he said.

Locsin said the DFA will also come up with a system which will record unanswered calls from the public.

The DFA secretary said the agency has been doubling its efforts to hasten passport issuance.

"Nobody in their right mind and good manners deliberately delays issuing passports or any requirement. What for?" he said.

In a Twitter exchange with an overseas Filipino worker (OFW) who encountered a problem renewing his passport

last week, Locsin questioned why it is necessary for applicants to submit their birth certificates when renewing their passports.

"Isn't the expired passport sufficient ID? How many times do you have to prove you are what the State declared you are in the expired passports?" he said, directing the question to Cato.

Since his appointment as DFA secretary in October last year, Locsin, a former journalist and lawmaker, has been using Twitter to address the concerns of the public.

Satellite images confirm surge of China vessels in WPS

By PAOLO ROMERO

Satellite, radar and infrared images taken over a span of six months last year showed an alarming increase of fishing vessels – mostly Chinese – in the West Philippine Sea that not only have further degraded marine resources in the area but also increased risks of armed conflict in the disputed waters, a security expert has warned.

Gregory Poling of the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative in his article published in the AMTI website last Jan. 9 analyzed the results of the six-month collaboration between the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and Vulcan Inc.'s Skylight Maritime Initiative.

The project involved tracking movements of fishing vessels through Automatic Identification System (AIS), Visible Infrared Imaging Radiometer Suite (VIIRS) and Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) in the South China Sea.

The results, he said, "tell a worrying story about the scale of unseen fishing ac-

tivity in the region, massive overcapacity in the Spratlys, especially on the Chinese side, and the stunning scale and expense of the maritime militia."

"The fisheries and fishers of the South China Sea warrant much more attention. The disputes over the islands, reefs and waters in the area have made effective fisheries management impossible, even as a calamitous stock collapse threatens livelihoods around the region," Poling said.

"Meanwhile, a different kind of fishing fleet, one engaged in paramilitary work on behalf of the state rather than the commercial enterprise of fishing, has emerged as the largest force in the Spratlys," he said.

"The numbers of militia vessels operating in the area on behalf of China is much larger and more persistent than is generally understood," he added.

The phenomenon of the so-called "maritime militia" was raised a few years ago after hundreds of Chinese fishing vessels monitored in the West Philippine Sea and other disputed portions of the South

China Sea were suspected to be not fishing at all but actually resupplying Beijing military installations in the area and acting as another force to enforce its territorial claims.

"Experts and policymakers focused on the South China Sea will need to devote a proportionate amount of their attention to these actors and the role they play in the area," Poling said.

Tools like VIIRS – which light sources at sea – and SAR, which detect anything metallic like hulls and ships, show the number of fishing vessels operating in the disputed Spratlys is exponentially higher than AIS transmissions suggest, he said, referring to the radio transponders that fishing vessels are required to have and turn on to be tracked.

He said improving the monitoring of these fleets would be critical if the claimants hope to save South China Sea fisheries resources and reduce the frequency of uncalled for incidents between vessels.

"As they race to pull the last fish from the South China Sea, fishers stand at least as much chance of triggering a violent clash as do the region's armed forces. And that has become even more likely as a significant number of fishing vessels in the area forgo fishing full-time to serve as a direct arm of the state through official maritime militia," Poling said.

He did not mention the duration of the project but he cited an image taken as late as October last year.

SAR and VIIRS data suggest very little activity occurring around reefs in the southeastern portion of the Spratlys occupied by Malaysia as well as unoccupied areas near the coast of Palawan, he said.

– With Pia Lee-Brago

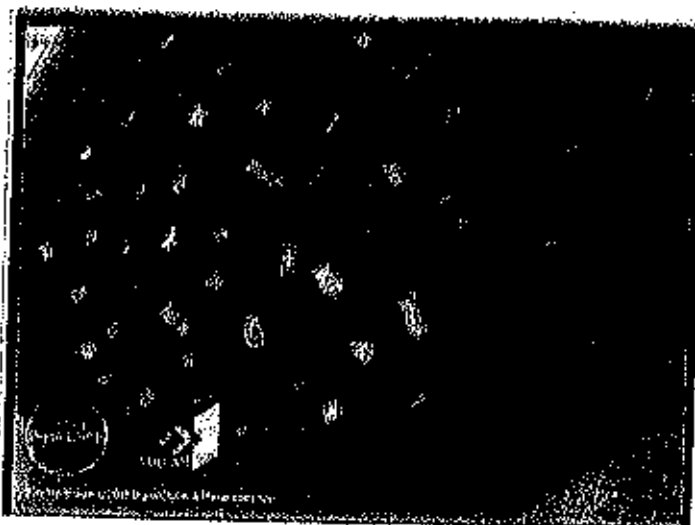


Photo provided by AMTI website shows Chinese fishing vessels at Subi Reef on Aug. 12, 2018.

Time to terminate



THE Balangiga bells are back, returned after 117 years in the hands of imperialist and colonialist United State of America. They were taken as war booty smeared with the blood of tens of thousands of Filipino men, women and children, in one episode most symbolic of the brutality of American invasion and occupation of the country.

And now, to complete the sovereignty, there's one more thing left to do—to terminate the not-so-mutual Mutual Defense

“This is a good opportunity for President Duterte.”

Treaty and the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement.

Section 25 of Article XVII of the 1987 Constitution is clear, “After the expiration in 1991 of the Agreement between the Re-

public of the Philippines and the United States of America concerning military bases, foreign military bases, troops, or facilities shall not be allowed in the Philippines except under a treaty duly concurred in by the Senate and, when the Congress so requires, ratified by a majority of the votes cast by the people in a national referendum held for that purpose, and recognized as a treaty by the other contracting State.”

Effectively, the 1987 Constitution, ratified in a nationwide plebiscite on Feb. 8, 1987, put an end to military cooperation under the RP-US Mutual Defense Treaty of 1951, a treaty which ensured that the Philippines continues to be a neo-colony of the US even after being granted a bogus independence in 1946.

Turn to A5

Time...

From A4

In fact, the MDT was not the only act the US forced the Philippines to swallow to maintain its hegemony over the country beyond the so-called grant of independence.

The 1946 Bell Trade Act, formally Philippine Trade Act of 1946, tied war damage claims to free trade conditions and equal economic rights for the US and its citizens.

The 1947 Military Bases Agreement granted the US the right to retain the use of its military bases in the Philippines for 99 years (but which was later reduced by the late President Ferdinand Marcos).

The Imperialist and neo-colonial designs of the US on the Philippines is best illustrated by the book of the late Filipino nationalist-industrialist Salvador Araneta written in his book “America’s Double-Cross of the Philippines.”

“The indifferent economic development of the country... was due to America’s policy toward Japan and the Philippines. This policy was the result of the Dodds Report, which Truman accepted and which had as its objective to make Japan the industrial workshop of Asia and the Philippines a mere supplier of raw materials,” Araneta wrote.

The Philippine economy continued its dependency on the US while successive

Philippine presidents attempted various degrees of industrialization initiatives while cutting back U.S. neocolonial influence, culminating in Marcos’ 11 Industrial Projects and reduction of the US military bases term, both leading to his ouster with U.S. assistance in 1986 and Clark Air Base used to hijack the president.

However, the 1986 EDSA Uprising restored neo-colonial elitism under Corason Aquino and almost succeeded in reversing the end of the U.S. Bases Agreement in 1991 but for 12 Senate votes affirming Marcos’ reduction of the lease.

And yet, in violation of the 1987 Constitution, the Philippine government signed a Visiting Forces Agreement in 1998 which became the basis for EDCA (Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement) U.S. military basing within Philippine military bases.

In January of 2016 the late Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago, echoing the persuasion of 14 other senators reminded one and all that “When the Supreme Court held in the 2009 case of Nicolas v. Romulo that the VFA is constitutional, no less than then Chief Justice Puno dissented, telling his colleagues, ‘This slur on our sovereignty cannot continue, especially if we are the ones perpetuating it.’ Those words resonate today, with the Supreme Court decision on the EDCA.”

A most welcome news came when late last December 2018 Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana raised the possibility of

scrapping the 1951 MDT between the Philippines and the United States, as he ordered a review of the pact to see if it is still relevant to the country’s national interest at this point in its history.

Lorenzana was quoted by various newspapers saying, “That was done in 1951, there was this raging Cold War. Do we still have a Cold War today? Is it still relevant to our security. Maybe not anymore?”

While the secretary is seen by some quarters as a pro-American element in President Duterte’s cabinet, others see a more balanced and objective professional retired Filipino officer in him.

The initiative for the review of the MDT is said to be purely the defense secretary’s, though no one can really say if it was not directly inspired by President Rodrigo Duterte, as the President has indeed taken sufficiently convincing steps such as the return of the Balangiga bells to convince anyone, not the least the defense secretary, that such a review of the MDT will be in line with the President’s persuasion.

A reopening for review of the MDT today will likely result in the conclusion that the reasons for such a treaty no longer exists and the recommendation to the President will be that it be scrapped.

Hence, it is a good opportunity to give Duterte the opening for a formal abrogation of the MDT and announcement of the end of the EDCA.

Reenacted budget woes: DPWH workers greet new year jobless

By Joey Gableta
and Ben O. de Vera
@Team_Inquirer

Official reports have yet to emerge regarding the total number of government workers affected by the delay in the passage of the 2019 national budget. But in Tacloban City alone, more than 3,700 workers under the public works department have become jobless as a result.

Records from the Region 8 office of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) showed that 3,786 workers—personnel listed as contractuels or under the job order (JO) category—have been told not to report for duty starting Jan. 1, as the agency could no longer pay their salaries.

Without a 2019 allocation, the DPWH is now operating under last year's reenacted budget.

Tonette Lim, DPWH regional information officer, said it would be unfair to ask JO workers to report for work without pay while the proposed P3.8-trillion 2019 national budget remained pending in Congress.

Work affected

At Lim's own office, five workers had been asked not to report for work, she said. "At present, only two of us are doing all the work. Without our JO staff, our work is really affected because they were really a great help to us."

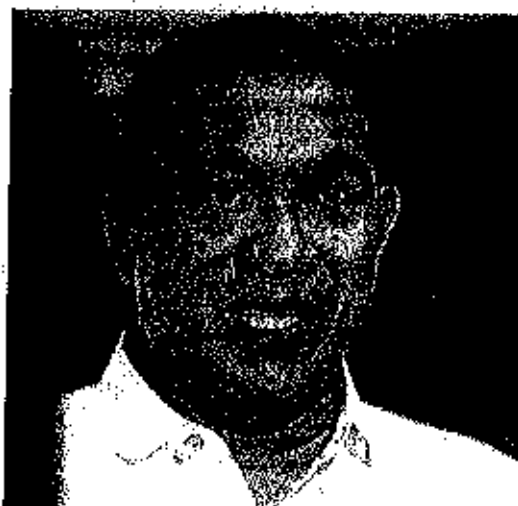
All 13 district engineering offices of DPWH-Region 8 have been affected by the nonpassage of the 2019 national budget, she added.

"Ana," a JO staffer for the

5



Benjamin Diokno



Rolando Andaya Jr.

past 10 years who earns about P14,300 monthly, said she had felt anxious about joining the ranks of the unemployed. "My concern is our daily expenses. I have four children who are all in school."

Diokno assurance

Also affected by the budget impasse are other government employees whose scheduled salary increases have been delayed by a month.

The raise, which should have taken effect at the start of the year, could be released next month, Budget Secretary Benjamin Diokno said on Friday.

"With pronouncements from Congress that the budget bill will be their top priority upon resumption (of session) next week, we expect the GAA [the General Appropriations Act] to be signed [in the] first week [of] February," Diokno said in a statement.

Diokno earlier said the salary increase for civilian as

well as military and uniformed personnel would only be implemented once the proposed budget is approved.

The additional subsidy under the unconditional cash transfer program for poor families will also remain at P2,400, instead of being increased to P3,600 this year, pending the budget approval, Diokno said.

The higher PhilHealth premium contribution of about P5,000, which is set to take effect this year, will be implemented only when the national budget is approved, Diokno added.

Refuting Andaya

On Wednesday, the budget chief said that since the government was currently operating under a reenacted budget, only the validity of 2018 capital outlays as well as maintenance and other operating expenses (MOOE) had been extended.

There were no funds provided for personnel services from which salaries as well as other government employee benefits.

Diokno said there was "no legal basis" for the statement made by House Majority Leader Rolando Andaya Jr. that the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) could already implement the fourth tranche of salary increases scheduled this year.

Basis of increase

Citing Section 11 of Executive Order No. 201 issued by then President Benigno Aquino III in 2016, which became the basis of the salary increase, Diokno explained that implementing the yearly pay raise was "subject to appropriations by Congress."

Section 15 of the EO authorizes the DBM "to implement or adjust the compensation corresponding to appropriations provided in the GAA," he added.

This means that only the budget intended for the year—and not the reenacted budget—becomes the source of funding for the pay hike, Diokno said.

Driton suggestion

Until the 2019 budget is passed, "government employees will continue to receive salaries indexed to the third tranche of the compensation adjustment," he said. "The implementation of the fourth tranche ... will be applied retroactively from Jan. 1, 2019 once the 2019 GAA is signed into law. In effect, government employees will receive salary differentials within the year."

As for Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon's suggestion that the Miscellaneous Personnel Benefits Fund be tapped to finance the salary increase, Diokno said the fund could only cover salaries for 2018.

Best solution

"We cannot implement higher pay without legal basis ... We need the GAA to be approved," he said. "(The) best solution is to get the budget passed."

Despite the delay, Diokno said a DBM-led task force was currently studying the possibility of further granting government workers a raise, from 2020 to 2022, to make their salaries at par with their private sector counterparts.

As for military and uniformed personnel, Diokno told reporters that the current pay structure would remain since Congress Joint Resolution No. 1 was implemented only last year. **INQ**

Duterte turns over homes to wounded soldiers, cops

By RAMON EFREN LAZARO

SAN JOSE DEL MONTE, Bulacan – President Duterte has turned over an initial 50 housing units for the families of soldiers and policemen who were wounded in action.

Initial beneficiaries include the families of 35 soldiers and 15 policemen.

"I saw it with my own eyes, the suffering and agony of a soldier of the Republic. And I thought that ... we can make things easier for them. At least life a better, a bit comfortable," Duterte said in the turnover

ceremonies here on Thursday.

The President also announced that totally disabled uniformed personnel will get housing units as a full grant while partially disabled beneficiaries will only pay P625 monthly amortization instead of P625.

"I hope that this will go a long way to alleviate their situation," he added.

The floor area of each housing unit is 24 square meters. The housing units are located in Pleasant View Residences Package 3 in Barangay Graceville in this city.

It has a total of 1,788 low-rise units on a 6.1863 hectares of land divided into three packages composed of 10 low-rise buildings for each package.

National Housing Authority general manager Marcelino Escalada said per instructions of the President, the floor area of the old design for soldier and police beneficiaries was too small.

"We decided to combine two units into one for all wounded soldiers, especially those who fought in Marawi," Escalada said.

Rody rules out purchase of firearms from US

By EDITH REGALADO

DAVAO CITY – President Duterte ruled out the possibility of buying arms and equipment from the United States in response to Washington's criticism of his war on illegal drugs.

Duterte added the US has been imposing strict rules on purchases, affecting the government's security program.

"You have to be a warrior to see the difference of what is a matter of principle and a mat-

ter of honor. Which is why we have to buy either from Israel or Korea, period. I will not agree to buy (from the US)... It does not sit well with us Filipinos following their dictates. I have no qualms against Americans, they started this... criticizing me heavily (on my war against illegal) drugs," Duterte said in a speech in San Jose del Monte, Bulacan last Thursday.

Duterte lamented how the US changed its policies over the sale of firearms and other

equipment to the Philippines.

He said he was caught in a situation where he was forced to buy military equipment from other countries.

The President said he went to China first, bringing along military officials to buy guns from them in 2016.

Duterte said he then flew to Russia to seek more armaments.

According to the President, his security officials are telling him that their existing arms inventory is no longer effective

in hitting the targets.

"So that we had that order from America, unfortunately they stopped it. That prompted me to decide to go to China to buy. I told the Chinese 'I'm here to buy. I'm not begging. I am willing to pay.' And China said, 'no it's all right. You can have the guns free,'" Duterte said.

Duterte said then US president Barack Obama cancelled the supposed order of the Philippines for new firearms after a member of the US Congress

denounced the delivery of the arms to the Philippines.

The delivery would have involved at least 23,000 M-16 rifles and SIG Sauer pistols.

Duterte also mentioned three US Cabinet members who wrote him to consider his position to proceed with the purchase of the 23,000 firearms. "And I told them no," he said.

In the same speech, Duterte lamented the US threatened to sanction countries buying arms from Russia and China, citing the existing embargo

and trade war with Beijing.

Despite this development, defense and military officials said the Philippines will remain tied up with Western countries including the US.

"Deliveries of key military equipment from the US are already in the pipeline. Also, as much as we like it, we cannot just abandon those already approved defense deals not only with the US but also with other Western bloc countries," one official said.

— With Jaime Laude

Vets to get P20,000 a month

LINGAYEN, PANGASINAN—

The old-age pension of World War II (WWII) veterans will be P20,000 in January, up from the P5,000 monthly pension they had been receiving in previous years.

President Duterte had signed into law Senate Bill No. 1766, or An Act Increasing the Monthly Old-Age Pension of Senior Veterans, last week, according to Ernesto Carolina, administrator of the Philippine Veterans Affairs Office, who attended the 74th Lingayen Gulf Landings anniversary and 12th Pangasinan Veterans' Day celebration here on Wednesday (Jan. 9).

Surviving senior veterans of WWII, the Korean War and the Vietnam War, as well as those who have not been receiving pensions from the Armed Forces of the Philippines, would be entitled to the P20,000 monthly pension "to tide them over so that their remaining years will be comfortable," Carolina said.

The additional pension, however, may not be transferred to any of the veteran's relatives or dependents. In the event of the veteran's death, the monthly pension of the surviving spouse remains at P5,000.

Other benefits

Aside from the monthly old-age pension, WWII veterans also receive a monthly disability benefit of P1,700 and a hospitalization benefit of P1,500. They are also entitled to a burial benefit of P20,000.

Carolina said most WWII veterans were 90 years old. On the average, about 300 of the war heroes die every month, usually from pneumonia, he said.

After WWII, there were about 350,000 veterans. At present, only more than 5,000 of them are alive, Carolina said.

In Pangasinan province, there are 217 living WWII veterans, down from 275 in January last year. Eight of them are aged 100 years or older.

As important as providing additional benefits is for the veterans, the government wanted to make sure they would not be forgotten, Carolina said.

The government has released P456 million for the development of Libingan ng Mga Bayani to make it at par with its American counterpart.

"Mt. Samat, a shrine of heroism located in Bataan [province], is now a tourism enterprise zone," Carolina said.

"The government had been investing [in the shrines] so that when our people visit these places, they would know how great our nation is. Filipinos who would go there will have a sense of national pride and love of country," he said.

—GABRIEL CARDINOZA INQ

War veterans' monthly pension raised to P20,000

By Nat Mariano

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte has signed a law increasing the monthly old-age pension of war veterans.

Under Republic Act No. 11164, veterans who saw action in World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War would receive increases in their old-age pensions.

The old age-pension will be increased to P20,000 per month, provided that the veterans of the Korean and Vietnam wars are not receiving a separate pension from the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

The law also provides that the entitlement to the increase in the old-age pension will be limited to the eligible living senior veterans and will not be transferable to any family members and/or dependents of the senior veterans.

Meanwhile, in order to augment the amount needed to fund the increase, the budget necessary for its initial implementation shall be charged against the current year's available appropriation of the Philippine Veterans Affairs Office.

COMELEC CLARIFICATION

MAYOR TAGGED BRAINS OF BATOCABE KILLING STILL A CANDIDATE

By Mar S. Arguelles
@msarguellesINQ

LEGAZPI CITY—Daraga Mayor Carlwyn Baldo, tagged as mastermind of the killing of Ako Bicol Rep. Rodel Batocabe, will not be disqualified from running for mayor until he was found guilty by a court.

Juana Valeza, Comelec regional director, said on Thursday that only the court can rule if Baldo was disqualified to run for an elective post.

Valeza said Baldo "can only be disqualified once the court found him guilty of the criminal offense he is accused of and issues a final and executory decision."

She said Baldo, despite being accused of double murder and six counts of frustrated murder, was "still presumed innocent until proven guilty" according to law.

Christmas event

Batocabe and SPO2 Orlando Diaz were gunned down while leaving a Christmas event for senior citizens and persons with disabilities in Daraga, Albay, on Dec. 22.

Police were able to detain



TEARS FROM HEAVEN Drenched in heavy rain, supporters and government workers including police, attend the funeral of Ako Bicol Rep. Rodol Batocabe in Daraga.—MARK ALVICESPLANA

suspects Emmanuel Rosello, Rolando Arimado, Christopher Naval, Henry Yuson, Jaywin Babor and Danilo Muelia who all admitted to being involved in the killing and pointed at Baldo as the mastermind.

At the time of his death, Batocabe was running against Baldo, who was seeking reelection.

tion in Daraga's mayoralty race.

Certificate of candidacy

Valeza also said Baldo is qualified to run for the mayoral post based on the certificate of candidacy he had submitted to the Comelec.

Earlier, the Lakas-Christian-Muslim Democrats Party

stripped off Baldo of his nomination as the party candidate for mayor of Daraga town.

Valeza said she expected the Comelec en banc any time this week to approve a resolution declaring the entire town under Comelec control.

Once placed under Comelec control, a local government would cede control of police

and local government operations to the poll body.

The Comelec would have the power to recall, remove and transfer policemen.

"If the situation becomes worse, we can ask for additional police and military troops to quell election-related atrocities," Valeza added.

Frontline troops

At the Regional Joint Peace and Security Coordinating Council meeting, the Philippine National Police and the Philippine Army were asked to closely monitor the provinces of Masbate and Camarines Sur following reports of intense political rivalries and the presence of private armed groups, including New People's Army.

Different task groups have been formed to step up the campaign on guns and set up Comelec checkpoints in several areas.

PNP data showed that there were so far 18 towns and cities across the country that were considered as election "hot spot" or areas of concern.

The list includes Camarines Sur and Masbate provinces in the Bicol region. INQ *AP*

Rody ends 2018 with higher approval rating

By HELEN FLORES

Most Filipinos still approved of President Duterte's performance and continue to trust him, according to a latest survey by Pulse Asia.

Duterte's approval rating rose to 81 percent in December from 75 percent in September last year.

The President obtained the highest approval scores among respondents from his bailiwick Mindanao, at 96 percent and among class ABC and E, at 87 percent and 86 percent, respectively.

Disapproval of the President's work, meanwhile, dropped from 10 percent in September to seven percent in December.

Trust in Duterte also increased to 76 percent in December from 72 percent in the previous quarter.

Most of the Mindanaoans (91 percent) and class E (82 percent) find the President trustworthy.

Distrust in Duterte fell from nine percent to six percent.

The survey was conducted from Dec. 14 to 21, using face-to-face interviews of 1,800 adults nationwide.

"The survey results underscore that our people fully believe in the methods under-

taken by the President in running the bureaucracy and the country, including formulating judgments during particular situations and events where Filipino people's lives and the country's economy are at stake," presidential spokesman and chief legal counsel Salvador Panelo said in a statement yesterday.

Panelo added that the Pulse Asia survey is another repudiation of the critics and detractors of Duterte.

"The survey was taken at a time when the Church, human rights groups, the opposition, the critics and the detractors were taking turns in lambasting the President's hyperbolic style of delivering his narratives on certain issues and groups," Panelo said.

It appears that the tirades against Duterte have been ignored by a huge majority of Filipinos, Panelo added.

"While the President is pleased with the survey results, such excellent acceptance and performance rating shall not stop him from excelling further to meet the expectations of the people he has sworn to serve and protect," Panelo said.

Duterte's heart and mind will be focused on performing his constitutional duties faith-

fully and courageously, Panelo added.

Like Duterte, Vice President Leni Robredo and Senate President Vicente Sotto III also continued to receive majority approval and trust ratings in the Pulse Asia poll.

Robredo's approval score, however, barely moved from 61 percent in September to 62 percent in December last year.

Those who were not satisfied with her performance dropped a point to 16 percent.

The Vice President's trust rating, meanwhile, stayed at 56 percent.

Distrust in her also remained at 17 percent.

Robredo expressed yesterday her gratitude to Filipinos for their continued trust and support.

"Her high approval and trust ratings in the latest Pulse Asia survey will serve as inspiration for her to work harder to serve the voiceless Filipinos, especially those in the fringes of society," Robredo's spokesman Barry Gutierrez said in a statement.

In the case of Sotto, 74 percent of Filipinos expressed approval of his job, up by one point from September's 73 percent.

Disapproval of the Senate President's performance re-

maintained at six percent.

The approval ratings of the country's top institutions also rose in the last quarter of 2018.

The Senate received an approval rating of 69 percent from 63 percent and trust score of 65 percent from 61 percent.

The Supreme Court registered an approval score of 64 percent from 52 percent.

Its trust rating also rose to 62 percent from 54 percent.

The survey has sampling error margin of plus or minus 2.3 percentage points.

According to Pulse Asia, the only notable changes between September 2018 and December 2018 were the eight-point increase in the approval ratings of Duterte, Robredo and Sotto in the rest of Luzon.

In terms of trustworthiness, Sotto also obtained an eight-point increase in the rest of Luzon.

Trust in the Vice President dropped by 16 points to 60 percent in the Visayas, Pulse Asia said.

Sotto welcomed the favorable ratings he and the Senate obtained that he attributed to the hard work of his colleagues.

"(The trust and approval ratings were) most probably because of the performance of the Senate and our shepherding (of the legislation) that gets

the approval and trust of our people," Sotto told reporters.

He vowed that the Senate will remain independent and sensitive "to the pulse of our people."

Sotto was elected to the leadership of the chamber in May last year.

GMA scores low

Meanwhile, House Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo received approval and trust ratings of 27 percent and 45 percent, respectively.

The former President's trust rating slightly increased from 43 percent in September 2018.

The House of Representatives, on the other hand, registered an approval rating of 66 percent, up by 10 points from 56 percent in September.

Trust in the House also increased from 58 percent to 64 percent.

Arroyo was included for the first time in the survey since taking over last July from former speaker Pantaleon Alvarez.

Pulse Asia noted a distrust in Arroyo from those surveyed in the rest of Luzon, the Visayas and Class D.

The survey indicated that the only majority figure obtained by Arroyo was her 52 percent distrust rating in Metro Manila.

Arroyo said low trust ratings do not distract her from doing her job.

"Remember I already answered that the last time. Those trust ratings are not new to me. Remember I was pilloried very much when I was president so I haven't done much to overcome that because I just have to do my work," she told reporters.

"My thrust is to concentrate on my work. I already said it the last time: I am not a stranger to those kinds of ratings," she said.

For his part, Communist Party of the Philippines founding chairman Jose Ma. Sison called the survey "stupid," adding that it was "deceptive, mercenary and obsequious to those in power and those agents who pay for the poll."

"Asking people whether they hope for the better this year is confusing them on some abstract and vague notion and playing on their tendency to hope for the better and to be hospitable, careful and even fearful of those in power, especially when they are extremely intimidating," Sison said in a statement posted on the National Democratic Front website. - With Paolo Romero, Edith Regalado, Jess Diaz, Jose Rodol Clapanot.

'Troops can't bomb rebel posts due to collateral damage'

DAVAO CITY – Government forces could not resort to bombing rebel positions for fear of collateral damage.

President Duterte admitted it is hard to prevail over a guerrilla warfare where the rebels are mixed in with the civilian population.

Had it not been for the civilians, then the war against insurgency would have long been won, he said.

In a recent speech in Dima-

salang, Masbate, Duterte said his work becomes difficult when government troops ask for his clearance to bomb a place where the rebels have been pinpointed.

Duterte earlier revealed government forces are using drones to determine the location of the rebels.

He said the drones made it easy for the military to pinpoint rebel locations as targets but as much as possible he

does not want to resort to bombing these locations to avoid civilian casualties.

Security officials led by Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana and Interior and Local Government Secretary Eduardo Año, however, expressed optimism that the military will prevail over the insurgents.

Lorenzana said the military will weaken the rebellion to the point of reducing the commu-

nist New People's Army (NPA) to a police matter.

He added Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) founding chairman Jose Ma. Sison is underestimating Duterte when he claimed his administration will fail in its efforts to bring down the communist rebel group.

"We'll see. Too soon for him to talk," Lorenzana said.

"We may not be able to finish them off completely to the

last man but we will reduce them into purely police problem – a simple peace and order problem of running after robbers, criminals and extortionists," Lorenzana said.

Año, for his part, said the CPP-NPA is in a "sharp decline," citing the thousands of rebels who surrendered to the government.

Año said 8,637 communist rebels have surrendered to the government since the Duterte ad-

ministration started in July 2016.

He said the rebel returnees have decided to avail of the government program offering the rebels promise of a better life.

Año said the government is speeding up the processing of former rebels through the task force that aims to end the local communist armed conflict with a focus on localized peace engagements. – Edith Regalado, Michael Punongbayan, Romina Cabrera, Roel Pareño

AFTER SOLDIERS, POLICEMEN

TEACHERS NEXT IN LINE FOR SALARY INCREASE-DU30

By Julia M. Aurelio
@JMAurelioINQ

BULAKAN, BULACAN—After police officers and soldiers, teachers are next in line for a salary increase, President Duterte promised on Thursday.

"I will make sure you are next. You are the most numerous," Mr. Duterte said during the groundbreaking rites of Gen. Gregorio del Pilar National High School at Barangay Sta. Ana here.

The President said he was willing to meet with teachers' representatives in Malacañang and strike a deal with them in the presence of Education Secretary Leonor Briones.

"You can choose the date, January. Just make it fast, then we can make an agreement or manifesto, choose whatever kind of document," he said.

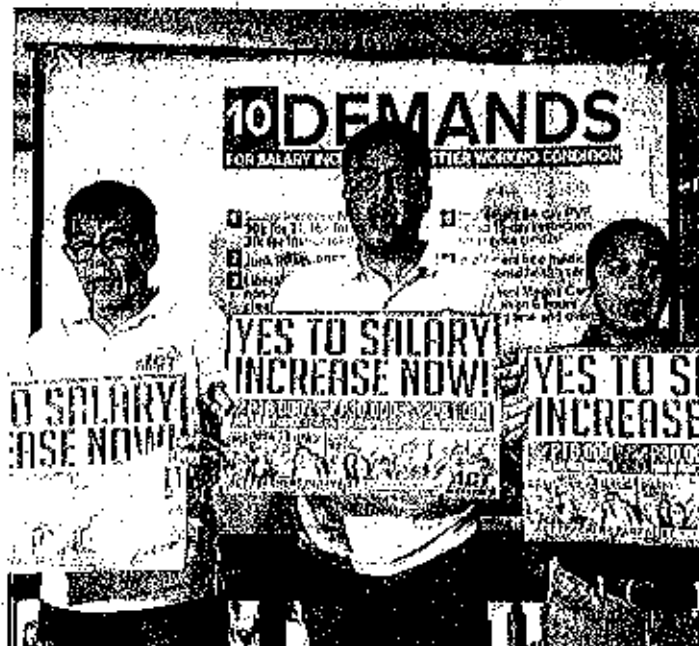
But he will not meet with teachers affiliated with Leftist groups, Mr. Duterte said, adding: "I don't like the Left. They say they are not communists, but who are we fooling?"

This week, a memorandum surfaced ordering police to "conduct an inventory" of all educators who are members of the progressive group Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT).

'Red October' plot

The memo followed an earlier monitoring of schools by the military, which said that under an alleged "Red October" plot, students were being recruited by rebel groups.

The President assured teachers that he had already discussed the planned salary increase with Budget Secre-



OUR TURN Members of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers demand the release of the last tranche of the salary increase promised to teachers by the government. —JAMSTAROSA

tary Benjamin Diokno.

But Briones clarified later that, whether the promised increase came through or not, teachers would still get a raise this year under the fourth and last tranche of salary increases for government employees.

Last tranche

"If there is any addition to that [pay increase], it's really up to [the President]. But with or without that, there's the last tranche [of increases] coming," Briones said.

Under Executive Order No. 201, which was signed by former President Benigno Aquino III in February 2016, teachers and other civilian personnel in the government's executive, leg-

islative and judicial branches were granted a graduated raise in salaries to be given in four tranches, with the last tranche scheduled on Jan. 1, 2019.

February release

In a statement released on Friday, the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) said the fourth and last tranche of the salary increase for government workers would be released in February.

"[T]he DBM chief assured that the fourth tranche salary adjustment will be implemented by February and that government employees will be entitled to their salary differential," the DBM said.

It added that the DBM ex-

pected the General Appropriations Act to be signed in the first week of February since Congress had made pronouncements that the budget bill would be their top priority once it resumes session next week.

Lawmakers have called on the President to release the last tranche of salary increases for government employees, which will cover public school teachers.

In the same event, the President threatened to kill loan sharks engaged in the usurious "5-6" lending scheme that many teachers turn to to make ends meet.

'Kill 5-6 lenders'

Because his own mother, Soledad, was a retired school supervisor, Mr. Duterte said he knew firsthand the financial woes that force many teachers to resort to "5-6" loans.

"That's why I know that 5-6. That is the system I want to kill. If I cannot kill the system, maybe we can kill the one who brings the '5-6.' That's easier," the President said of lenders in the money-lending scheme whose high interest rates have pushed many poor Filipinos deeper into debt.

In 2016, Mr. Duterte ordered a crackdown on the practice and warned foreigners involved in "5-6" that they would be arrested and deported.

"They keep on adding [to] your debts so you are in perpetual bondage... The [borrower becomes] a slave working for you, or for your money," he said.

"So I told them, you better stop it. If you lend the money, [it's all right to get] back the payment. But if you add, I will kill you," the President said. INQ

DepEd urged to defend ACT members amid PNP profiling

By JANVIC MATEO

The Commission on Human Rights (CHR) on Friday urged the Department of Education (DepEd) to speak up in defense of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) after the profiling conducted by the Philippine National Police (PNP) on its members.

CHR spokesperson Jacqueline de Guia welcomed the statement of Education Secretary Leonor Briones that she will issue a directive reminding local DepEd and school officials to comply with provisions of the Data Privacy Act.

De Guia, however, said the red tagging of ACT and its members calls for condemna-

tion from DepEd to reassure and show support to the teachers.

"The dignity and safety of teachers must be given utmost priority given their vital contribution in educating and honing the youth. Any violation against teachers diminishes their dignity and undermines their noble profession," De Guia said.

"We urge the DepEd to unequivocally speak up in defense of ACT and to provide them with sufficient protection and support, especially to those whose personal information have been released," she added.

The DepEd did not categorically condemn the profiling by the PNP of ACT members, with officials saying it is not within their mandate to question the actions of another agency in the performance of its responsibilities.

During a meeting with Interior

Secretary Eduardo Ato, Briones said she relayed their position that requests for information should be evaluated by the central office on a case-to-case basis.

The PNP drew flak after confidential memos directing the profiling of members of the ACT, which it accused of having ties to the Communist Party of the Philippines.

Reports said police officials have been visiting schools to request for the list of ACT members.

Briones said she will issue a reminder to school officials to refer to the central office any request for information covered by the Data Privacy Act.

Education Undersecretary Nepomuceno Malaluan said the law neither absolutely prohibits nor allows data or information sharing; hence the need for evaluation. J

Mentors' raises on ice

We are happy that we're in the same boat with the President in terms of providing our public school teachers a salary that is commensurate to their value to our society

**By Mario J. Mallari
and Eimer N. Manuel**

Promising public school teachers will be his priority this year, President Rodrigo Duterte said he will "strike a deal" with Budget Secretary Benjamin

Dickno and Education Secretary Leonor Briones to ensure that they get their pay hikes.

In his address to teachers at the groundbreaking of the Gen. Gregorio del Pilar National High School in Bulacan, Duterte said he directed both Cabinet

members to "make it fast."

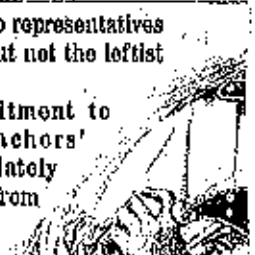
"Then we can make even an agreement or manifesto or choose whatever kind of document. You will be next to receive salary increases this year," Mr. Duterte said.

The President said he is

willing to talk to representatives of teachers, "but not the leftist ones."

The commitment to increase teachers' wages immediately drew support from

Turn to page 2



Mentors' raises on ice

Then we can make even an agreement or manifesto or choose whatever kind of document. You will be next to receive salary increases this year

From page 1

legislators as a huge boost, not only to the welfare of thousands of mentors, but also to the country's educational system.

Sen. Sonny Angara said the President's promise will surely motivate public school teachers to perform better — for the benefit of the Filipino students and future generation.

"Our teachers are considered to be the heart of the educational system. The government needs to give priority to their welfare and interests," Angara pointed out.

Improved education quality
"Definitely, this would lead to an improvement in the quality of education in our public school system," he added.

While Mr. Duterte did not mention how much the increase would be, it was definitely on top of the fourth and last tranche of salary increases for all government workers to be implemented this year.

Angara has been pushing for

the teachers' salary hike since he was a member of the House of Representatives representing the lone district of Aurora province.

In June 2016, he filed Senate Bill 135 which sought to adjust the minimum salary grade level of teachers by double their current monthly base pay of P20,170 to P42,000.

"We are happy that we're in the same boat with the President in terms of providing our public school teachers a salary that is commensurate to their value to our society," he said.

"Our teachers may have one of the hardest jobs with the smallest monetary reward. Thus, giving them a reasonable raise would help them feel more appreciated and understand why they wanted the job in the first place," he added.

Priority explained

Mr. Duterte said the salary increase of uniformed personnel came first due to budget constraints and the peace and order situation in the country but vowed to prioritize the teachers' pay hike next.

In January 2018, Duterte signed a joint resolution increasing the base pay of the military and police.

"I prioritized the soldiers' pay hike because I know what will happen. I saw the future and

it would cost lives. I had to act first. I just did not divulge it," he said, apparently referring to the Islamic State (IS)-inspired siege of Marawi City.

"The intelligence community, the way we were plotting it is that something would happen, and something indeed happened. Which is why I was caught in between, ma'am," he said talking to a crowd of public school teachers.

The President's promise will surely motivate public school teachers to perform better

Dikono, meanwhile, said all government employees are set to receive a salary increase in 2019, but Congress needs to approve the national budget first.

"All government employees will get an increase in pay, but it has to wait for the approval of the 2019 General Appropriations Act. DBM (Department of Budget and Management) has initiated a study for the increase in compensation for government workers from 2020 to 2022," Dikono said in a message to reporters Thursday.

Last Wednesday, the Budget chief announced an additional salary hike for government workers is also scheduled in 2020. This is following news that the fourth tranche of salary adjustments will not be implemented until the General Appropriations Act (GAA) is legislated.

Nevertheless, he assured the workers that the fourth tranche of salary adjustments will be implemented by February and government employees will be entitled to their salary differentials.

"With pronouncements from Congress that budget bill will be their top priority upon resumption next week, we expect the GAA to be signed first week February," he said.

New salary structure set

In addition, the Governance Commission for GOCC (GCG) is contracting an independent firm to conduct a study on the wage structure of government workers vis-a-vis their private sector

counterparts.

The DBM will be utilizing this data to craft a new salary schedule for government workers to be implemented starting 2020.

Funding for the conduct of the study has already been allocated to the agency budget of the GCG for FY 2019. Currently, the agency is conducting Early Procurement for the independent researcher, so they may proceed with the conduct of the study as soon as the 2019 General Appropriations Act is passed.

Results from the study are expected to be delivered by the independent firm before end of June this year. Consequently, the DBM will come out with a proposed salary schedule by the third quarter of 2019.

Still no arms from US

Meanwhile, Mr. Duterte is still firm on his decision not to buy arms and military equipment from the United States during his term despite the threat of Washington to sanction countries that deal with Russia.

In a speech before military personnel in San Jose del Monte, Bulacan recently, the President revealed that aside from Russia, the US also is against the Philippines purchasing arms from China.

"If you buy arms from Russia or China, you cannot trade with America. So, I told your superiors and the civilian leaders that with that kind of arrangement, do not expect me to buy arms from the United States," Duterte said. "The US really pushed us against the wall after we asked help from Russia and China."

All government employees will get an increase in pay, but it has to wait for the approval of the 2019 General Appropriations Act.

He also noted he is setting his sights on Israel and South Korea as potential arms suppliers with the US now out of the picture.

"I will not agree to buy from the US. It does not sit well with the Filipinos," Duterte said. "They stated it, and they criticized me heavily on the war on drugs."



Something for the future School students shown here taking a selfie with President Rodrigo Duterte have a good reason to be thankful as higher salaries are expected to inspire teachers and improve quality of education.

8 NPA 'MILITIA' SURRENDER IN MINDORO

TANAY, Rizal: Eight active Milisyang Bayan of the New Peoples Army (NPA) belonging to the Mangyan tribe, voluntarily surrendered to the Community Support Program (CSP) troops of the 76th Infantry Battalion (76IB) in Sablayan, Occidental Mindoro. Lt. Colonel Mario Lito Retirva, commanding officer of the 76IB, said the surrenderers served as NPA contacts in the barrios and admitted they were holding several key positions in the *Samahang Magsasaka*, *Samahang Kababaihan* and *Samahang Kabataon*. "They also operate with the NPA regulars when the group requires additional manpower for ambush, sniping and extortions," Retirva added. Earlier, the 76IB recovered three M16 rifles buried by the NPAs in the forested area of Sibo Kablugan, Barangay San Vicente, Abra de Ilog, Occidental Mindoro. In October 2018, the 76IB in Mindoro discovered two arms caches in Mindoro with 12 high-powered firearms. Col. Marcellano Teofilo, commander of the 203IB with jurisdiction over Mindoro Island, said, "These were clear manifestations that the NPA leadership in Mindoro is incompetent, their strength is degraded, and they have no more control over their members." Under the government's Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program, a former rebel can receive P15,000 immediate cash assistance, P50,000 livelihood assistance, firearms remuneration, access to housing, loans, medical and legal assistance. It also includes educational benefits which can be extended to the rebels' immediate family members.

BY BELLY M. OTORDOZ

Govt, Reds clash in Negros, Iloilo

By Francisco Tuyay

FIGHTING erupted on two fronts in Negros Occidental and Iloilo between security forces and New People's Army rebels, resulting in the wounding of a soldier and scores of casualties on the rebel side on Thursday and Friday, officials said.

The fighting broke out after the rebels attacked the patrol base of the 62nd Infantry Battalion in Sitio Camanggahan, in Hilamonan village Kabankalan City around 7:50 p.m. on Thursday.

The soldiers manning the detachment engaged the rebels in a firefight that lasted for 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, the Interior department on Friday said the communist movement was in a sharp decline following the surrender of 8,367 communist rebels since President Rodrigo Duterte

assumed office in 2016.

Acting Interior Secretary Eduardo Afio said 1,117 had been granted benefits under the Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program, the primary components of Balik Loob Program of the Duterte administration.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said the military might not be able to wipe out the communist rebels within the next three years, but they would most likely be reduced to a simple peace-and-order problem.

He made the statement following Communist Party of the Philippines founder Jose Maria Sison's claim that the government would not be able to defeat the New People's Army within the next three years.

"We may not be able to finish them off completely to the last man but we can reduce them into a purely police problem," Lorenzana told the Philippine News Agency on Friday.

Capt. Seragon, commander of the Bravo Company of the 2nd Infantry Battalion, informed the nearby military post of the attack. Reinforcements arrived, forcing the attackers to withdraw towards Buenavista Himamaylan City where an NPA encampment was seized on Jan. 1.

The attack prompted Col. Benedict Arevalo, commander of the 303rd Infantry Brigade, to remind his troops on the

alert for possible renewed NPA attacks.

"Once again I remind the troops to be more aggressive and vigilant at all times and encourage the civilian populace to continuously support government forces and report any NPA activities to prevent terroristic activities in the community," Arevalo said.

In Iloilo, a contingent of Scout Rangers from the 61st Infantry Battalion led by Lt. De Vera figured in fierce fighting with 30 terrorists in Sitio Tignahan, Almodias village in Miagao town Friday morning.

Reports said the troops were on combat patrol when they encountered the 30 rebels and fighting ensued. 12

In Sultan Kudarat, meanwhile, Esperanza municipal Mayor Helen Latog handed over 32 assorted firearms to military officials in Esperanza town on Friday morning. With PNA

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January 2019



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'Red tag' sparks row

To prove it has no political leaning, a journalist organization should condemn the atrocities of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA), said Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO) Undersecretary

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22

'Red tag' sparks row

From page 1

Lorraine Marie Badoy as she denied an accusation that PCOO was "red-tagging" the group.

In a radio interview, Badoy asked the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP) to issue a statement denouncing the atrocities committed by CPP-NPA to disprove its alleged sympathy for the communist rebel group.

"I just want to ask the chairman of the NUJP: Will you issue an official statement? Could you do that as a challenge -- denouncing the activities, the atrocities of the CPP-NPA? As simple as that," Badoy said.

Badoy added NUJP chairman Noyoy Espina himself posted contents on social media "patronizing and romanticizing" the CPP-NPA during its 50th founding anniversary.

"Maybe the chairman of the NUJP would like to explain to us, why during the 50th anniversary of an organization that has been consistent and relentless in its protracted war against the government, why would he put something like this on his page?" she asked.

True color

She said Espina's Facebook page had photos of communist terrorists holding high-powered guns.

Badoy said since communist insurgency was identified as the primary hindrance to the country's progress and development, the NUJP should say something about it.

"Internationally, they are responsible for all these horrible reports about the Philippines at a time when our country had turned a corner," she said.

Badoy added the PCOO and its attached office, the Philippine News Agency (PNA), are only after "simple, plain and responsible journalism."

She also slammed the NUJP for not recognizing the Duterte administration's pro-people program, such as the free college education and the Universal Health Care Act.

NUJP wants censorship

The NUJP earlier had cried foul over an article published by the PNA over a group of former communist members who denied that their claims against NUJP being linked with the leftist movement is part of

an orchestrated plan to silence the group.

The article, titled "Red link tag on NUJP not 'orchestrated': ex-rebels" and published online on 8 January, cited the said group, Kilusan at Alyansa ng mga Dating Rebolusyonaryo (KADRE), which narrated that "hardcore elements" in the NUJP made sure to block the release of their stories and their "freedom to expose the truth."

The report stated a group of former communist movement members denied their "revelations" against the NUJP being linked with the left carried in several newspapers was part of an orchestrated or "well-planned" operation.

She also slammed the NUJP for not recognizing the Duterte administration's pro-people program.

"We just want answered whether or not the NUJP is a legal front of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army-National Democratic Front," KADRE said in a statement.

The group said "hardcore elements" in the NUJP have made sure the release of their stories and their "freedom to expose the truth" are blocked.

KADRE claims membership of more than 800 former CPP-NPA elements.

The CPP-NPA, in previous reports, had been allegedly involved in cases of extortion, mass murder and violation of indigenous people's rights.

The US State Department and the European Union have both tagged the CPP-NPA as a terrorist organization.

Fruits of paranoia

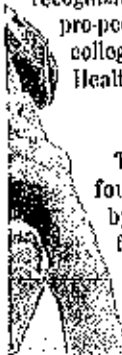
Malacañang had already denied allegations that PCOO was "red-baiting" or "red-tagging" groups.

Presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said the allegations may have been the result of paranoia.

"Nothing, there is no such thing. PCOO will not do that," Panelo said.

Last December, the Philippines was removed from the list of the top-five most dangerous countries for journalists in 2018, according to the annual report of media freedom organization Reporters Without Borders.

In October, the Philippines was named by the Committee to Protect Journalists as one of the countries with an "improved status" in its 2018 Global Impunity Index.



2 alleged terrorists fall in Manila

By REY GALUPO

Two men accused of being members of a Mindanao-based terror group were arrested in separate operations in Manila over the holidays, officials said yesterday.

Sudals Asmad and Jeran

Aba were reported to be on a mission to disrupt the holiday season and the Black Nazarene procession, according to a high-ranking Manila Police District (MPD) official.

According to a National Capital Region Police Office report obtained by The

STAR, Asmad was arrested in Binondo on Dec. 20, 2018 and is allegedly a member of the Abu Sayyaf under the umbrella of the Dawlah Islamiyah.

Aba was arrested on Dec. 25, 2018 after barangay officials saw him alight from a

tricycle with a pistol tucked in his waistband. A hand grenade was also confiscated from him, said MPD director Senior Superintendent Vicente Danao Jr.

"The suspect is a member of the Dawlah Islamiyah and Moro Islamic Liberation

Front and that he was planning to conduct an IED (improvised explosive device) attack during the holiday season," Danao told The STAR.

He said the suspect also admitted that he fought during the Marawi siege.

"We did not come out with the report immediately because we don't want to create panic among the public," Danao said.

The suspects were charged with violation of the comprehensive firearms and explosives law and resisting arrest.

Japan affirms support to PH peace efforts

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

The Japanese government on Thursday affirmed its support for the Philippines' peace process.

During a courtesy call to new Presidential Peace Adviser Carlito Galvez Jr., Japanese Ambassador to the Philippines Koji Haneda committed his country's continued support for peace process mechanisms and programs, projects and activities (PPAs) being implemented by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in Mindanao.

Galvez thanked Japan for being a partner of the Philippines for peace and development.

"The level of your investment and presence in our country demonstrates the unwavering support and commitment of Japan to help us attain just and lasting peace," he said.

Japan has provided a total of \$5.98 billion in official development assistance (ODA) to the Philippines as of the third quarter of 2018, making it the country's biggest donor, according to the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA).

During their meeting, Galvez also updated Haneda on the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), particularly the plebiscite on Jan. 21 and Feb. 6.

Haneda said Japan hopes the BOL "wins the heart of the Bangsamoro people."

"Japan will continue its support to the peace process," he said.

Among the peace process mechanisms that Japan had participated in were the International Contact Group, International Monitoring Team, Independent Decommissioning Body, Joint Normalization Committee, Joint Peace and Security Committee, and Independent Commission on Policing.

Galvez developed a close relationship with the Japanese embassy in 2012 during the turnover of a two-story school building in Basilan and the first meeting in Cambug Albarka with MILF 104 BC Commander Haji Dan Asnawi with the facilitation of the ICG-IMT Ceasefire Mechanism.

BOMB COURIER KILLED IN COTABATO SHOOTOUT

CAMP SONGCO, Maguindanao: Joint elements of the 5th Special Forces Battalion and Cotabato City Police Office killed a bomb courier who was transporting "anti-personnel mines" in a shootout along the Cotabato City East Diversion Road in Barangay Tamontaka 2, an Army official said on Friday. Maj. Arvin Endras, spokesman for the 6th Infantry Division (6ID), said the suspect, who was riding a motorcycle, was flagged down at a checkpoint after he was observed acting suspiciously. When the troops approached, the suspect refused to yield and instead drew a pistol and fired several shots, triggering a brief shootout. The suspect was declared dead on arrival at the hospital. Found in his possession were a caliber .45 pistol loaded with ammunition, personal belongings, P5,700 cash and a black Honda motorcycle. Maj. Gen. Cirillo Sobejana, 6ID commander, said the troops also found "anti-personnel mines" inside the utility box of the suspect's motorcycle. Explosive Ordnance Disposal Team of the Philippine National Police recovered the component of one unexploded ordnance of 81mm mortar as main charge with two cell phones. Sobejana said the identity of the suspect has yet to be verified.

JULMUNIR I. JANNARAL

Arrests averted holiday mayhem

NCRPO reveals capture of 2 IS terrorists

By Mario J. Mallari

The National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) yesterday announced the Christmas Day arrest of an alleged member of the Islamic State-inspired Daulah Islamiyah who was out to conduct bomb attacks in Metro Manila during the holiday season.

Nabbed was Jeran Aba, who uses the aliases Paito Pangadaman Liwalig and Abu Sinan, a member of Daulah Islamiyah — an umbrella organization of various IS-inspired groups operating in Mindanao.

Aba was arrested at around 8:30 p.m. last 25 December on Quezon Boulevard corner Norzagaray St. in Qulapo, Manila after he was seen in possession of a pistol.

Five days earlier, a wanted Abu Sayyaf terrorist, identified as Sen, who uses the aliases Abu Nas, Suhud, Jul and Sudats Asmad, was also collared by police operatives on Eleano Street in Binondo, Manila. He is wanted for the kidnapping of 15 employees of Golden Harvest Plantation in 2011.

"(Aba) was planning to conduct IED attack in NCR during the holiday season and incoming festivals," NCRPO chief Director Guillermo Eleazar said in a statement.

Aba also admitted he was a former member of Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and took part in the Marawi siege in 2017.

On the other hand, Sen was in Metro Manila "purportedly to receive financial support from sympathizers of the Daulah Islamiyah and for other yet unknown missions."

Sen also serves as liaison for "Balik Islam" members in Luzon who are going to Basilan. He is identified with the Abu Sayyaf group of Isnilon Hapilon, who was killed during the Marawi City siege, and Furuji Indama.

Both were charged with illegal possession of firearms.

Eleazar said the two separate arrests prompted NCRPO to intensify intelligence and security operations in the metropolis, not only during the yuletide season, but also during last Wednesday's Feast of the Black Nazarene in Manila or the *Traslacion*.

The NCRPO chief said the arrests were products of special intelligence and counter-terrorism operations.

"With those accomplishments, the NCRPO further intensified its intelligence efforts and police operations that resulted in the generally peaceful celebration of the yuletide season and *Traslacion* 2019," Eleazar said.

50% turnout ideal for BOL poll

Comelec asks proponents to raise level of campaign to draw more voters for Jan. 21 plebiscite

By Julie Alipala
@inqmindanao

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Proponents of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) were brimming with confidence that the measure would be approved in a plebiscite but an election official said turnout should be high to make the results more convincing.

The plebiscite is barely two weeks away and an election official of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) called on proponents and officials to exert extra effort and step up the campaign to attain at least 50-percent voter turnout.

Lawyer Rey Sumalipao, regional election director of the ARMM, urged the BOL campaigners to maximize their resources, go down to the grassroots and encourage more peo-

ple to take part in the Jan. 21 plebiscite.

Sumalipao said based on previous uncontested elections, turnout was usually 50 percent "but a massive campaign will certainly help in increasing it."

2.16M voters

Expected to troop to the polling places on Jan. 21 are the 2.16 million registered voters of the ARMM.

ARMM Gov. Mujiv Hataman said he expected more Moro people to vote for BOL ratification.

"I know the 'yes' will dominate despite some quarters pushing for 'no,'" Hataman said.

"Of course, they have their right to say no, but my only appeal to them is to refrain from sowing negative information pertaining to the BOL, just stick to the provisions," he said.

"Allow our people to make the right decision on Jan. 21," Hataman said.

Hataman urged his people to help disseminate information as there was barely enough time left before the plebiscite.

Sumalipao, however, warned that only noncivil service employees in the ARMM can participate in the campaign.

Sign of support

While opposition to the BOL surfaced after the forum organized by the BOL proponents in Basilan, Mohaqer Iqbal, peace panel chair of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), expressed optimism "that more people in Isabela City as well as Sulu will go for the ratification of the BOL."

In Isabela City, thousands of residents took part in a BOL forum, which Iqbal said was a good



**The BOL
is an antidote
against terrorism
and violent
extremism...**

Carlito Galvez Jr.
Presidential Peace Adviser

sign because of strong opposition to the BOL shown by residents.

In Sulu, Iqbal said almost 8,000 people, along with local officials, took part in the forum, mak-

ing it a "grand success," he said.

When asked to define grand success, Iqbal said it was "because many people attended and politicians' response was very encouraging, speeches all in support of the BOL."

MILF launched a series of forums to bring awareness about the BOL to the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), the sultan of Sulu and the turf of Sulu politicians.

Not MILF alone

Presidential Peace Adviser Carlito Galvez Jr. said the Jan. 5 forum in Sulu drew "tens of thousands of people to show their support" for the BOL.

Murad Ebrahim, MILF chair, said he was surprised by the turnout of people for the forum at Notre Dame College in Jolo.

"I did not expect this crowd,"

he said. "I am very pleased to see everybody here," Ebrahim added.

He said the BOL was not just the work of the MILF but encompassed all signed peace agreements, including those between the government and the MNLF.

"The BOL is not a victory of the MILF but a victory of the entire Bangsamoro people," Ebrahim said.

"This is the fruit of our sacrifice, the result of our collective efforts," he added.

"Inshallah we will win in Sulu," Ebrahim said.

Galvez said the new law was the only way to stop the so-called "generational chain of violence" by allowing the Moro people to effectively run the future Bangsamoro government.

"The BOL is an antidote against terrorism and violent extremism," he said. INQ

BOL PLEBISCITE**28 areas
outside
ARMM
added****By SHEILA CRISOSTOMO**

Twenty-eight barangays that are not under the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) have been included in the plebiscite to ratify the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), the Commission on Elections (Comelec) said yesterday.

James Jimenez, spokesman for the Comelec, said from 20, eight more areas were approved by the poll body to be included in the plebiscite.

"The final number of areas covered by the BOL plebiscite is 28," Jimenez said.

These areas are all in North Cotabato.

Covered by the BOL plebiscite are Barangays Lubungan Torreta, Upper Pangankalan, Datu Mantil and Simsiman in Pigcawayan; Barangays Langogan, Pebpoloan, Kibayao, Kitulaan

Turn to Page 2

28 areas From Page 1

and Tupig in Carmen.

Others are Barangays Rajahmuda, Barungis, Gli-gli, Nalapaan, Paricupan, Nunguan, Manaulanan, Bulol, Bualan, Nabundas, PamaliAn and Fort Pikit in Pikit; Pedtad, Buluan, Simone, and Tamped in Kabacan; Tumbras in Midsayap and Galidad in Tulunan.

A total of 103 areas under ARMM but are adjacent to the places covered by the BOL have filed petitions for inclusion in the plebiscite.

The Comelec had screened the petitions and found that only 28 met the requirements.

Jimenez said most of the petitions were denied because they do not have "contiguous border with existing" main territories covered by the plebiscite.

The Comelec will hold the first leg of the plebiscite in the ARMM territories on Jan. 21.

If this yields favorable results, the second leg will be conducted in the 28 barangays on Feb. 6.

Support for ratification

The leadership of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) assured Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Carlito Galvez Jr. of their commitment to the ratification of the BOL during a meeting on Tuesday.

Yusop Jikiri, who chairs the MNLF central commit-

tee, reiterated their support for President Duterte's call to ratify the BOL.

Jikiri said the MNLF is "100 percent behind the President's aspiration to bring peace and progress in Mindanao."

Galvez lauded the MNLF for carrying out orderly campaign rallies across the proposed territories of the future Bangsamoro autonomous region.

"You have shown to our people your commitment on how we really wanted the BOL to push through and be ratified convincingly," Galvez told members of the MNLF central committee.

He called on the MNLF to ensure that the conduct of the plebiscite would reflect the will of the people.

"The ratification of the BOL will bring peace, security, unity, reconciliation and progress not only in Mindanao but to the whole country," he said.

The MNLF leadership vowed to mobilize their members and communities to actively campaign for the BOL to gain support for the upcoming plebiscite.

Last week, thousands joined the caravan for BOL launched by the MNLF in Cotabato City.

Commissioner Jose Lorena of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission noted the strong

support of the MNLF in the political process.

"The Bangsamoro people should stand to become one. We need to hurdle the first obstacle, which is passing the BOL through this plebiscite," Lorena said.

Japan backs peace process

The Japanese government affirmed its support for the peace process in Mindanao.

Japanese Ambassador Koji Haneda, who paid a courtesy call on Galvez on Thursday, committed his country's continued support for the various peace process mechanisms and programs being implemented by the Japan International Cooperation Agency in Mindanao.

Galvez thanked Japan for being an active partner for peace and development.

"The level of investments in our country demonstrates the unwavering commitment of Japan to help us attain peace," he said.

Japan has provided \$5.98 billion in official development assistance to the Philippines as of third quarter of 2018, making it the country's biggest donor, according to the National Economic and Development Authority.

Bomb plots meant to disrupt BOL?

Meanwhile, two groups of local militants linked to the

Islamic State were allegedly behind the foiled bomb attacks supposedly to disrupt the scheduled BOL plebiscite in Mindanao, the military said yesterday.

Maj. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, commander of the Army's 6th Division, tagged the Bangsamoro Islamic

Freedom Fighter (BIFF) and Dawlah Islamiyah (DI) of Abu Turaife group in the recent Cotabato mall bombing and attempts to slip improvised explosive devices in urban areas in Mindanao.

Sobejana said members of the BIFF and DI allegedly

burned heavy equipment of a construction firm in Sultan Kudarat.

"These groups are peace spoilers and we believed the bomb plots were part of terror threats to sabotage the plebiscite," he said.

- With Roel Pareño, Jose Rodel Clapano

Comelec OKs 8 more petitions for inclusion in BOL plebiscite

By **LESLIE ANN G. AQUINO**

Eight more petitions of barangays in North Cotabato seeking to be included in the referendum for the creation of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) has been approved by the Commission on Elections (Comelec).

These were Barangays Pamalian and Fort Pikit in Pikit; Galidan in Tulunan; Tumbas in Midsayap; and Peditad, Buluan, Simone, Tamped in Kabacan.

The Comelec en banc had earlier granted 20 petitions as they have complied with all of the requirements under the law and the rules and have sufficiently established that its territory is contiguous to that of the local government units.

The 20 approved petitions came from Barangays Libungan Torreta, Upper Pangankalan, Datu Mantil, and Simsiman in Pigkawayan; Barangay Pagangan in Alcosan; and Barangays Langogan, Peppoloan, Kibayao, Kotulaan, and Tupig in Carmen.

Also approved were petitions from Barangays Rajahmuda, Barungis, Gili-gili, Nalapaan, Palleupan, Nunguan, Manaulanan, Bulol, Bualan, and Nabundas, all in Pikit.

"Some were not included because of considerations. First of all, whether or not they are actually contiguous. But, in general, what we are looking is failure to meet the requirements. In some cases, some places that petitioned actually submitted none of the requirements at all just what amounted essentially to an expression of their intent to participate in the plebiscite... so they were not included," Comelec Spokesman James Jimenez said in a press briefing in Manila, Friday.

"In other cases they just absolutely had no contiguous border with existing territories so those had to be denied," he added.

More than 100 petitions were filed at the poll body for voluntary inclusion in the Bangsamoro plebiscite.

Earlier, the Comelec said areas contiguous to any of the Bangsamoro core areas may ask for voluntary inclusion in the plebiscite, by either the local government of such

an area filing a resolution; or at least 10 percent of the registered voters in a local government unit filing a petition and ask for inclusion in the plebiscite.

The plebiscite for the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) will be conducted in two separate days on January 21 and February 6, 2019.

The poll body said the January 21 plebiscite will be conducted in areas comprising the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), as well as Isabela City in Basilan, and Cotabato City.

For the province of Lanao del Norte, except Iligan City; the municipalities of Alcosan, Carmen, Kabacan, Midsayap, Pikit, and Pigkawayan in the province of North Cotabato; and all other areas contiguous to any of the Bangsamoro core areas where: The local government of such area, by way of a resolution, asked for inclusion in the plebiscite; or at least 10 percent of the registered voters in a local government unit, by way of a petition, asked for inclusion in the plebiscite, the plebiscite will be held on February 6.

Arroyo calls for swift approval of BOL

HOUSE Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo on Friday reiterated her support for the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) ahead of the plebiscite for the measure's ratification on January 21 and February 6.

"I hope it passes. I was saying earlier, the Bangsamoro congressmen are now eager to go to the next step — try to get investments," Arroyo told reporters in Pampanga.

"In having the Bangsamoro, they will be able to bring down the poverty there by having business activities so we're helping them out. We are going to have an investment mission in Saudi Arabia," she added.

The BOL plebiscite on January 21 covers voters within the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao areas, Isabela City in Basilan and Cotabato City. Voting on February 6 are those residing in Lanao del Norte except Iligan City and

six North Cotabato municipalities.

Presidential Peace Adviser Carlito Galvez said the ratification of the BOL would bring "peace and security, unity, reconciliation, and progress not only in Mindanao but to the whole country." Arroyo previously said that the ratification of the BOL was part of her agenda as she took over the speakership during the state of the nation address of President Rodrigo Duterte on July 23, 2018. In his address, Duterte announced that the BOL would be signed into law.

The BOL is envisioned to allow for an establishment of an autonomous entity known as the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region, which will replace the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, following the agreements made between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front back in 2014.

A3 GLEE JALEA

Military, police tapped to secure BOL plebiscite

By GENALYN D. KABILING

President Duterte has ordered the military and the police to ensure free, peaceful, and credible Jan. 21 plebiscite on the Bangsamoro Organic Law as well as May 13 midterm elections.

The President issued two memorandum orders concurring with the Commission on Elections on the deputation of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the Philippine National Police, and other law enforcement agencies in connection with the two upcoming democratic exercises.

Memorandum Order No. 34 involved the BOL plebiscite while Memorandum Order No. 35 was

related to the midterm polls.

"The foregoing law enforcement agencies and other concerned agencies are hereby directed to coordinate and cooperate with the Comelec in the performance of their duties and functions," Duterte said in the orders.

Under the Constitution, the Comelec is empowered to deputize, with the concurrence of the President, law enforcement agencies and instrumentalities of the government, including the AFP, "for the exclusive purpose of ensuring free, orderly, honest, peaceful, and credible elections."

The orders, signed by Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea last Dec. 28, took effect immediately.

Lorenzana's wishful thinking

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana's recent pitch on reviewing the Cold War-era Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT) with the United States sounded like tough talk. Whether the defense chief can convince the United States to finally say in no uncertain terms that it will use fire and sword to defend the Philippines against foreign aggression is, however, wishful thinking.

The 1951 MDT was imposed upon the then Quirino regime primarily as part of a Cold War alliance system to prop up US hegemony in the Asia-Pacific. The MDT bound the Philippines to fight the United States' Asian wars in Korea, Indochina and elsewhere. It became a major tool to cement the country's dependency ties with America.

Instead of dropping the treaty as the Cold War ended in 1990, and in lieu of the nonrenewal of the US bases agreement, Philippine authorities signed the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) and the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (Edca), which allowed US forces to stay in the country. Both agreements are used today by the United States to contain China.

But there have been tectonic changes that should sweep the MDT to its grave. No wars have occurred in Asia since the '80s except domestic conflicts, and now the entire continent is engrossed in economic growth and multilateralism. The two Koreas are engaged diplomatically, with Pyongyang determined to jump-start its economic modernization amid denuclearization talks between US President Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un. Trump's "America First" unilateralism has been costly, as major allies like Japan and India now gravitate toward China and as the latter's soft power economic diplomacy is

creating a new global architecture.

COMMENTARY
BOBBY M. TUAZON

creating a new global architecture.

The only point left in favor of maintaining the MDT is a more bellicose US military primacy in the Asia-Pacific including the South China Sea (SCS), given the decline of its economic clout relative to China's rising influence. Other than keeping its military supremacy, the United States has no clear core interests in the region. Its provocative naval exercises in defense of freedom of navigation and trade in the SCS fall flat on their face, as there has been no such actual threat in peacetime.

Asean countries refuse to be drawn into a war of nerves between the two powers because it does not benefit them at all, and also given their growing economic interdependence with China. This sentiment is bolstered by the fact that, today, more countries see the United States as a security threat, according to a 2017 Pew Research survey of 30 states, including the Philippines.

Under the regime of the MDT, the Philippines' sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as respect from other countries, suffered. Not one US soldier who has committed a crime in the Philippines has served prison time, and the facilities that operated under the treaty came at tremendous social, health and environmental costs. The culture of militarism promoted by US anti-insurgency methods cannot solve the leftist rebellion, because the solution lies somewhere else; in fact, the

government's peace with Moro rebels is being achieved no thanks to the United States.

Still, the United States will not give up the MDT because of the repercussions it will cause. Without it, the VFA, Edca and other pacts will have to go, sending signals to other US allies to take a similar move. Renegotiating the treaty is not an option, as it will force the United States to change a long-standing policy—that SCS territories are not covered by the MDT. The United States takes no position in the maritime feuds in the name of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which it has never ratified anyway.

The United States will certainly think twice about being forced into a skirmish with China given that, based on recent reports, the latter is at near military parity with it. More than half the world, including the Philippines, depends on a partnership with China, and any war will bring down the global economy. Make no mistake: The United States will not fight any war unless its own core interests are at stake.

When the proposed bases renewal treaty was junked by the Senate in 1993, the United States cut off nearly all military and economic aid to the Philippines. This alone may deter the Department of National Defense—a recipient of massive US military aid for decades now—from reviewing the MDT.

With no leading member of Congress taking up his call, Lorenzana's rhetoric on the MDT may just end up a dud.

Bobby M. Tuazon is director for policy studies of the Center for People Empowerment in Governance and teaches international politics in UP Manila.

HINDSIGHT

F. SIONIL JOSE

Pax Americana

Vernon Loeb, his wife Pat, and their four grown children dropped by the bookshop the other day, and we reminisced about the Manila of 25 years ago, when Vernon was based here as *Philadelphia Inquirer* correspondent. He is now political editor of *The Atlantic* in Washington.



They were amazed at Manila's evident progress – the shopping malls, the soaring skyscrapers – and, yes, the population explosion and the traffic jams. I told them the surface progress is an illusion. Twenty-five years ago, there was no one sleeping on the sidewalk in front of the bookshop. Now there are. Vernon asked if Smokey Mountain was still in Tondo. I assured him it was, but is no longer a smoky garbage dump. It is now green with grass and some houses.

And, as with most conversations about America, the topic turned to Trump, immigrants, and what the Trump presidency means for the future of America and for regional relations.

Perhaps, it is because we were colonized by the United States that that nation's politics and culture have always fascinated me. While I am critical of three aspects of that culture – the racism, the wastage, and the smugness that there are American solutions for all the world's problems – America has one enduring strength: it is capable of self-renewal. And this strength is brought about by its openness, its self-criticism, and the continuing immigration of the best minds from all over the world. America has always provided a sanctuary, a place where their genius can bloom, and a future for their children.

When I was at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Kyoto in the mid-1980s, some of my Japanese colleagues were convinced that America was in irreversible decline. At the time, Ezra Vogel's book, *Japan as Number One*, had just come out. The Japanese blamed America's educational system. Drugs, too, had sapped the American spirit. I told them they were wrong, that what they were saying had long been expressed by the Americans themselves.

Now comes Martin Jacques's bestselling *When China Rules the World*. The author implies that, again, the United States will be left behind because of its incapability to equal China's dynamism. Sure, China has more than 4,000 years of civilization, that it was already literate when Europe was peopled by primitive hunters and food gatherers. Some observers say that China is now in the same period like Japan was in the 1930s when it modernized, became militarily strong, and began to advance its imperial ambition.

To be credible, empires claim that they maintain noble motives and should therefore be welcomed by their colonies. The British claimed they were bringing British law and civilization to a benighted world. The Spanish empire sought to spread Catholicism, and to make the world safe for democracy is America's excuse for its hegemony. In fairness to the Americans, there is some nobility in its imperial posturing. In pursuit of its own self-interest, it helped Europe rise from the rubble of World War II with its Marshall Plan. Maybe China's future hype will be its Confucian ethic, which emphasizes hierarchy and harmony.

Chinese civilization is a continuum. There are serious gaps in its development when it lagged behind the west in science and modernization, and was easy prey for the Imperial west. But it is the knowledge of this gap that has fired Chinese nationalism and its consequent imperial reach. Now China and the United States are engaged in a trade war and, at the moment, the United States seems to be winning. However, China is still developing its industrial sinews, and has not yet reached its maximum potential.

The two countries are headed toward a military war both do not really want. But they are engaged in a game of chicken, and one of them is likely going to make a mistake soon. The possibility of that war is very real, given the growing tensions between the two powers in the South China Sea. In the event that it does happen, whether we like it or not, we will get involved. As the old Burmese saying goes, when the elephants quarrel, the grass gets trampled. To this, I add my own caveat: when the elephants make peace, the grass gets eaten.

It would seem that China today – like Japan in the 1930s – is testing its muscle, even at the risk of antagonizing its small weak neighbors. For sure, all of Southeast Asia will be sinicized in the next hundred years. The richest in all these Southeast Asian nations are ethnic Chinese. In the Philippines, seven of our top ten billionaires are ethnic Chinese. They are a powerful presence, and in the event that war erupts, where will their loyalties lie? Always remember, all came to the Philippines with nothing and they became rich by exploiting the Filipinos and their land.

Eventually comparisons have to be made. I say that the United States can afford the likes of Trump for the free institutions in that country are all working, and the Americans themselves are always alert.

As for Duterte, I told Vernon that in the beginning I was for the man, foul-mouthed though he is. No Philippine president has ever challenged the oligarchy, the Catholic Church and the media. I really thought he would bring about the revolution this country needs and that I had been hoping for, for decades. But he has divided the country instead of uniting us as revolution always does.

The Chinese always take a long view of history, in keeping with their own venerable past. The story goes, that when the Chinese leader, Zhou Enlai, was asked about what he thought of the impact of the French Revolution on western civilization, he replied, "It's too early to tell."

Perhaps we may say the same thing of the American empire. Will it last longer than the Roman and the Spanish empires? Or the Vatican?

AT GROUND LEVEL

SATUR C. OCAMPO

Need to rethink EO 70,
'National Peace Framework'

"We are not saying ACT is an enemy of the state," Albayalde confusingly explained. "We are pinpointing here individuals, not the organization, that's why we are [gathering intelligence]." Fact is: the state security forces – and President Duterte – have tagged ACT as a "front" of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), along with Bayan Muna and the other progressive partylist organizations grouped under the Makabayan Coalition.

In this light, the Zambales Police memo's reference to the May mid-term elections assumes dire implications. For one, Malacanang's communications operations office head, Martin Andanar, has vowed to prevent the Makabayan partylist groups from winning anew in the May elections. How?

But there's a more ominous peril to ACT, to the other Makabayan partylist groups, and to all progressive and militant people's organizations tagged as "fronts" of the CPP. Their members may already have been targeted for profiling by the PNP and other state intelligence groups.

The bigger peril, however, would arise should the security forces mindlessly carry out – as their commander-in-chief's order – what Duterte told soldiers in a military camp recently. Ranting against the CPP and what he called its "legal infrastructure" or "fronts," he blurted: "Kill them... Destroy them!"

It's important to point out that, to end the "communist armed conflict," EO No. 70 calls for the creation of a National Task Force with 20 members mostly Cabinet heads, to oversee the campaign. It's chaired by President Duterte himself with his national security adviser as vice chair.

The EO also calls for "institutionalizing the 'whole-of-nation' approach in attaining inclusive and sustainable peace," and directs the adoption of a "National Peace Framework." It sets a six-month period, from the issuance of the EO, for the Task Force to "formulate and start to implement, in coordination with relevant government agencies, LGUs, civil society and other stakeholders a whole-of-nation-approach-driven National Peace Framework."

The bungled witch hunt by Intelligence units of the Philippine National Police (PNP) against the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) only reflects – in their implementation – the brutish style with which the government's counterinsurgency policies and directives are issued by the highest level of command. ACT is the sole accredited teachers' union in the country.

Note why PNP Director General Oscar Albayalde sacked three police intelligence officers: not for carrying out the illegal profiling of ACT members but for the crude way this was being done. He groaned, "Maybe they don't know what the job of an intelligence officer is: No. 1... there shouldn't be a leak [of the operation]... especially so if you would be creating unnecessary panic."

One of the "leaked" documents is a memorandum to "All COPs (Attn: Intel Section)," issued by the Zambales Police Provincial Office Intelligence Branch officer-in-charge on Dec. 27, 2018. It orders the "inventory of all public and private school teachers who are members of the (ACT)." It cites three references: the mid-term elections in May, and two memos from higher PNP offices – "TDI dated Dec. 10, 2018" and "RID PRO3 dated Dec. 27, 2018," both on the same subject matter.

Acting on such memos, replicated by other PNP intel units, police officers have visited public elementary and high schools in Metro Manila, Baguio City and besides Zambales, schools in other provinces including Bulacan, Sorsogon, Camarines Sur, and Agusan del Sur.

The police actions have raised vehement protests (among others) from ACT, the human rights coalition Karapatan, and the National Union of People's Lawyers (NUPL). The Makabayan Bloc in the House of Representatives has urged a congressional investigation of the "PNP spying." And the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* editorially blasted the actions as "part of the escalating campaign of vitriol, demonization and harassment being directed at a broad swath of activists, dissenters and opposition leaders."

The government's own agencies, including the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) itself, were alarmed. "Given the climate of harassment and threats against progressive and vocal groups," said CHR spokesperson Jacqueline de Guia, "this (profiling) move already raises doubts and fears, considering that the PNP has not been transparent in doing the profiling and they gave no solid justification or legitimate aim for such operation." She added: "There is a risk that the list (of ACT members) can be utilized to repress legitimate concerns or to silence criticisms or opponents."

Meantime, the Department of Education (DepEd) has recalled an endorsement of the Manila Police memo by a division school superintendent. Education Secretary Leonor Briones said: "Legally, we are not bound to give personal information as a public institution. Personal information is covered by the Data Protection Act [RA 10173]. Requests will have to be evaluated by our central office, and we are going to reiterate that to our officials down the line... With the Data Privacy Act, you have to be much more sensitive in giving away information that may cause damage."

Privacy Commissioner Raymund Liboro, chief implementor of RA 10173, gave the same warning. While the law recognizes the importance of public order and safety, and that processing of personal information is important for law enforcement purposes, he said, "This, however, is not without limits." Personal data collection, especially those

of sensitive nature such as political affiliation, requires the person's consent, he emphasized, and should "always be consistent with full respect for human rights and the Constitution."

Now, PNP chief Albayalde has admitted that the police efforts to identify ACT members are part of the government campaign "to end the communist insurgency" by the end of Duterte's term in 2022. This campaign is laid down in Executive Order No. 70, which Duterte signed on Dec. 4, 2018.

Duterte had allowed himself to be convinced by the financially overindulged military to announce last year that the armed conflict would be ended in 2019. However, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana is now singing a different tune. He said: "[The insurgency] has been going on for the last 50 years and we cannot end it in one year. But if our target would be the remaining three years of President Duterte's presidency, we can probably do it [emphasis mine]."

Since the PNP's witch hunt against ACT exemplifies an aspect of how EO No. 70 can and will backfire in its implementation, shouldn't President Duterte pause and – more resolutely than he has done many times before – rethink his executive order? Shouldn't he take into account Lorenzana's apparent reservation over the certainty of attaining its objective? 7

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★

Ratifying...

From A6

the Bangsamoro that sought to have their voices heard. It is a product of a bipartisan group of Senators and Representatives from the administration and opposition—Zubiri, Drilon, Angara, Fariñas, Serna, Dimaporo, and Llobregat, etc. who worked together to forge a consensus even as they represented diverse, conflicting interests. The President himself got involved at the right time and resolved an important legal issue—how to approach the inclusion of the six Lanao del Norte municipalities—correctly.

The objective of the BOL is “to establish a political entity, provide for its basic structure of government in recognition of the justness and legitimacy of the cause of the Bangsamoro people and the aspirations of Muslim Filipinos and all indigenous cultural communities in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao to secure their identity and posterity, allowing for meaningful self-governance within the framework of the Constitution and the national sovereignty as well as territorial integrity of the Republic of the Philippines.”

The law consists of 18 articles defining the territorial jurisdiction of the BARMM, general principles and policies, the powers and structure of the Bangsamoro government, Wali, basic rights, justice system, national defense and security, fiscal autonomy, regional autonomy and patrimony, rehabilitation and development, plebiscite, amendments and transitory provisions.

Article IV (General Principle and Policies) lists down the guiding principles that shall govern the BARMM in all aspects of socioeconomic and political governance. These principles include: territorial integrity and allegiance which mandates the Bangsamoro as an integral part of the Republic and its people an inseparable part for the Filipino nation; self-governance

which allows the Bangsamoro people to chart their own destiny; democratic political system which allows the Bangsamoro people to participate in a democratic political system; an electoral system consistent with national electoral laws and democratic electoral participation; establishment of a civilian government; promotion of social justice; adherence to international agreement and treaties; respect for the rights of non-Moro Indigenous peoples; and respect for the freedom of choice.

Article V delineates the powers of the national government and the Bangsamoro Government. Thus, the national government exercises all powers not granted to the Bangsamoro government by the Constitution. Section 2 specifies the powers granted to the Bangsamoro Government. The more significant powers by the Bangsamoro Government are administration of justice, administrative organization, ancestral domain and natural resources, budgeting, civil service, classification of public lands, customary laws, eminent domain, human rights, indigenous people's rights, public works and structure, tourism development and many more.

Article VI (Intergovernmental Relations) lays down the mechanism that will define the relationship between the national government and the Bangsamoro government for cooperation, coordination and issue resolution. The President shall exercise general supervision over the Bangsamoro Government to ensure that the laws are faithfully obeyed. An Intergovernmental Relations Body is created to coordinate and resolve issues through consultation and negotiation in a non-adversarial manner.

Finally, Article III delimits the territorial jurisdiction of the BARMM. As defined, the Bangsamoro shall include all geographical areas of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, municipalities that voted for inclusion in the ARMM during the 2001 plebiscite, the cities of Cotabato and Isabela in Basilan, and all other contiguous areas where a resolution of the local

government unit or a petition of at least ten percent (10%) of the registered voters in the area seeks for their inclusion at least two (2) months prior to the conduct of the ratification of this Organic Law.

The plebiscite will be held on two dates. The first is on Jan. 21 for the provinces (Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Basilan, Tawi-Tawi, and Sulu, which are already part of ARMM which the law considers one unit for purpose of ratification, and for the cities of Cotabato and Isabela which are being proposed for inclusion into the new entity. The second is on Feb. 6 for those municipalities in Lanao del Norte and barangays in North Cotabato that the BOL includes as areas to be included in the BARMM and other areas which are petitioning to be included into the new entity. In the second vote, the whole of Lanao del Sur and North Cotabato would be voting to allow or disallow the concerned municipalities or barangays to join BARMM. I suppose that if there are other areas—probably municipalities or barangays from other provinces—that would be included because of a successful petition, their home or current provinces or cities would also have to vote.

There will be challenges in implementing the BOL. Staffing the new governance entity with competent technical people will not be easy. Getting the national government agencies, especially the Department of Budget and Management, to change their behavior from one control to one of respect, support and autonomy, will not come overnight.

There is also the constitutional challenge pending before the Supreme Court. A Temporary Restraining order halting the plebiscite would have immediate impacts on the ground, especially this late in the game.

It's time to move forward in Mindanao. Ratifying the Bangsamoro Organic Law and creating the new Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao is a good step in that direction.

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Vote Philippines

POWER
POINT
ELIZABETH
ANGSIOCO

2019 may spell a difference in how the country is being administered if the electorate uses its right of suffrage responsibly and intelligently. The midterm elections in May is of paramount importance if Filipinos want to reverse the trajectory the country is headed led by this administration.

Major challenges beset us. The 1987 Constitution, the basic law of the land, may be thrown to the trash bin and replaced by one crafted solely by vested interest groups whose interest is not only to effect a shift in our system of government to federalism, but also to weaken guarantees of the people's human rights, and further strengthen the ruling class' control on government power.

Resolution of Both Houses (RBH) No. 15 authored by Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has been endorsed to the plenary of the House of Representatives (HOR) for consideration. This document, apart from changing the form of government to federal, has removed the term limits for congresspersons and senators. This means that they can run for office and stay in their positions until kingdom come.

Moreover, the Arroyo draft Constitution does not have any provision against political dynasties unlike the present Constitution that explicitly prohibits the reign of political families and clans. Even the Duterte-appointed Consultative Committee's (ConCom) draft Constitution provides for some regulation (though not prohibition) of political dynasties.

Clearly, lawmakers pushing for RBH 15 want to stay in power perpetually. Needless to say, if their draft Constitution is approved, our democracy will be significantly weakened.

We need government functionaries who will protect the present Constitution and our democratic gains.

President Duterte's war against drugs continues to kill people, mostly the poor. Journalist Inday Espina-Varona, in a Facebook post said that under Duterte, more than 27,000 people have

been killed. Included here are 12 mayors and 6 vice mayors; 172 farmers; 3 priests; 34 lawyers; and 12 journalists. The list grows daily as killings continue.

The scariest thing is, many of those who perished died in the hands of the very people mandated to protect them – the police. Life in this country has become very cheap. It seems that everyone has access to guns. With a president who, in his speeches encourages violence and killing, this culture of violence is further strengthened.

Very sadly, it seems that people are becoming accustomed to the killings that the public outrage and protests are weakening.

We need people in government who will go against this penchant for killing. We need public servants who will protect our right to life.

"The coming elections is an opportunity for the people to strongly assert our power to direct our country."

China continues to occupy and militarize parts of our territory. We are losing what we own, and what we won. Duterte's administration does not seem to mind that our sovereignty is blatantly violated and disrespected by a country our President considers as his friend.

We cannot just stand by and allow our country to be occupied right under our noses. We need to put in position people who will protect our land and waters. We need leaders who will exhaust all means to stop China's occupation of the West Philippine Sea.

The freedom of the press and our right to free expression are being repressed. We continue to see how legitimate media organizations are threatened with lawsuits and non-renewal of franchises. The former Chief Justice who stood up to strong-arm tactics was removed via a very questionable means.

Even elected officials are hounded and put to jail. Senator Leila de Lima remains behind bars. Another critic, Senator Antonio Trillanes is harassed continually.

Vote...

From AA

Duterte's men are moving heaven and earth to also put him in jail.

Without freedom of the press and free expression, democracy will die. We will be like robots or servants who will follow and believe whatever is told us.

Our human rights are sacred. They dignify our humanity. However, our Constitutionally guaranteed rights are being consistently disrespected and eroded. Women are subjected to blatant misogynist remarks from no less than the highest official of the land almost on a daily basis. This president is single-handedly destroying the gains achieved by Filipino women through hard work for many decades.

Moreover, human rights defenders and advocates are vilified by this administration in an attempt to intimidate them into silence.

We need government officials who will champion our people's rights. We need progressives who will fight with the women in the protection of our rights.

Philippine economy has significantly deteriorated. Capital flight is real. Our foreign debt has ballooned significantly. The value of the peso continues to go down, and inflation rates remain high. The poor continue to be poor, and many of those in the middle class complain of the high cost of living.

The Filipinos' quality of life is not improving. With the impending implementation of TRAIN 2, it is hard to be economically optimistic this year.

We need to put in position people who will seriously look after the people's welfare and work to put in policies that will help improve our lives.

Much rests on the choices that the Filipino electorate will make come the midterm elections. If people want to retain our democratic gains, restore faith in our justice

system and the police, protect our sovereignty, respect human rights, particularly women's rights, improve our quality of life, and overall change the country's course, we need to be very careful in who to vote for.

The coming elections is an opportunity for the people to strongly assert our power to direct our country.

The Senate is particularly important because it is the body that can possibly thwart the threat of Charter Change, oppose repressive policies, protect our independence and sovereignty, promote human rights, and put in place laws that will look after people's welfare.

We need principled and progressive senators who know and are capable of doing the work. We need to make the right choices. Vote for the Filipino people. Vote: Philippines.

@bethangsioco on Twitter Elizabeth Angsioco on Facebook

Our elusive chance at peace, prosperity



POINT OF
IMPACT
ERWIN
TULFO

WE WELCOME the Supreme Court's rejection of bids to stop the conduct of the plebiscite on the Bangsamoro Organic Law in the Muslim Mindanao regions as scheduled this coming Jan. 21 and Feb. 6.

Quickly following the announcement, lawmakers from opposing camps lauded the high court's disposition as it finally paves the way for the BOL's likely ratification. They echoed in unison the sentiments of my fellow Mindanaoans.

Unfortunately, certain quarters like the Philippine Constitution Association just cannot appreciate that political exercise means the world to most Mindanaoans, both Muslims and Christians.

The Supreme Court's wise justices apparently know better than to allow the elusive chance for peace and prosperity for the Promised Land to slip

away again.

The BOL aims to establish a more meaningful regional autonomy, and shall replace the existing Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao administration.

If approved by the majority of electorate and implemented eventually, the BOL shall be the key to a lasting peace and progress not only for the Muslim areas but for the entire Mindanao.

What the previous administration had failed to accomplish would finally be realized with a more realistic and relevant enabling law.

In fact, the success of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao shall bode well for federalism movement throughout the nation.

It follows that the BARMM may be a precursor for the country's shift to the federal system of government, where the country's regional governments would have a similar autonomy to more effectively deliver services to their respective constituents.

The Supreme Court's green light for the BOL plebiscite is a go-signal toward genuine change.

Time to terminate



THE Balangiga bells are back, returned after 117 years in the hands of imperialist and colonialist United State of America. They were taken as war booty smeared with the blood of tens of thousands of Filipino men, women and children, in one episode most symbolic of the brutality of American invasion and occupation of the country.

And now, to complete the sovereignty, there's one more thing left to do—to terminate the not-so-mutual Mutual Defense

“This is a good opportunity for President Duterte”

Treaty and the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement.

Section 25 of Article XVII of the 1987 Constitution is clear: “After the expiration in 1991 of the Agreement between the Re-

public of the Philippines and the United States of America concerning military bases, foreign military bases, troops, or facilities shall not be allowed in the Philippines except under a treaty duly concurred in by the Senate and, when the Congress so required, ratified by a majority of the votes cast by the people in a national referendum held for that purpose, and recognized as a treaty by the other contracting State.”

Effectively, the 1987 Constitution, ratified in a nationwide plebiscite on Feb. 8, 1987, put an end to military cooperation under the RP-US Mutual Defense Treaty of 1951, a treaty which ensured that the Philippines continues to be a neo-colony of the US even after being granted a bogus independence in 1946.

AC Jan 10/19

Time...

Frank A4

In fact, the MDT was not the only act the US forced the Philippines to swallow to maintain its hegemony over the country beyond the so-called grant of Independence.

The 1946 Bell Trade Act, formally Philippine Trade Act of 1946, tied war damage claims to free trade conditions and equal economic rights for the US and its citizen.

The 1947 Military Bases Agreement granted the US the right to retain the use of its military bases in the Philippines for 99 years (but which was later reduced by the late President Ferdinand Marcos).

The imperialist and neo-colonial designs of the US on the Philippines is best illustrated by the book of the late Filipino nationalist-industrialist Salvador Aranceta written in his book “America’s Double-Cross of the Philippines.”

“The indifferent economic development of the country, was due to America’s policy toward Japan and the Philippines. This policy was the result of the Dodds Report, which Truman accepted and which had as its objective to make Japan the industrial workshop of Asia and the Philippines a mere supplier of raw materials,” Aranceta wrote.

The Philippine economy continued its dependency on the US while successive

Philippine presidents attempted various degrees of industrialization initiatives while cutting back US neocolonial influence, culminating in Marcos’ II Industrial Projects and reduction of the US military bases term, both leading to his ouster with US assistance in 1986 and Clark Air Base used to hijack the president.

However, the 1986 EDSA Uprising, restored neo-colonial plutism under Corazon Aquino and almost succeeded in reversing the end of the US Bases Agreement in 1991 but for 12 Senate votes affirming Marcos’ reduction of the lease.

And yet, in violation of the 1987 Constitution, the Philippine government signed a Visiting Forces Agreement in 1998 which became the basis for EDCA (Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement) U.S. military basing within Philippine military bases.

In January of 2016 the late Senator Miriam Defensor Sanjago, echoing the persuasion of 14 other senators reminded one and all that “When the Supreme Court held in the 2009 case of Nicolas Y. Romulo that the VFA is constitutional, no less than then Chief Justice Eustacio Y. Yano dissented, telling his colleagues, ‘This slur on our sovereignty cannot continue, especially if we are the ones perpetuating it.’ Those words resonate today, with the Supreme Court decision on the EDCA.”

A most welcome news came when late last December 2018 Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana raised the possibility of

scrapping the 1951 MDT between the Philippines and the United States, as he ordered a review of the pact to see if it is still relevant to the country’s national interest at this point in its history.

Lorenzana was quoted by various newspapers saying, “That was done in 1951, there was this raging Cold War. Do we still have a Cold War today? Is it still relevant to our security? Maybe not anymore?”

While the secretary is seen by some quarters as a pro-American element in President Duterte’s cabinet, others see a more balanced and objective professional retired Filipino officer in him.

The initiative for the review of the MDT is said to be purely the defense secretary’s, though no one can really say if it was not directly inspired by President Rodrigo Duterte, as the President has indeed taken sufficiently convincing steps such as the return of the Balangiga bells to convince anyone, not the least the defense secretary, that such a review of the MDT will be in line with the President’s persuasion.

A reopening for review of the MDT today will likely result in the conclusion that the reasons for such a treaty no longer exists and the recommendation to the President will be that it be scrapped.

Hence, it is a good opportunity to give Duterte the opening for a formal abrogation of the MDT and announcement of the end of the EDCA.

Editorial**Pulis at sundalo, bawal tomoma sa publiko**

IPNAG-UTOS ni President Duterte na bawal uminom ng alak sa publiko ang mga pulis at sundalo. Ipinaaresto niya ang mga talabag sa kautusang ito. Ayon sa kanya, madalas ang away kapag nag-inuman sa publikong lugar ang mga pulis at sundalo. Kapag natatag na umano ang mga ito ay magbabarilan. Meron pang nag-aagawan sa mikropono kapag nagka-karaoke. Hindi raw maitwasan ang pagkakagulo kapag nag-inuman sa pampublikong lugar kaya nahigpit niyang ipinag-uutos na ipagbawal ang ganitong praktis.

Kakatwa ang pag-uutos na ito. Matagal nang ipinagbabawal sa mga miyembro ng pulis at military ang pag-inom sa mga pampublikong lugar kaya dapat pa bang ulit-ulitin ito. Iba pa, alam naman ng pulis at sundalo na ang kanilang propesyon ay tagapagtupad ng batas kaya alam nila sa sinulap na ang pag-inom sa publiko ay bawal. Kailangan pa bang ulitin ito?

Pagkaraang ipag-uutos ni Duterte na bawal uminom sa publiko ang pulis at sundalo, agad gumawa ng guidelines ang Philippine National Police at Armed Forces of the Philippines para ipatupad ang kautusan ng Presidente. Ibig sabihin, maski ang pamunuan ng PNP at AFP ay wala ring alam ukol dito sapagkat kailangan pa nilang gumawa ng tuntunin kung paano ipatupad sa kanilang tauhan. Posibleng alam nila ito pero nagkukunwari silang hindi alam. At maaaring guilty sapagkat maaaring uminom sila mismo sa publiko.

Pault-ulit na lang ang ganitong pag-uutos sa mga taong gobyerno. Kamakailan lang ipinag-uutos ni Duterte na huwag magka-casino ang mga taong gobyerno. Pero paano pa malalaman kung naglalaro ay taong gobyerno. Maliban na lang kung ang opisyal ay kilalang-kilala gaya ng opisyal ng LTO noon na na-videohang naglalaro sa casino. Nagbitiw ang LTO official dahil sa pressure.

Bawal uminom, bawal magsugal at iba pa. Sana maipatupad ito. Hindi sana ningas kugon lang.

ONLINE NEWS

12 JANUARY 2019

4 rebels surrender in SurSur

From the Philippine Information Agency (Jan 11, 2019): 4 rebels surrender in SurSur

Four members of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army-Terrorist (CNT) have surrendered to government forces, said an official from the 36th Infantry Battalion (36IB).

Civil Military Operations Officer Lt. Jonald Romorosa of the 36IB bared that one CNT member from Platoon 8, Guerilla Front 19, Northeastern Mindanao Regional Party Committee voluntarily surrendered without firearms to 36IB Commanding Officer Lt. Colonel Xerxes Trinidad on Jan. 1.

The surrenderee was a resident of Barangay Libertad, Butuan City.

The other three gave themselves up to the 36th IB Advance Command Post based in Barangay Magroyong, San Miguel town last Wednesday, Jan. 9. The surrenderers reportedly brought along with them the two homemade shotgun.

The military did not disclose the identities of the returnees for security reasons, adding that one of the returnees held a high position in the NPA.

LTC Trinidad, quoting one of the surrenderers, said the former rebels could no longer stomach the extortion activities that they were forced to do against their fellow impoverished countrymen and the promises that were never fulfilled by the organization.

"We call on to the remaining CPP-NPA terrorist leaders to surrender and return to the folds of the law. Lay down your arms and surrender, not just for your own sake, but rather, for your own family and loved ones. Abandon your malignant armed struggle and help the government bring development and long and lasting peace in our community," he said.

As surrenderees, the four would be enrolled in the Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (E-CLIP) of the national government. Under the E-Clip, an NPA surrenderee can immediately receive P15,000 cash assistance and P50,000 livelihood assistance.

They can also avail of firearms remuneration and housing, livelihood, and legal assistance among other forms of help from the government.

<https://pia.gov.ph/news/articles/1016946>

Mayor seeks mountain villagers' support vs. NPAs

From the Philippine News Agency (Jan 11, 2019): Mayor seeks mountain villagers' support vs. NPAs

A town mayor in Sultan Kudarat province asked his constituents in the mountain villages on Friday to alert police authorities about the presence of "new faces" in their communities.

"This is to avoid a repeat of the January 7 burning of construction equipment in Barangay Hinalaan by communist rebels," Mayor Ronan Garcia of Kalamansig, a coastal town of Sultan Kudarat province, said over a local radio station.

"Report new faces in your sitios as they may be rebels out to create trouble in your communities. Report right away," Garcia said in the vernacular.

"Security measures are in place in partnership with the police, Philippine Marines and local officials," Garcia said, adding that those behind the burning of eight heavy equipment in Barangay Hinalaan on Monday were not from the area but from nearby towns in Sarangani province.

Following the burning of a grader heavy equipment, cement mixer and dump trucks, the road construction firm, Janmerc Construction Corp., decided to temporarily cease working on the road project.

Garcia noted that the incident will have an impact on the development projects in Kalamansig but insisted it is temporary.

"In due time, the road will be completed," he said.

Supt. Aldrin Gonzales, speaking for the Police Regional Office 12 (Soccsksargen), said the communist rebels were demanding revolutionary tax from the construction firm but was ignored.

Police estimated the cost of damages to equipment at PHP33 million.

<http://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1058603>

Soldier hurt in clash with rebels in southern Negros

From the Philippine News Agency (Jan 11, 2019): Soldier hurt in clash with rebels in southern Negros

A Philippine Army trooper was slightly wounded in a clash with New People's Army (NPA) rebels, who attacked a patrol base of the 62nd Infantry Battalion, in Barangay Hilamonan, Kabankalan City on Thursday night.

Corporal Andin Jamison sustained minor injury on his right thigh.

A report of the 303rd Infantry Brigade said that between seven and nine rebels fired at the Hilamonan Temporary Patrol Base at about 7:45 p.m. and an intermittent firefight followed, lasting about 15 minutes.

The rebels then withdrew to the direction of Barangay Buenavista, Himamaylan City, where an NPA encampment was found by 62nd Battalion troopers last January 1.

Col. Benedict Arevalo, commander of the 303rd Brigade, said in a radio interview that the rebels' action was a "typical hit-and-run," and could be in retaliation for seizure of their camp.

He called on the troops anew to be "more aggressive and vigilant at all times."

"I also encourage the civilian populace to continuously support the government forces and report any NPA activities in their area," Arevalo added.

The 303rd Brigade, based in Murcia, Negros Occidental, can be reached through (0958)3282415.

<http://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1058631>

NPA rebels torch bus in Zambo Norte town

From the Philippine News Agency (Jan 11, 2019): NPA rebels torch bus in Zambo Norte town



Five gunmen claiming to be members of the New People's Army (NPA) have torched a passenger bus after the owner refused to pay revolutionary taxes in Zamboanga del Norte, a top official said Friday.

Chief Supt. Emmanuel Luis Licup, Police Regional Office 9 (Zamboanga Peninsula) director, said the incident happened in Barangay Pucay, Salug, Zamboanga del Norte at about 8 p.m. Wednesday.

Licup said investigation showed the SSG Liner passenger bus driven by Deonilo Asman Bucan, 48, was traveling from Salug municipality to the town of Godod in the same province when it was waylaid by five unidentified gunmen.

He said the rebels ordered Bucan and his three crewmen – identified as Leo Lomondaya, 28; Nelson Ambahang, 28; and, Celso Ambahang, 33 -- to come down from the bus, and that they introduced themselves as NPA rebels.

He said Bucan reported that the rebels told him, "You are always passing without paying," while pouring a gallon of gasoline and torching the bus.

The bus was loaded with fertilizer, feeds, sardines, soft drinks, dried fish, hollow blocks, sacks of rice and corn and seven containers of gasoline at the time of the incident.

Licup said the estimated loss to property was placed at PHP420,000.

He said the NPA rebels fired a shot into the air before fleeing towards Godod.

<http://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1058647>

Mining company debunks NPA claim of burning equipment

From the Philippine News Agency (Jan 11, 2019): Mining company debunks NPA claim of burning equipment

The Pilipinas Eco-Friendly Mining Corporation (PEFMC) has refused to believe the New People's Army (NPA) was responsible for the recent destruction of their PHP120-million worth of heavy equipment.

Joel Obar, the legal counsel of PEFMC, said Thursday the way it was carried out was unusual because his client Mark Yu, who owns the company, did not receive any letter from the communist group warning him of any incident.

Obar said that burning is usually done when the communist rebels ask for revolutionary tax, so the company cancels the possibility that the NPA did it.

He surmised it could be the work of ordinary criminal elements disguising as NPA rebels for a fee, or purely business rivalry as he said there is some friction between those involved in small- and large-scale mining in the municipality.

"Sana itong mga tawo (hopefully, these people) who claimed they are concerned for Negros Oriental should think twice because this is not doing the province any good. It destroys the name of the province and the tourism industry and is not good for the economy of Ayungon, and so the people will get poor," he said.

Obar added that if those responsible are concerned for Negros Oriental they should stop such kind of activity.

He speculated that the burning was done "because of a business rivalry".

Obar, however, refused to name names, hoping the incident will not escalate in the future or even during the election.

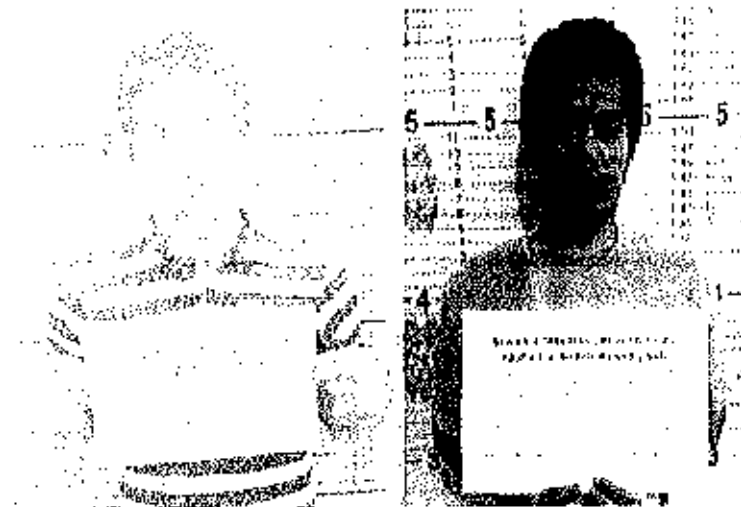
A statement issued purportedly by the NPA in Negros earlier claimed responsibility for the burning incident last January 1 in Barangay Jandalamanon, Ayungon, saying the mining activity in the area was destroying the environment.

The Philippine National Police in the province also alleged that it was the NPA, the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines, which was responsible for the incident.

<http://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1058659>

Suspected bombers arrested

From the Daily Tribune (Jan 11, 2019): Suspected bombers arrested



Sudai Asmad (right) and Jeran Aba. (NCRPO photo)

The National Capital Region Police Office announced Friday the arrest of two suspected terrorists plotting to bomb Metro Manila and raise funds for the attack.

Sen, a.k.a. Abu Nas or Sugud and Jul a.k.a Sudais Asmad y Sali, and Jeran Aba y Sangcopan were separately arrested on 20 and 25 December, according to the NCRPO.

Both are allegedly members of the Daulah Islamiyah.

Aba was in Metro Manila to allegedly conduct bombings while Asmad was to solicit financial support from sympathizers, the NCRPO said.

<http://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2019/01/11/suspected-bombers-arrested/>

Don't support rebels, officials warned

From the Visayan Daily Star (Jan 11, 2019): Don't support rebels, officials warned

Local chief executives are being warned against giving material and political support to left-wing rebel groups.

The warning of Interior and Local Government Secretary Eduardo Año to local government executives was contained in Memorandum Circular No. 2018-211, a copy of which was sent to the 303rd Infantry Brigade, that mandates regional, provincial, city and municipal peace and order councils to apply moral suasion to, or recommend sanctions against LCEs who are giving material and political support to communist rebels.

Col. Benedict Arevalo, 303rd Infantry Brigade commander, yesterday described it as a "welcome development", adding it would boost their efforts against those government officials, who are directly, or indirectly supporting the communist terrorist organization in Negros.

Section 4 of RA 10168, otherwise known as the terrorism financing prevention and suppression act of 2012, states that "any person, who directly or indirectly provides funds or financial services to facilitate the commission of any terrorist act by a terrorist organization, or by an individual terrorist, shall suffer a maximum of period of reclusion perpetua and a fine not less than P1 million," Año, who used to be the Armed Forces of the Philippines chief of staff, said.

Any person who organizes or direct others to commit financing of terrorism will also be guilty of similar offense and penalty, he added.

Año added that the legal provision further reinforced by the pronouncement of President Rodrigo Duterte that local chief executives should not give any aid to the rebel groups, as it would only result to much distress and embarrassment, even losing power over the police.

Following the encounter between communist rebels and 79th Infantry Battalion troopers November last year in Brgy. Washington, Escalante City, Negros Occidental, residents in the area urged those supporting the NPA to stop from doing so, to avoid putting their families in harm's way whenever armed encounters happen, Arevalo said.

The residents expressed their intent as well to pass a resolution, to be approved by the mayor, for the city government to stop providing funds and material support to leftist organizations supporting the NPA, Arevalo said.

Even before the issuance of memorandum order by DILG, Arevalo said that they have been requesting some government officials, suspected to be aiding communist rebels, to stop such illegal acts.

He added that Año may have been aware that there are some local chief executives supporting the CPP-NPA, that prompted him to remind peace and order councils to recommend sanctions against those who are doing it.

<http://www.visayandailystar.com/2019/January/11/topstory2.htm>