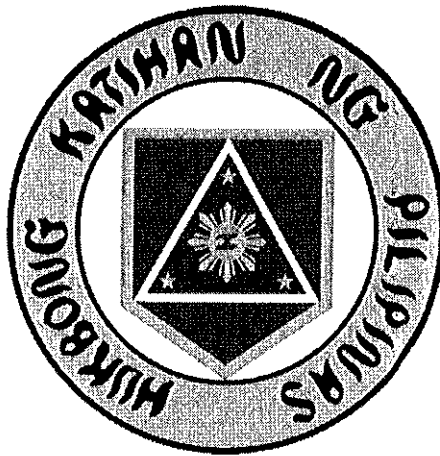


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NEWS CLIPPINGS

13 January 2019

Sunday



Honor. Patriotism. Duty

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POLL GUN BAN ON; CHECKPOINTS UP

STORY BY JAYMEE T. GAMIL AND JOVICYEE

The Philippine National Police says security measures are in place nationwide as the 150-day election period for the May midterm polls begins on Sunday. The Commission on Elections stresses that the campaign period won't begin until Feb. 12, warning candidates against premature electioneering.

A4

FROM A1

By Jaymee T. Gamil
and Jovic Yee
@Team_Inquirer

A nationwide gun ban, the setting up of police checkpoints across the country and other security measures will be implemented starting on Sunday as the 150-day election period for the May midterm polls gets underway.

The Philippine National Police will also begin the recall of all police security details assigned to politicians, said PNP Director General Oscar Albayalde.

The gun ban prohibits the carrying of firearms outside residences and suspends the processing and issuance of gun licenses.

At a press conference last week, Albayalde said only law enforcement personnel such as the police and military as well as civilians who received ban exemptions from the Commission on Elections (Comelec) would be authorized to carry firearms during the period ending on June 2.

Starting midnight on Sunday, the PNP will also put up at least one checkpoint in each city and municipality nationwide, in coordination with the Comelec and the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

Comelec warning

In a statement on Saturday, the PNP said the checkpoints sought "to intercept guns, explosives and other instruments of violence, including illegal security personnel that may mar the holding of peaceful, credible and fair midterm elections in May."

With the security measures

VOTE 2019

#ELECTION 2019

in place, the Comelec will also launch Regional and Provincial Election Monitoring and Action Centers to monitor the conduct of the campaign period.

The Comelec on Saturday warned candidates in the midterm elections they run the risk of being disqualified from taking office if their posters, billboards and other campaign materials were not taken down two days before the start of the campaign period on Feb. 12.

Comelec spokesperson James Jimenez said they expected the candidates to ramp up efforts to woo voters in the coming days, especially with the start of the election period.

Though it is still a month away from the official campaign period, Jimenez said the public could expect an increase in the visibility of candidates, particularly those running for a Senate seat.

Premature campaigning

"A lot of politicians will start taking advantage of this particular time, if they haven't [done] so. To clarify, it's still premature campaigning because the campaign period for the national candidates starts on Feb. 12," Jimenez told reporters on Friday.

Premature campaigning is hardly penalized, however, considering that the Supreme Court ruled in 2009 that it is not an election offense.

According to the high court, a person can only be considered a candidate once the cam-



EXPECT TIGHTER CHECKS The election period for the midterm polls in May starts today, and the Commission on Elections has directed the police to strictly implement a nationwide ban on bearing firearms outside of residence. —MARIANNE BERMUDEZ

paign period starts.

Jimenez said they would give candidates who put up campaign materials prematurely or disregarded Comelec rules on these at least two days before the official campaign period to take them down.

"We will be advising candidates and political parties to take down their materials that have already been posted. [If any material [is found] after the start of the campaign period, then it will be presumed that it [remains] there with the consent of the candidate," he said.

'Standard excuse'

Though the act would not automatically disqualify the candidate, Jimenez said this would be classified an electoral offense, which could eventually cost the candidate the seat he or she is vying for.

The Comelec official said it had been the "standard excuse" of erring politicians to blame

other people for putting up campaign materials that violate the poll body's rules.

Jimenez said if these were put up during the campaign period, it would not extinguish the candidate's responsibility.

The PNP said all personnel of the Police Security and Protection Group assigned to politicians would be required to report to Camp Crame in Quezon City on Sunday.

The PNP has listed 18 towns and municipalities as election "hot spots." The number does not include Daraga, Albay and Cotabato City, two trouble areas that the Comelec said should "also be watched."

AFP chief of staff Gen. Benjamin Madrigal Jr. said they would immediately act on any report linking members of the military's civilian auxiliary force to politicians' private armed groups.

"We will ensure that they will be nonpartisan and apoliti-

PROHIBITED ACTS

May 2019 elections

JAN. 13 TO JUNE 12

(Election period)

- Alteration of territory of a precinct or establishment of a new precinct
- Suspension of elective officials and transfer of officers and employees in the civil service
- Bearing, carrying or transporting firearms or other deadly weapons in public places
- Use of security personnel or bodyguards by candidates, whether such bodyguards are regular members of the military or other law enforcement agencies
- Organization or maintenance of reaction and strike forces or other similar forces

FEB. 12 TO MAY 12

(Start of campaign period for senators and party-list groups)

- Giving donations and gifts in cash or in kind
- Appointment or use of special policemen, confidential agents and the like

MARCH 14 TO JUNE 12

- Illegal release of prisoners

MARCH 29 TO MAY 11

(Start of campaign period for representative and other elective posts)

- Appointment or hiring of new employees; creation or filling up of new positions; promotion or giving of salary increases, remuneration or privilege

- Construction of public works, delivery of materials for public works and issuance of treasury warrant or similar devices for a future undertaking chargeable against public funds
- Release, disbursement or expenditure of public funds

MAY 12

(Eve of Election Day)

- Campaigning
- Selling, furnishing, offering, buying, serving or taking intoxicating liquor
- Giving, accepting, free transportation, food, drinks and things of value

MAY 13

(Election Day)

- Campaigning
- Selling, furnishing, offering, buying, serving or taking intoxicating liquor
- Giving, accepting, free transportation, food, drinks and things of value
- Soliciting votes or undertaking any propaganda for or against any candidate or any political party within the polling place or within 30 meters
- Voting more than once or in substitution of another
- Opening of booths or stalls for the sale of merchandise or refreshments within a radius of 30 m from the polling place.
- Holding of fairs, cockfights, boxing, horse races or any other similar sports

COMPILED BY INQUIRER RESEARCH
SOURCE: COMELEC RESOLUTION NO. 10429

cal in this exercise," Madrigal said of the militiamen.

"The AFP will not be providing any personnel security to candidates, unless approved by

the Comelec," Madrigal said.

In May, Filipinos will vote into office a total of 18,095 officials nationwide, from senators to town councilors. INQ

Privacy body to probe passport data mess

By JANVIC MATEO

The National Privacy Commission (NPC) will investigate the claim of Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. on social media that a terminated contractor had run off with personal data of passport holders.

Privacy commissioner Raymond Liboro over the weekend said they are preparing to summon officials of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) and other agencies as well as the unnamed contractor to shed light on the matter.

"The NPC shall conduct its own investigation on the DFA assertion that a private contractor has caused the non-availability of Filipino passport data and other documents entrusted to it for processing," Liboro said.

"Any form of non-availability of personal data, infringement of the rights of data subjects and harm from processing that includes inconveniencing the public, must be adequately explained to the satisfaction of the law,"

he added.

The Data Privacy Act of 2012 created the NPC and mandated it to ensure that the law's provisions, particularly on the protection of personal data of Filipinos, are upheld by government agencies and private organizations.

Locsin earlier claimed that a contractor ran off with the passport data, prompting the agency to require those renewing passports to submit birth certificates.

He did not identify the contractor involved, or when it carted away the data, or how the DFA responded to the incident.

"One way is by not sharing the app that allows access. In other words the public has

Turn to Page 2

Privacy

From Page 1

been inconvenienced horrendously on f***ing officials' excuse the data has to be re-constituted. Any other angle is what we journalists call a cover-up," he said in a tweet when asked how the contractor was able to retain the data.

The possible data theft was a national security issue and a reflection of the Duterte administration's incompetence in protecting the people's private data, according to Sen. Risa Hontiveros.

"Exactly what data were lost? When, how and under whose watch did this happen? Where did the breakdown occur? Who exactly is the responsible firm? And why aren't they being sued for running away with such vital

information?"

She said the government needs to reassure the people that their data would be retrieved completely and that those responsible for such "gross display of incompetence" are held fully responsible.

"They say, 'go out and see the world.' But how can our people do that if our government can't even provide efficient passport application and renewal services to the public? Worse, it can't be trusted to protect the citizens' sensitive data," she said.

The senator said it's now doubtful if the President can keep his promises to protect the country's sovereignty and the people. "If we cannot trust it to protect our people's docu-

ments, how can we trust it with anything else?"

Worried passport holders, meanwhile, have bombarded social media with expressions of concern and indignation.

Comments, Inquiries

On Twitter where he made the initial claim that passport data were taken by a contractor, Locsin received a flurry of comments and inquiries regarding the government's action on the matter.

"So where is the data now? With the private firm? If it is, we should get it back! Are we expecting soon a #DFADData-Leak? I hope not," one Twitter user told the secretary.

"What's the government action plan for the possible data leak?" another asked.

A netizen noted that digital

hacking is already considered an e-crime punishable by Philippine laws, apparently referring to cybercrime prevention and data privacy laws.

"The government should unleash hell on earth for this crime upon the state and its people," he added.

Lawyer Romel Bagares noted that the Data Privacy Act, passed in 2012, provides that the personal information belongs to the data subject concerned.

"The DFA is required under law to have data sharing agreement - with appropriate protections for data subjects - for transactions like this," he said in a post on Facebook.

But in one post, the secretary appeared to downplay the incident and even insinuated that it may have never happened at all.

"(Old passports) should

f**king be enough unless the data based in birth certificate got lost, stolen or is as being now claimed mere inaccessible which is f***ing the same thing," he told one user who asked if birth certificates are necessary for passport renewal.

"It is not a question of data privacy. The data is useless to the old contractor. It is a question of official stupidity or more likely cupidity," he added in another post.

He later admitted that they are not aware if the matter had been corrected or not.

"I just want it fixed and not repeated. Redundancy of data was promised by previous contractor but not fulfilled or just denied us. We have no knowledge whatsoever if it had been corrected," he said.

"Like a cuckolded husband, we are always the last

to know," he added.

It was Locsin who revealed earlier this week that a terminated contractor ran away with data of passport users.

He used the anomaly to explain why birth certificates are needed for renewal of green or maroon passports, or those issued before the dark maroon electronic passports.

"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 by private entities. Data belongs to the state," he said.

"DFA lost its previous data to the previous contractor who claimed they owned it," he added.

- With Cecille Suerte Felipe

5

'Chinese fishing vessels manned by military'

By JAIME LAUDE

Many of the Chinese fishing vessels around the Kalayaan Island Group (KIG) in the Spratlys archipelago are manned by militia and soldiers disguised as fishermen, a defense department insider said yesterday.

"We know for a fact that PLAN has been sending and funding their maritime militia aboard dozens upon dozens of civilian ships in the region disguised as fishermen," the official said. PLAN stands for People's Liberation Army-Navy.

The official, who requested anonymity, said deploying dozens of supposedly fishing vessels in or near the exclusive economic zones of Southeast Asian countries including the Philippines is China's way of boosting its presence and projecting power in the region.

The Chinese started their occupation of Panganiban (Mischief) Reef in the early 1990s by building a bamboo hut on stilts, which they claimed was a shelter for fishermen.

Panganiban Reef, located within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone (EEZ), is now a highly fortified Chinese

military base.

Earlier, Beijing announced that it would undertake rehabilitation of damaged areas in the South China Sea.

It was not clear, however, if the growing presence of Chinese vessels in the area was an offshoot of the supposed rehabilitation effort.

"For now, we don't know why the sudden surge in the presence of Chinese fishing boats in the region," the defense insider said.

A senior military official said all the Philippines and other Spratlys claimant countries can do is to monitor the presence of

the Chinese vessels as they appeared to be civilian boats.

He admitted sightings of gray Chinese ships – likely naval vessels – have become frequent.

China is laying claim to almost 90 percent of the South China Sea, citing what it claimed was historical proof.

In 2016, the Permanent Court of Arbitration based in The Hague ruled on a case filed by the Philippines and invalidated China's massive claim and reaffirmed Manila's maritime entitlements.

The Center for Strategic and International Studies, in

partnership with Vulcan Inc., has released satellite imagery showing the extent of Chinese vessels' presence in the South China Sea.

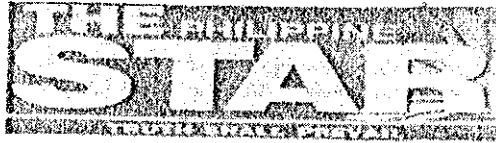
Most of the supposedly Chinese boats were concentrated in the lagoons of Zamora (Subi) Reef and Panganiban Reef.

Zamora Reef, now a heavily fortified Chinese military fortress, with runways, naval base and missile emplacements – just like those in Chinese-occupied Panganiban Reef and Kagitingan Reef – is only 12 nautical miles from the Philippine-occupied Pag-asa Island.

Pag-asa, the second largest islet in the region next only to the Taiwanese-occupied Itu Aba, is one of nine Filipino outposts in the region.

Aside from being a military outpost, the island now serves as the seat of Kalayaan town, a fifth class municipality of the island province of Palawan, with 200 to 300 civilian residents.

The island is undergoing development with the construction of a harbor to allow Philippine Navy cargo ships to bring in and unload construction materials needed for the repair of Rancudo Air Field.



2 slain in Laguna, Bulacan drug busts

Two drug suspects were killed in alleged shootouts with police officers in Laguna and Bulacan yesterday.

Senior Superintendent Eleazar Matta, Laguna police director, said Jeffrey Orofil, who was on the drug watchlist, resisted arrest in Barangay Banay-Banay, Cabuyao.

Johnrey Bergonio fired at anti-narcotics agents in Barangay Camangyanan, Sta. Maria, Bulacan, police said.

In Maguindanao, 41 members of a drug ring, who reportedly get their supply of shabu from the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, surrendered in Sultan sa Barongis town on Friday.

The military said local and military officials helped facilitate the surrender of the drug suspects led by a certain Anwarudin Biang and his brother Teddy.

Lt. Col. Harold Cabunoc, 33rd Infantry Battalion commander, turned over the surrenderees to Sultan sa Barongis Mayor Ramdatu Angas. — Ramon Efren Lazaro, John Unson, Ed Amoroso

DND welcomes increase in pension for war vets

By JAIME LAUDE

The defense department welcomed President Duterte's approval of the increase in monthly pension from P5,000 to P20,000 of the already dwindling number of veterans of World War II and the Korean and Vietnam wars.

As of last year, only 6,000 Filipino war veterans are still alive and stand to benefit from the newly signed pension law.

"The Department of National Defense (DND) welcomes the passage of Republic Act 11164 increasing old age pension of World War II, Korean War and Vietnam war veterans from P5,000 to P20,000," Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said.

He added that the old law covering war veterans' pension was enacted more than 20 years ago and the amount provided is insufficient to sustain the needs of senior and

surviving veterans.

In fact, most of the country's war heroes from these three wars are dead and cannot enjoy the pension like.

Those still alive could barely stand and are in wheelchairs, as shown in the recent US-sponsored event in honor of surviving World War II Filipino veterans held at the US embassy compound in Manila.

But just the same, Lorenzana thanked the country's legis-

lators and the national leadership for giving the surviving senior Filipino veterans what is due them.

"This is one way by which a grateful Filipino nation honors our veterans' sacrifices and heroic deeds," he said.

Lorenzana said the pension hike would encourage the youth to follow the veterans' footsteps and become themselves future defenders, leaders and patriots of the republic. 4

Veterans' pension increase lauded

An increase in the old age pension of veterans would not be merely a token of financial assistance but, more importantly, a recognition of the extraordinary service they have rendered

The Department of National Defense has lauded President Rodrigo Duterte's decision to sign into law Republic Act (RA) 11164, which increases the monthly old age pension of World War II, Korean War and Vietnam War veterans from P5,000 to P20,000.

Malacañang earlier said Duterte had signed RA 11164 last 20 December 2018.

In a statement issued Friday night, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana noted the current amount of pension the veterans are receiving is no longer sufficient for their needs as it was pegged by a law enacted more than two decades ago.

"This is one way by which a grateful Filipino nation honors our veterans' sacrifices and heroic deeds, thereby encouraging the Filipino

youth to follow their footsteps as defenders, leaders and patriots," Lorenzana said.

However, such benefit is limited only to the living senior veterans and cannot be transferred to any family member or his dependent.

For the initial implementation of the new law, the required funding shall be charged against the current year's available appropriations of the Philippine Veterans Affairs Office. Thereafter, the necessary funding shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

Earlier, former Special Assistant to the President Christopher Lawrence "Bong" Go also thanked Duterte for signing the measure into law.

"It showed President Duterte's genuine concern for the welfare of



Honoring heroes The country celebrates the Philippine Veterans Week from 5 to 11 April of every year to extol the heroic deeds of our war veterans and enhance patriotism and love for country. In recognition of their sacrifice, the government has also raised their monthly old age pension from P5,000 to P20,000.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

our veterans," he said.

Go pointed out that an increase in the old age pension of veterans would not be merely a token of financial assistance but, more importantly, a recognition of the extraordinary service they have rendered for our country.

"This should not be seen only as a matter of increased benefits. More importantly, this law recognizes the

great sacrifice and service these veterans did for our country," Go said.

The measure was first filed in 2010 under the 15th Congress when there were around 18,000 surviving senior veterans. 3

However, with the passing of years, the number of senior veterans has dwindled to around 6,000 with an average mortality of 300 per month.

EWB

Security tightened as poll period starts

By EMMANUEL TUPAS

The Philippine National Police (PNP) has strengthened security nationwide as the election season for the midterm polls starts today.

In his memorandum, PNP chief Director General Oscar Albayalde directed all field commanders to establish strict checkpoints across the country to inter-

cept suspected criminals in possession of loose firearms, explosives and other weapons that could be used to disrupt the elections.

"The memorandum directed regional directors to establish at least one checkpoint in each of the country's 1,600 cities and municipalities in coordination with the local Comelec (Commission on Elections) officer

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Security From Page 1

and AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) territorial unit in the area," PNP spokesman Chief Supt. Benigno Durana Jr. said in a statement over the weekend.

Checkpoint operations commenced at the start of the 150-day election period at 12:01 a.m.

The PNP has also imposed a nationwide gun ban, which will last until the end of the election season on June 12. The ban bars licensed gun owners from carrying or transporting their firearms outside their residence unless the Comelec grants them an exemption.

Albayalde said lawmen on duty and in uniform are exempted from the gun ban. Also excluded are personnel of the AFP, Philippine Coast Guard, National Bureau of Investigation, Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency and

other law enforcement agencies. Private security agencies may also be exempted from the ban.

Politicians with threats may apply for security escorts from the PNP Police Security and Protection Group.

Comelec spokesman James Jimenez reminded policemen manning checkpoints that they can only do a visual search on motor vehicles they are inspecting.

"Officers can look but they shouldn't touch. There is the plain view doctrine in effect - if something is in plain view and arouses reasonable suspicion then the police can do something other than look," he told reporters.

He also said that officers "can only look, shine their light on your car but you are under no obligation to open anything up for them."

"If you volunteer, open

compartment, trunk, that's your call. Be aware that if you do that, anything that they see there, they can search. They can't force you to open up compartments," he added.

Based on Comelec Resolution 10468, "no person may be subjected to a physical or body search in the absence of any reasonable ground to believe that a person has just committed or is about to commit, or is committing a crime."

In a checkpoint inquiry, the occupants can also not be compelled to step out of the vehicles. However, when approaching Comelec checkpoints, motorists are required to slow down and dim the headlights and turn on the cabin lights. Jimenez said all checkpoints must be in well-lit areas and clearly marked. They must have signboards that contain the name and contact information of the election officer in-charge of the area as well

as the name and contact of the police-in-charge.

Aside from the gun ban, the following are prohibited acts during the election period: suspension of elective official; use of security personnel or bodyguards by candidates unless authorized by Comelec; giving of donations or gifts in kind or in cash; illegal release of prisoners; transfer or movement of civil servants; alteration of territory of a polling precinct or establishment of new precincts.

1.7 million OFW voters

Comelec noted an increase in the number of Filipino overseas absentee voters (OAVs) as it reported a total of 1,789,823 Filipinos overseas who have registered for the May 13 midterm polls.

Jimenez said the number represents a 77.78 percent increase in the number of OAVs when compared to the

2016 polls, which only had 1,005,747 OAVs.

"For 2019, we have a total of 783,076 new voters and this is because of the greater interest in electoral system. The perception (of) overseas voters is very relevant, they were reinvigorated and they are very active recently," he told reporters.

Jimenez described it as a "good development" as he hopes that the trend will continue until the elections in 2022.

The biggest increase was recorded in the Middle East and Africa, which account for 889,114 of the total OAV population (including the 437,779 new registrants); followed by Asia and the Pacific with 388,619 voters, the Americas with 337,060 and Europe with 175,030.

"But still overall, the area with the most OAV is Middle East and this region has been consistent on this because they have

the biggest contingency of Filipinos," the poll spokesman said.

He added that, unlike in the Philippines where voting will be automated, the modes of voting in OAV are either personal or postal using either automated or manual system, depending on location.

In the European region, for instance, voting is mostly postal using both automated and manual system, except in the Vatican which is manual. In Athens, it will be automated through personal and postal voting.

There are 87 Philippine posts across the globe that will participate in the overseas voting.

He added that OAV voting will start on April 13 but the ballots will be kept at the posts until they are sent to Comelec for counting at the end of voting on election day.

- With Sheila Crisostomo

Comelec, gov't in Negros Occidental prepare for poll security

BACOLOD CITY (PNA) - The Provincial Joint Security Control Center in Negros Occidental, led by the Commission on Elections (Comelec), has kicked off preparations for the national and local elections on May 13.

Provincial Elections Supervisor

Milagros Salud Villanueva led the initial command conference held at the Social Hall of the Provincial Capitol here Friday.

"The security plan is being put in place to ensure that our elections, like before, will be peaceful, safe and cred-

ible," Villanueva said in an interview.

She was joined by Bacolod City Election Officer Mavil Majarucon-Sia; Col. Benedict Arevalo, commander of Philippine Army's 303rd Infantry Brigade; Senior Supt. Romeo Baleros, officer-in-charge of the Negros Occiden-

tal Police Provincial Office; and Senior Supt. Francisco Ebreo, acting director of the Bacolod City Police Office.

Villanueva said, for now, they could not yet identify the election watch list areas in Negros Occidental.

"We will know once the election period, going into the campaign period, starts. It will be clear then what areas we will focus on and give emphasis," she added.

Arevalo said the military considers the New People's Army (NPA) as the number one threat for the coming elections, adding that the rebel group continues to be the top private armed group in Negros, if not in the whole Philippines.

He added that the rebels will be trying to create a scenario of violence to boost their extortion activities for the midterm elections.

"We encourage those who are victims of the extortion activities to contact us through our detachments and proper authorities like the police," Arevalo further said.

On Sunday, the start of the election period, the Bacolod City Police Office, together with Comelec-Bacolod City, will hold a unity walk, prayer rally, and peace covenant signing at the public plaza.

At 6 a.m., a mass will be held at the San Sebastian Cathedral before the activity at the plaza.

Chief Insp. Ariel Pico, city police public information officer, said that through the activity, the Bacolod police hopes to attain peaceful and credible elections with the support and commitment of the candidates.

13

January 2019

IN THE CITY OF MANILA
MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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Renewed commitment

ZAMBOANGA CITY - More than a hundred military officials, non-commissioned officers, and civilian personnel joined Armed Forces of the Philippines, Western Mindanao Command (AFP-WestMinCom) Commander Lt. Gen. Dela Vega in welcoming 2019 with "hope and determination" last Friday, Jan. 11, at the Eisenhower Hall of AFP-WestMinCom mansion in Camp Navarro, Calarian, Zamboanga.

"Let us stand steadfast amidst the challenges that come our way during our journey. I encourage everyone to go that extra mile to achieve new heights in our life as soldiers and citizens of the Philippines who are working for peace in this part of the country," said Dela Vega. He said military officials and soldiers renewed their commitment and loyalty to the Armed Forces of the Philippines and to its leadership during the traditional call. (Nonoy Lacson)

Election period for 2019 polls begins today

By **LESLIE ANN G. AQUINO** and **AARON B. RECUENCO**

The election period for the May, 2019 national and local polls officially starts today, January 13, and ends on June 12, 2019.

Commission on Elections (Comelec) spokesman James Jimenez reminded aspirants for elective

posts that the campaign period will only start on February 12 for national candidates, and March 29 for local candidates.

During the election period, the gun ban will be imposed in which it is prohibited to



Election period...

◀1

bear, carry, or transport firearms or other deadly weapons.

It is also prohibited to employ, avail, or engage the services of security personnel or bodyguards.

"It is likewise prohibited to

transport and deliver firearms and/or its parts, ammunition, and/or its components, and explosives and/or its components unless duly authorized by the Comelec," said the poll body.

Violation of these prohibited

acts shall constitute an election offense which carries with it a punishment of one to six years imprisonment, disqualification to hold public office, and deprivation of the right to suffrage.

During the gun ban, Director General Oscar Albayalde, Philippine National Police (PNP) chief, said processing of licenses for gun owners will also be suspended.

Albayalde said the PNP will also provide security personnel to politicians who would need protection during the election campaign.

"We have Commission on Elections (Comelec) exemptions for the security details of those politicians who applied for one but they will be in uniform because they will be carrying firearms," Albayalde said.

During the election period, all licenses to carry firearms outside the residence will be suspended. Only members of the PNP, Armed Forces of the Philippines, National Bureau of Investigation, and other law enforcement units who are on duty will be issued written permits by the Comelec to carry firearms.

Aside from the gun ban, the alteration of territory of a precinct or establishment of a new precinct; the transfer or movement of officers and employees in the civil service; the use of security personnel or bodyguards by candidates, unless authorized in writing by

the Commission; the organization or maintenance of reaction forces, strike forces or other similar forces, and suspension of elective local officials are also prohibited from January 13, 2019 to June 12, 2019.

Other prohibited acts during the election period include: The giving of donations or gift in cash or in kind; as well as the appointment or use of special policemen, confidential agents and the like. This prohibition will be in effect between February 12, 2019 and May 13, 2019.

The release of prisoners will also be restricted between March 14, 2019 and June 12, 2019.

The following actions shall also be suspended or restricted from March 29, 2019 to May 13, 2019: Appointment or hiring new employees; creation or filling up of new positions; promotion or giving of salary increases, remuneration or privilege; construction of public works; delivery of materials for public works, and issuance of treasury warrant or similar devices for a future undertaking chargeable against public funds; release, disbursement or expenditures of public funds.

Campaigning abroad shall be allowed between April 13, 2019 and May 13, 2019.

On May 12, 2019 campaigning; selling, furnishing, offering, buying, serving, or taking intoxicating liquor; giving, accepting, free transportation, food or drinks or things of value will not be allowed.

Campaigning; selling, furnishing, offering, buying, serving, or taking intoxicating liquor; giving, accepting, free transportation, food or drinks or things of value; voting more than once or in substitution of another; soliciting votes or undertaking any propaganda for or against any candidate or any political party within the polling place or within 30 meters thereof; opening of booths or stalls for the sale, etc., of merchandise or refreshments within a radius of 30 meters from the polling place; holding of fairs, cockfights, boxing, horse races or any other similar sports will be also be prohibited on May 13, 2019.

And with the start of the election period, Jimenez expects to see an increase in the presence or visibility of candidates.

"A lot of politicians will start taking advantage of this particular time, if they haven't already been doing so," Jimenez said in a press briefing in Manila, Friday.

"Because it's within the election period, within the time that you expect people to talk about the elections, but it's still outside of the campaign period, which means they still have about a month's time before they can be actually regulated," he added.

"The problem with doing this prior to the election period is that it becomes sort of very obvious that you are prematurely campaigning and some people shy away from that. But when you enter the election period, a sort of psychological barrier is lifted because well it's election period," said Jimenez.

Checkpoints readied

Meanwhile, the PNP said hundreds of checkpoints and chokepoints are expected to be set up around the country as part of the election security for the midterm elections.

Albayalde said there would be more checkpoints that would be established in the coming days within the 150-day election period.

"At past midnight tonight (January 13), the Philippine National Police will establish strong checkpoints in strategic locations across the country to intercept guns, explosives and other instruments of violence including illegal security personnel that may mar the holding of peaceful, credible and fair midterm elections in May," said Albayalde.

Albayalde said his order for the establishment of simultaneous checkpoint operations is contained in the memorandum he issued for all police commanders nationwide.

The memorandum mandates police commanders to establish at least one checkpoint in each of the country's 1,600 cities and municipalities in coordination with the local Comelec officer and AFP territorial unit in the area.

Checkpoints set; poll season on

Get used to police checks on major thoroughfares as the official election period starts today.

Turn to page 2

All regional directors were also instructed to personally lead the kick-off of checkpoint operations simultaneously nationwide at 12:01 a.m. today

From page 1

Philippine National Police (PNP) chief Director General Oscar Albayalde issued a flash memorandum to all police regional directors to conduct simultaneous checkpoint operations for the elections pursuant to Commission on Elections (Comelec) Resolution 10468.

We have Comelec exemptions for the security details of those politicians who applied for one but they will be in uniform.

Albayalde also ordered regional directors to establish at least one checkpoint in each of the country's 1,600 cities and municipalities in coordination with the local election officer and military territorial unit in the area.

All regional directors were also instructed to personally lead the kick-off of checkpoint operations simultaneously nationwide at 12:01 a.m. today.

On 13 May, voters will choose 12 senators, congressmen, partylist representatives, and local government officials, such as mayor, vice mayor, governor, vice governor, city councilors and municipal and provincial board members.

A six-month gun ban is also in effect starting today which means the processing of licenses for owners of firearms is suspended during the period.

Albayalde said the PNP will also provide security personnel to politicians who would need protection during the election campaign.

"We have Comelec exemptions for the security details of those politicians who applied for one but they will be in uniform because they will be carrying firearms," the PNP chief told reporters.

During the period, all licenses to carry firearms outside the residence are suspended.

"Only members of the PNP, Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), National Bureau of Investigation and other law enforcement units who are on duty will be issued written permits by the Comelec to carry firearms," he said.

Law enforcement and other concerned agencies are hereby directed to coordinate and cooperate with the Comelec in the performance of their duties and functions.

Road jam expected

A so-called Unity Walk will be held today where candidates join a parade from Quezon City Hall to the Quezon City Memorial Circle (QCMC) where an inter-faith prayer rally and peace covenant signing will be held at the Liwasang Aurora.

Albayalde, AFP chief of staff Gen. Benjamin Madrigal Jr. and Comelec Chairman Sheriff Abas will deliver messages during the event which seeks to ensure a clean and peaceful elections.

The activity will end with the release of white doves as a symbol of peace and unity.

Motorists were advised to avoid areas near the QOMC.

In a statement, Quezon City Police District director Chief Supt. Joselito Esquivel Jr. said multi-sectorial groups, stakeholders, leaders, personnel and members of government agencies, religious groups, academe, students, civic and other non-government organizations were also expected to attend.

A portion of the Elliptical Road, from East Ave. to Kalayaan Ave., will be closed to traffic at 5 a.m.

Priority on peace

Last Thursday, Albayalde, Madrigal and Abbas held the first of a series of conferences that would ensure the smooth conduct of the midterm elections.

Albayalde said they tackled security preparations, particularly the deployment of personnel to intensify intelligence-driven law enforcement operations and strengthened police-community partnership to preclude violence and ensure order during the political exercises.

President Rodrigo Duterte earlier had issued memoranda mandating the deputation of AFP and the PNP to secure the upcoming plebiscite for the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) and the 2019 elections.

Interior Secretary Eduardo Año also said the extension of martial law in Mindanao will greatly help the police and the military ensure the peaceful conduct of the plebiscite.

"Law enforcement and other concerned agencies are hereby directed to coordinate and cooperate with the Comelec in the performance of their duties and functions," the President stated in Memorandum Orders 84 and 85 which he issued on 28 December and were released to the media on Friday.

String of polls

The Constitution mandated the Comelec to "deputize, with the concurrence of the President, law enforcement agencies and instrumentalities of the government, including the Armed Forces of the Philippines, for the exclusive purpose of ensuring free, orderly, honest, peaceful and credible elections."

Plebiscites on the BOL will be held on 21 January and 6 February.

Interior Secretary Eduardo Año also said the extension of martial law in Mindanao will greatly help the police and the military ensure the peaceful conduct of the plebiscite.

The BOL, previously known as the Bangsamoro Basic Law and considered as one of Duterte's biggest legislative achievements, seeks to give the Moro people basic legal tools to chart their own destiny within the country's constitutional framework.

OL

PNP KEEPS AN EYE ON 19 'HOT SPOTS'

By Francisco Tuyay

NINETEEN cities and towns have been identified by the Philippine National Police as hot spots in the May midterm elections—just a few days before the start next week of the election period while security authorities begin deploying troops to ensure a peaceful political exercise.

The 19 have been categorized as each having a tense political atmosphere arising from rivalries among aspirants and existing private armed groups and other threat groups.

These are two cities and nine towns in Mindanao and eight towns in Luzon.

PNP Spokesman, Chief Supt Benigno Durana, citing data from the Directorate for Operations enumerated the 19 hot spots as: Sudipen and Balwan towns in La Union; Jones in Isabela; Lemery in Batangas; Roxas in Oriental Mindoro; Balud and Dimasalang towns in Masbate and Daraga in Albay.

The other hot spots were Pagadian City and Cagayan de Oro City in Zamboanga del Sur and Misamis Oriental, respectively; the towns of Hadji Mo-

hammad Ajul, Lantawan and Tipi-Tipo in Basilan.

They also include the town of Sultan Dumalondong, Basilan; and five towns in Maguindanao—Masasapano, Shariff Aguak, Shariff Saydona, Mustapha and Datu Unsay.

The latest hot spot area to be included in the list is Daraga, Albay, following the death of Ako Bicol Party-list Rep. Rodel Batocabe and his escort SP01 Orlando Diaz on Dec. 22.

Incumbent Daraga Mayor Carlwyn Baldó has been linked by a self-confessed gunman of Batocabe to have masterminded the murder.

Durana said the decision putting the town of Daraga as hot spot came two days following the recently-concluded

Turn to A2

PNP...
from A1

conference between officials of the Commission on Elections, Philippine National Police and the Armed Forces of the Philippines in Camp Crame.

"Daraga town was considered as hot spot due to the intense political rivalries among aspirants in the coming midterm elections," Durana said.

Officials have yet to determine whether to include Cotabato City as hot spot area considering the tense security atmosphere relating to the forthcoming Bangsamoro Organic Law plebiscite this month.

Dozens of elected local officials have been killed—blamed on the involvement of illegal drugs or intense political contention since 2016 till 2018, the latest victim being Batocabe.

Among those killed were mayors Alexander Buquing of Sudipen, La Union; Mariano Banco of Ronda, Cebu; Ferdinand Bote of General Tinio, Nueva Ecija; Antonio Halili, Tanauan, Batangas; Ronald Lowell Tirol, Buenavista, Bohol, whose death was in 2018.

Several vice mayors also killed in 2018 were: Alex Lubigan, Trece Martirez, Cavite; Al Rashid Mohammad Ali, Sapa-Sapa, Tawi-Tawi; and Jonah John Ungab, Ronda, Cebu.

Due to the prevailing tense political atmosphere in the 19 hot spot areas, PNP Chief Oscar Albayalde said considerable police forces would be deployed not only to defuse tension but more importantly preserve peace and tranquility before, during and after the conduct of elections.

Thousands of military and police personnel have been dispatched critical areas in Luzon and Mindanao to prevent any serious incidents in the runup to the elections.

Cease hypocrisy

They should come out
in the open, cancel
celibacy and allow them
to have boyfriends

By Kristina Maralit

The criticisms against the
Catholic Church, including
President Rodrigo Duterte's

allegation that most priests
and prelates are homosexuals,
were mere expressions of his
sentiments on "hypocrites" in the
society, presidential spokesman

Salvador Panelo said yesterday.
Panelo added despite the
verbal assaults, the Chief
Executive maintains a high level
of respect to the faith.

"Listening to his speech with
an open mind and watching his
body language, one can easily
discern that PRRD (President
Rodrigo Roa Duterte) was only

airing his sentiments against
some Church leaders who are
living in luxury contrary to their
teachings," the Palace official
said.

Turn to page 2

Cease hypocrisy

PRRD (President Rodrigo Roa Duterte) was only airing his sentiments against some Church leaders who are living in luxury

From page 1

Mr. Duterte, addressing Bulacan local officials, said street idlers should "rob and kill" bishops because they have a lot of money.

"His use of figures of speech, as we have repeatedly emphasized, is his style in articulating and dramatizing a point. As expected, the detractors of the President are once again condemning him for his latest remarks on the bishops," he added.

Proof of pudding

Panelo reiterated while Mr. Duterte has repeatedly attacked the Catholic Church and disputed some of its teachings, recent policies and orders issued by the President are proof of his respect for the faithful and how he "recognizes the fundamental role of religion in the lives of the Filipino people."

"PRRD's signing of Republic Act 11163, otherwise known as the National Bible Day Act, which recognizes the value of the Holy Bible, as the core of Christian faith and of its reading, as a communion between Christians and their Creator," Panelo said of the new law declaring every last Monday of January as a special working holiday.

President's actions show that he respects beliefs and traditions with its rich cultural, social and ethnic diversity.

Mr. Duterte's message to devotees of the Black Nazarene during the annual staging of the traslacion, the spokesman said, was an acknowledgment of "the people's devotion to the sacred

image" and their "strong faith and reliance" in God.

"The President's actions show that he respects beliefs and traditions with its rich cultural, social and ethnic diversity. It is therefore his fervent hope that the free exercise of all religions pursuant to the Constitution shall aid and encourage the development of the moral character and spiritual foundation of our citizens," Panelo said.

No blinders

With this, the official calls on the President's detractors to "not

allow the clergy, whom he called as "sons of bitches," to have boyfriends.

"Only I can say bishops are sons of bitches, damn you. That is true. They should come out in the open, cancel celibacy and allow them to have boyfriends," he exclaimed.

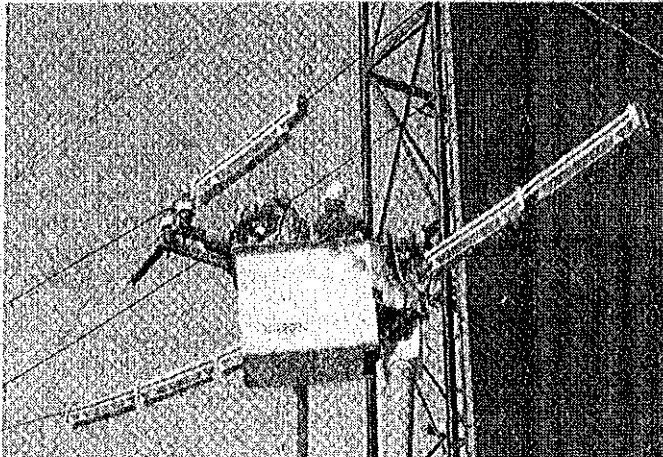
He, however, was quick to stress that he "has nothing against gays."

"The problem is, who will believe in you now?" Mr. Duterte asked, noting the sexual abuse scandals plaguing the Catholic

Church. "God is stupid but my God has a lot of common sense." That is exactly the words that came out from my mouth," Mr. Duterte stated.

"Then they tell me I am going to hell when I really do not have an ambition to be in heaven," he added in jest.

His animosity towards the prelates may have stemmed from their opposing views on his administration's policies, specifically the campaign against illegal drugs.



Can't touch these Electricians ready power cables along Commonwealth Avenue in Quezon City for construction work in the Metro Rail Transit 7 project.

ANALY LABOR

turn a blind eye" every time he speaks and "momentarily suspend their incorrigible biases" to fully comprehended the message he is trying to convey to all Filipinos.

Panelo likewise urged the prelates to be more accepting of Mr. Duterte's criticisms as they, too, have hurled their condemnations at him and his style of governance.

"If the men of the cloth can unleash tirades against the President then they should be able to receive some lashes from him to return the favor," he expressed.

Get real

Mr. Duterte also dared gay priests to "come out."

The Catholic Church should

Church in many parts of the world.

The President, himself a Catholic, has time and again recounted how he was supposedly abused by a priest in a Catholic school. He lambasted the Church as the "most hypocritical institution" and even challenged its leaders to prove him wrong by holding a public debate.

Sensical God

The President also repeatedly said his God is different from the God Catholics worship.

"My parents are all Catholic. I was brought up close to the Church. It's not my choice actually, it's a choice of my parents. I am not saying that I do not believe in God. I said, 'Your

Momentarily suspend incorrigible biases to fully comprehended the message Mr. Duterte is trying to convey to all Filipinos.

Action within 24 hours

Also, reiterating his stance on ridding the government of graft and corruption until his last day in office, Mr. Duterte called on the public to help him in cleaning the bureaucracy by giving him information about any abusive government officials.

The President even promised extending the privilege to the complainant of slapping the erring official in front of him.

"*Magsumbong kayo* and I will personally - and I will show you how. I'll even ask you the penalty that you prefer. I will give you the privilege, I'll slap the official in front of you," the Chief Executive expressed.

"So remember that, report it to me within 24 hours. If you're mad, I'll slap the offender five times. If you waited long, collect interest, make it 10. When it comes to corruption report it to me," he added.

Mr. Duterte extended his warning to the military and police personnel and even local executives from the mayor down to barangay captains.

"I will show you how they should behave in public office. I guarantee if there's a complaint, 24 hours," he said.

DEPED URGED TO LOOK DEEPER INTO 'BAKWIT' SCHOOLS

THE Save Our Schools Network reacted to the Department of Education Region 11's statement that *bakwit* schools in UCCP Haran will not be recognized, saying it fails to address the problem of schools displaced due to militarization.

This comes after DepEd 11 spokesperson Jernelito Atillo said they will not recognize the *bakwit* school of Salugpongan Community Learning Center for their displaced grade 6 and 7 classes of Naslaban and Dulyan, Talaingod as they are held outside of the areas of their school permits.

SOS network spokesperson Rlus Valle said the DepEd should not just look at the mere technicality of the permits of Salugpongan, but should rather address why Lumad schools are being driven away from Talaingod in the first place.

"If we have to be technical about it, what about the violations made by the military against international humanitarian law and the rights of the children? This is the reason why these Lumad children are in *bakwit* schools because the soldiers and paramilitary are encamped in the campus and padlocking them, and DepEd need to act on this," Valle said.

The SOS urged DepEd to investigate instead these cases of attacks on schools which have been reported to them by Salugpongan administrators and other Lumad schools.

Valle believed this is within the mandate of DepEd to enforce the protection of schools and ensure the right to education of the Lumad school children and youth.

"Rather than zeroing in on the issue of technicality, the way to address these *bakwit* schools is to enforce the soldiers leave the Lumad schools and communities, and disband the paramilitary, so that the Lumad schools can return," said Valle. ^{A3}

Valle said that DepEd 11 has long made technicalities an issue. On 2015, a MISFI Academy school was forcibly closed in Kapalong, Davao del Norte and evacuated to Haran due to attacks by Alamara. Yet the DepEd ignored the dangers by urging the Lumad evacuees to return to their communities and continue their schooling in areas specified by their permits.

Reds taking over gov't unlikely — defense chief

By JAIME LAUDE

There's no way for the communist rebels to overthrow the government, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said yesterday.

Lorenzana said the only chance for the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA) to rule the country is for them to win in the elections, which the Filipino people will not allow.

Lorenzana dismissed claims made by CPP founding chairman Jose Ma. Sison that the NPA's main goal for this year onward is to work for the ouster of President Duterte with the support of the Filipino people.

"While it is very difficult to completely eradicate the communist's armed component to the last man, we believe that we have enough momentum, support and resources to render the (communists) and their political ally irrelevant by 2022," Lorenzana said.

Last year, the military leadership as well as Malacañang declared it can defeat the NPA by

the middle of this year but had to reset their target date, citing the country's enormous insurgency problem.

Lorenzana, however, remains optimistic, saying the NPA will be downgraded into a bunch of criminals that the police can deal with by the end of President Duterte's term.

He added Sison and his comrades in exile abroad will soon be forgotten.

Lorenzana said he is supporting the President's decision not to employ purely military solutions in ending the country's decades-old insurgency problem.

"The defense department fully supports the President's decision. Working closely with local government units, we are actively pursuing local peace initiatives such as localized peace talks, community support and development and promotion of good governance," he said.

While focused military operations will weaken the NPA, Lorenzana said the promise of a better life for the families of rebels would bring them back to the fold of the law. **J**

From 649 to 8: DOJ cuts communist terror list

By MARC JAYSON CAYABYAB

The Department of Justice (DOJ) has reduced to eight the alleged officers of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) it wants declared as terrorists in an amended petition filed before the Manila regional trial court (RTC).

This is a significant decrease from the 649 alleged communist terrorists in the earlier version filed, which included United Nations

special rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples Victoria Tauli-Corpuz and 45 other human rights defenders.

Corpuz has since been dropped from the list after Manila RTC Branch 19 Presiding Judge Marlo Magdoza-Malagar declared her, former Bayan Muna party-list representative Satur Ocampo, former Baguio city councillor and former Asia representative to the UN

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From 649

From Page 1

Expert Mechanism Jose Molintas and National Democratic Front consultant Rafael Baylosis as nonparties due to petitioner's failure to present evidence they are officers of the CPP-New People's Army (NPA).

Several others have sought the court's permission to be dropped from the terror list, including Beverly Longid, Joanna Cariño, Joan Carling and Jeanette Cawiding of the Cordillera People's Alliance.

In the amended petition, the DOJ prosecutors implicated as communist officers founding chairman Jose Maria Sison, Jorge Madlos of the NPA National Operations Command; Jaime Padilla, a supposed leader of the Melito Glor Command; Francisco Fernandez, an alleged secretary of the Negros Region Committee; Cleofe Lagtapon, a Southeast Front head of the same committee; Antonio Cabanatan, secretary of the Mindanao Commission; Leonido Nabong, head of the Western Mindanao Regional Party Military Commission; and Myrna Sularte, secretary of the Northeastern Mindanao Regional Committee.

The names and addresses of the other alleged CPP-NPA officers, however, are "unknown" but "are also operating in different parts of the Philippine territory," the amended petition read.

The petition identified a significantly fewer number of alleged officials, unlike its first petition where it identified 18 alleged top communist leaders, 46 human rights defenders, four Catholic priests, a former party-list lawmaker and several others.

The amended petition still enumerated the alleged crimes of the CPP-NPA on the people such as murder, bombings and extortion, in convincing the court that the CPP-NPA should be declared as terrorists, and that the communists are only deceiving the Philippine government in entering into peace talks.

"The CPP and NPA are merely buying time by deceiving the Philippine government in entering into peace talks, while their main purpose is to mobilize all their forces in preparation for the 'people's war' aimed at overthrowing the duly constituted authorities, seizing control of the Philippine government and imposing a totalitarian regime. Thus, there is no other time to put an end to their deception... but through the filing of this petition," the amended petition read.

The DOJ filed an amended petition after suffering a blow on the first one when the judge cleared four people of involvement in the communist movement.

The court directed them to serve summons to alleged CPP-NPA officers by publication in a newspaper, "considering the petitioner's obvious lack of knowledge of the official address of the CPP-NPA."

The petition was also amended after Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra, in a budget hearing at the House of Representatives, admitted that the first terror list, submitted during his predecessor Vitaliano Aguirre's term, was not properly vetted and was merely based on intelligence reports.

Lorenzana to rebels: Don't underestimate Du30

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana on Friday warned communist rebel leaders they should not underestimate President Duterte's resolve to end the rebellion even if the schedule to do so had been moved. Lorenzana made the statement in reaction to communist leader Jose Maria Sison's comment that the deadline set by Mr. Duterte to defeat communist rebels would not be met. Sison said the change in the target date for finishing off rebels was just a sign of a faltering campaign and was a form of victory for rebels. In a statement on Friday, Lorenzana said it was "too soon" for Sison to claim victory. "He is underestimating this President," the defense chief said. "We may not be able to finish them off completely to the last man, but we will reduce them into a purely police problem," Lorenzana said. —JAYMEET GAMIL

'Reds biggest threat to Negros polls'

BACOLOD CITY – The New People's Army (NPA) is the biggest threat to this year's elections in Negros, according to the military.

"We know that it has a political intention in the forthcoming elections," Col. Benedict Arevalo, 303rd Infantry

Brigade commander, said during the activation of the Negros Occidental Provincial Joint Security Control Center in this city on Friday.

Arevalo said soldiers are bracing for a possible escalation of attacks by communist rebels as elections near.

On Thursday night, suspected NPA rebels stormed a military outpost in Kabankalan City, leaving an Army soldier wounded.

Prior to the attack, a militiaman was killed in Guihulngan City while heavy equipment valued at around

P120 million were burned in Ayungon, both in Negros Oriental.

Arevalo urged candidates to report extortion attempts by NPA rebels even as he warned local officials against supporting the communist movement. – Gilbert Bayoran

Critics warn PNP of consequences for profiling ACT members

By EMMANUEL TUPAS

Critics warned the Philippine National Police (PNP) they will give the police a dose of their own medicine if they will not stop profiling members of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT).

Bayan Muna chairman Neri Colmenares over the weekend said the PNP is treading on dangerous ground with its insistence on gathering intelligence information on ACT members suspected of supporting communist rebels.

Colmenares warned of dire consequences for the PNP if it will not stop its profiling.

Among these are the slew of charges that could be filed in court against policemen.

Colmenares chided PNP chief Director General Oscar Albayalde for his statement that teachers have nothing to worry about being profiled if they have nothing to hide.

If they will follow the PNP chief's logic, Colmenares said nothing will prevent them from seeking a petition to have the bank accounts of Albayalde and other police officials in the country opened for scrutiny.

"We will demand to open their bank accounts. If they have nothing to hide then

they have nothing to fear. Tell that to Albayalde," he said.

Colmenares said the PNP is doing a form of electioneering as it will discourage teachers from joining ACT.

ACT officials claimed to have received death threats just days after they discovered the police profiling of its members.

ACT secretary-general Raymond Basilio said he received a call on Friday from a certain Gary who knew of his personal details and issued him a death threat.

Another officer, ACT regional coordinator for central Luzon Aurora Santiago, also received an anonymous call

from someone who threatened her if she fails to cooperate.

The group said Santiago's caller identified himself as the provincial commander of the communist New People's Army in Bulacan and told her that "if she will not cooperate, (he) can have her house burned or have her killed."

Basilio on Saturday described the incidents as an escalation of harassment that their group has been receiving in recent weeks.

He noted the profiling conducted by the PNP of its members, which was discovered after an internal memo from the intelligence division

of the Manila Police District was leaked to the public.

"These terroristic moves to harass and threaten our leaders show the intensifying operations against our organization, which comes shortly after the police profiling of our members," Basilio said. The police "should run after these vile people who terrorize our leaders and punish them according to our laws."

Kabataan party-list Rep. Sarah Jane Elago said she would push for a congressional inquiry on the PNP's profiling. She criticized the PNP for opening ACT members to risks such as illegal arrests and trumped-up charges.

Albayalde has defended the profiling of ACT members, adding it is part of their mandate as a law enforcement agency.

He said there is no provision in the Constitution or in the law that prohibits the PNP and Armed Forces of the Philippines or other law enforcement agencies from gathering intelligence information.

Albayalde claimed they would not have conducted the profiling were it not for Communist Party of the Philippines founder Jose Maria Sison admitting ACT is one of their legal front organizations. -- With Janvic Mateo

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• Persona non grata

CAMP DATU LIPUS MAKAPANDONG, Awa New Leyte, Prosperidad, Agusan del Sur. - The local government unit (LGU) of Sibagat In Agusan del Sur province recently declared Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA) terrorists as "Persona Non-Grata," it was learned yesterday. This, after the municipal council passed Municipal Resolution 137-18 and signed by Mayor Maria Liza L. Evangelista. The declaration was due to the raid of the NPAs of the New Tubigon Patrol Base last December 19 where terrorists were able to abduct the 12 CAFGU Active Auxiliaries (CAAs) and two soldiers. (Mike U. Crismundo)

NPA's burn passenger bus in Zambo Norte

By NONOY E. LACSON

ZAMBOANGA CITY – Suspected members of the New People's Army (NPA) operating in Zamboanga del Norte set ablaze a passenger bus after its operator reportedly refused to pay revolutionary tax to the rebel group.

Police Regional Office in Zamboanga peninsula (PRO-9) Chief Supt. Emmanuel Luis D. Licup yesterday said five suspected members of the Secom Feliciano A group, operating in the four municipalities of Zamboanga Del Norte, claimed responsibility for the attack.

Licup said the bus was travelling from Liloy to Godod in Zamboanga del Norte at around 8 p.m. when it was stopped by heavily armed men.

He said one of the suspects introduced his group as belonging to the NPA, and told the driver, "you're always passing here without paying taxes to us."

Police identified the bus driver as Deonilo Asman Bucan, 48, and a resident of Barangay Poblacion, Godod, Zamboanga del Norte.

His three bus helpers were identified as Leo A. Lomondaya, Nelson Dominding Ambahang and Celso Dominding Ambahang.

Bucan told investigators the rebels then asked all of them to disembark from the bus, before they set the SGS liner on fire in Barangay Pucay, Salug, Zamboanga del Norte.

Bus, sinunog ng NPA sa Zamboanga

ZAMBOANGA CITY - Sinunog ng umano'y grupo ng New People's Army (NPA) ang isang pampasaherong bus dahil umano sa hindi pagbabayad ng revolutionary tax sa kilusan sa Zamboanga del Norte, kamakailan.

Ayon kay Police Regional Office 9 (PRO-9) Zamboanga Peninsula director, Chief Supt Emmanuel Luis Licup, agad na inako ng limang umano'y kaanib ng Secom Feliciano A ng NPA ang insidente.

Ang nasabing grupo ay nag-o-operate sa apat na bayan sa nabanggit na lalawigan, ayon kay Licup.

Aniya, limang armadong lalaki ang humarang sa nasabing bus na may plakang QBE-811 na pag-aari ni Sabino Gallo, ng Liloy, Zamboanga del Norte, na minamaneho naman ni Deonilo Asman

Bucan, 48, may-asawa, ng Poblacion, Godod, sa Barangay Pucay Salug, ng nabanggit na lalawigan, nitong Miyerkules ng gabi.

Inihahayag ni Licup, sinabihan ng isa sa mga rebelde ang driver na "hindi sila nagbabayad ng buwis kahit madalas silang dumadaan sa nabanggit na lugar."

Pinababa aniya ng mga rebelde si Bucan, kasama ang tatlong bus helper na sina Leo Lomondaya, 28, binata, ng Banawan, Godod; Nelson Dominding Ambahang, 28, may-asawa, at Celso Dominding Ambahang, pawang taga-Bgy. Poblacion, Godod at mga pasahero bago sinunog ang bus.

Nagpapatok pa ng baril ang grupo bago sila patungo sa liblib na lugar.

Nonoy E. Lacson

9 soldiers wounded in encounter with NPA

By MARIE YONETTE MARTICIO

TACLOBAN City—Nine soldiers were wounded in an encounter with suspected Communist New People's Army (NPA) terrorists in a remote area of Barangay Bay-ang, San Jorge, Samar on

Saturday.

In a report from Lt. Col. Rizaldo Laurena, Commanding Officer of the 63rd Infantry (Innovator) Battalion, based in San Jorge, Samar, he said his troops were on their way to Barangay Bay-ang of said town at around 6:50 a.m. when they chanced upon a group

of fully-armed men in the area.

This triggered a brief firefight, which was also marked by the detonation of an improvised explosive device (IED).

When the smoke cleared from the battle, nine soldiers were found to have been wounded, mostly from

shrapnel wounds sustained from the IED attack.

Laurena said there was also an undetermined number of casualties on the side of the enemy.

The wounded troops were immediately brought to the nearest hospital for treatment.

9 soldiers injured in Samar encounter

TACLOBAN CITY, Leyte — Nine soldiers were wounded in an encounter with suspected New People's Army rebels in a remote area of Barangay Bay-ang, San Jorge, Samar yesterday.

A report from Lt. Col. Rizaldo Lau-

rena, commanding officer of the Army 63rd Infantry (Innovator) Battalion based in San Jorge said his troops were on their way to Barangay Bay-ang at around 6:50 a.m. when they chanced upon a group of fully armed men.

A brief firefight ensued and an improvised explosive device detonated.

Nine soldiers were wounded from the IED shrapnels. An undetermined number of casualties from the NPA was reported. (Marie Tonette Marticio)

9 na sundalo, sugatan sa engkentro

TACLOBAN CITY. - Sugatan ang siyam na sundalo matapos nilang makasagupa ang mga miyembro ng New People's Army (NPA) sa isang liblib na lugar sa San Jorge, Samar, kahapon ng umaga.

Sa ulat ni 63rd Infantry Battalion (IB) commanding officer, Lt. Col. Rizaldo Laurena, patungo sana ang grupo nito sa Barangay Bay-ang nang makaengkuwentro nila ang grupo ng

mga rebelde, dakong 6:50 ng umaga.

Sa kasagsagan ng bakbakan, pinasabugan din ang mga sundalo ng improvised explosive device (IED).

Napilitang umatras ang mga rebelde nang masugatan ang kanilang mga kasamahan.

Siyam na sundalo ang nasugatan dahil na rin sa mga tama ng shrapnel at agad silang isinugod sa ospital.

Marie Tonette Marticio



Full anti-Red solution

By Kathleen Mae Bulquerin

The solution to the communist insurgency will not be entirely the domain of the military as directed by President Rodrigo Duterte, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said.

Turn to page 6

Without their armed component, the CPP will become just like any other political party

From page 1

"The DND fully supports the President's decision not to employ a purely military solution to ending the communist insurgency in the country," Lorenzana said.

He added the government has committed to work closely with local officials in pursuing localized peace talks, community support and development and promotion of good

governance, all aimed at neutralizing the insurgency threat.

Also included in the initiative is the implementation of the Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Programs or E-CLIP that provides assistance to former rebels through financial, livelihood and educational, psychosocial support.

Former guerillas are also provided housing, the Defense chief said.

Normal life as choice

"While focused military actions will weaken their armed component, it is the promise of a better life for their families that drives their members to return to civil society

and the fold of the law," Lorenzana added.

The DND chief said the government has the momentum, support and resources to render the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army-National Democratic Front (CPP-NPA-NDF) strategically and politically irrelevant by 2022.

"By the end of President Rodrigo Duterte's term, the NPA will be reduced into a purely police problem of running after robbers, criminals, arsonists and extortionists," he said.

Peace goal

During the earlier years of his presidency, Mr. Duterte tried to negotiate peace with the communist group as it was his "dream" for

the country to achieve peace.

However, in 2017, the peace negotiations with the communist rebels were halted as Mr. Duterte said the NPA kept its attacks on state forces despite the peace talks.

This prompted the military to resume operations against the communist rebels and encourage them to surrender instead.

"Without their armed component,

the CPP will become just like any other political party whose only chance of taking over government is by winning in an election, something that the Filipino people will never let happen because their hands are stained with the blood of thousands of Filipinos they have sacrificed in the altar of a discredited and failed ideology," Lorenzana said.

Purely military solution vs Reds rejected

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said yesterday that they have no plans to employ a purely military solution in ending communist insurgency in the country despite the bogging down of the peace talks marked by harsh exchanges between President Duterte and Communist Party of the Philippines founder Jose Maria Sison.

This is the reason, according to Lorenzana, why they have been aggressively pushing for the localized peace talks since the peace negotiations between the government and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines have stalled last year.

"Working closely with local government units, we are actively pursuing local peace initiatives such localized peace talks, community support and development, and promotion of good governance, as well as the implementation of the Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Programs or E-CLIP which helps former rebels start their lives anew by providing financial, livelihood, and educational assistance, psychosocial support, and housing," said Lorenzana.

The Defense chief said even Duterte is not in favor of using the government force alone to end communist insurgency, the most recent pronouncement of which was the Chief Executive saying that he does not want to bomb rebel camps.

"The Department of National Defense fully supports the President's decision not to employ a purely military solution to ending the communist insurgency in the country," said Lorenzana. (Aaron Recuenco)

DND: Military solution vs rebelde, di solusyon

Sinabi kahapon ni Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana na wala silang planong gumamit ng purely military solution sa paglaban sa rebelyon sa bansa sa kabila ng pagpapatigil sa usapang pangkapayapaan, nang-ugat sa pagpapalit ng maaanghang na salita nina Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte at Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) founder Jose Maria Sison.

Ito ang dahilan, ayon kay Lorenzana, kung bakit nila isinusulong ang localized peace talks simula nang matigil ang usapang pangkapayapaan ng pamahalaan at National Democratic Front of the Philippines noong nakaraang taon.

"Working closely with local government units, we are actively pursuing local peace initiatives such localized peace talks, community support and development,

and promotion of good governance, as well as the implementation of the Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Programs or E-CLIP which helps former rebels start their lives anew by providing financial, livelihood, and educational assistance, psychosocial support, and housing," sabi ni Lorenzana.

Sinabi ng Defense Chief na kahit hindi pabor si Duterte na puwersa lamang ng gobyerno ang kikilos upang matuldukan ang rebelyon; ang pahayag kamakailanay ang punong ehekutibo na nagsabing ayaw niyang bombahin ang mga kampong niga rebelde.

Sinusuportahan ng Department of National Defense ang desisyon ni Pangulong Duterte "not to employ a purely military solution to ending the communist insurgency in the country,"

sabi ni Lorenzana.

Kamakailan, ipinahayag ni Pangulong Duterte na bukas pa rin siya sa usapang pangkapayapaan sa mga rebeldeng komunista. Tinanggap ni Sison ang kanyang pahayag, sinabing prayoridad ng NDI ang peace talks.

Sa kanyang parte, sinabi ni Lorenzana na mas interesado silang hikayatin ang mga rebelde na sumuko sa gobyerno, ipinahayag na karamihan sa mga ito ay nil-recruit dahil sa kahirapan.

"While focused military actions will weaken their armed component, it is the promise of a better life for their families that drives their members to return to civil society and the fold of the law," pahayag ni Lorenzana.

3 Aaron Recuenco

Security officials warn vs BOL poll saboteurs

Security is tightening in autonomous areas of Mindanao in the days leading up to the Jan. 21 plebiscite for the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), with police and military officials warning against saboteurs who would disrupt or prevent the voting.

President Duterte earlier ordered security officials to ensure free, orderly and credible voting for the BOL.

1st Gen. Arnel dela Vega, head of the Western Mindanao Command, said all units and systems had been put in place to protect at least 2.1 million registered voters in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) during their exercise of their right to vote.

400 policemen

Dela Vega said the military had tapped the help of all sectors, including the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), to secure the plebiscite.

In General Santos City, at



PEACE WARRIOR: MILF chair Murad Ebrahim in November became the first MILF leader to set foot in what could be the lion's den—headquarters of the Philippine Army in Camp Aguinaldo—and was greeted by then Armed Forces Chief Carlito Galvez Jr. —INQUIRER PHOTO

least 400 policemen were deployed on Thursday to boost security in Cotabato City ahead of the plebiscite for the BOL, according to a top police official.

Chief Supt. Eliseo Rasco, regional police director, said the policemen were trained to respond to "whatever scenario."

"The challenges we are facing appears greater than us," Rasco said.

"Yet, on hindsight, it is one of those life-changing events for us and an event that we can be proud of," he said in a statement.

Rasco backed the ratification of the BOL, which he said

could "put an end to the conflicts that have long been tormenting people in the region."

Once the BOL is ratified, the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao will replace the 28-year-old ARMM.

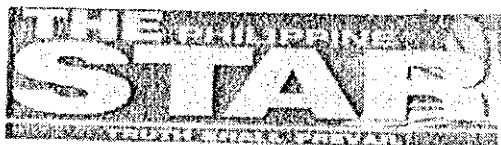
Cops' role

Rasco said policemen had been trained to perform as board of election inspectors to replace teachers who might be unable to render service because of security issues.

Besides Cotabato City all other areas in the ARMM will vote on Jan. 21, including Isabela City in Basilan. *RS*

Cotabato City, which is the seat of government of the ARMM, had twice rejected inclusion in the Moro autonomous region.

Dela Vega said the military was keeping close watch on Sulu and Cotabato City. —REPORTS FROM BONG S. SARMIENTO, JULIE ALIPALA, EDWIN FERNANDEZ AND JULIE M. AURELIO INQ



5 Maute men surrender

Five remnants of the Maute group surrendered to the military in Lanao del Sur in the past two days, according to the military.

Two surrendered to the 55th Infantry Battalion (IB) on Friday and three others yesterday, Col. Romeo Brawner, 103rd Infantry Brigade commander, said.

Brawner said the militants turned over their guns, including a submachinegun and a caliber .45 pistol, to Lt. Col. Ian Ignes, 55th IB commander.

Brawner quoted the surrenderees as saying that they decided to lay down their arms because they are tired of running away from government troopers.

The remaining Maute men are led by Owayda Benito

Marohombsar, alias Abu Dar. He reportedly assumed leadership of the group after the Maute brothers and Abu Sayyaf leader Isnilon Hapilon were killed in the fighting in Marawi in 2017.

The military has offered a reward of P3 million for the arrest of Marohombsar, who is said to be a relative of the Mautes.

Marohombsar's wife, Nafisah Pundog, was arrested in General Santos City last year.

Brawner said military operations against the remaining Maute militants would continue. "Our combat operations will be relentless... so as not to hamper the... rehabilitation of Marawi," he said.

— Roel Pareño, Jaime Laude

2 Maute-IS remnants surrender in Lanao del Sur

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

Two Maute-Islamic State (IS) remnants, who reportedly belonged to the group of terrorist leader Abu Dar, surrendered to the military in Lanao del Sur on Friday, January 11.

A military report disclosed that the two turned themselves in to the Army's 55th Infantry Battalion in Pagayawan, Lanao del Sur at about 9 a.m.

Owayda Benito Marohombsar also known as Abu Dar, became the leader of the Maute-IS remnants after the suc-

cessful military operation during Marawi siege.

"Based on our initial custodial debriefing, the two were tired of running and evading our troops," said Lt. Col Ian Ignes, 55th Infantry Battalion Commander.

"Our combat operation will be relentless and continuous so as not to hamper the recovery, reconstruction and rehabilitation of Marawi," said Col. Romeo Brawner, the newly installed 103rd Infantry Brigade Commander based in Marawi, Lanao del Sur.

The surrenderers also gave up a cali-

ber KG 9 sub-machine gun and a caliber-.45 pistol.

Custodial debriefing is still ongoing as of this posting.

Meanwhile, Maj. Gen. Roseller Murillo, 1st Infantry Division and Joint Task Force Zampelan (Zamboanga Peninsula and Lanao Provinces) Commander, commended the efforts of the troops that led to the surrender of Abu Dar's comrades.

"Our campaign against terrorists will be continuous in order to attain a just and lasting peace in our area of operation," he added.

2 Maute Group men surrender

Two members of the Islamic State-Inspired Maute Group surrendered to the military in Lanao del Sur on Friday.

A military report disclosed that they turned themselves in to the Army 55th Infantry Battalion in Pagayawan at about 9 a.m.

Their identities were not disclosed but they belong to the group of Owayda Benito Marohomsar, alias "Abu Dar," who became the leader of the Maute-ISIS remnants after the successful military

operation during the Marawi City siege.

"Based on our initial custodial debriefing, the two were tired of running and evading our troops," said Lt. Col. Ian Ignes, 55th Infantry Battalion commander.

"Our combat operation will be relentless and continuous so as not to hamper the recovery, reconstruction, and rehabilitation of Marawi," said Col. Romeo Brawner, the newly installed 103rd Infantry Brigade commander based in

Marawi, Lanao del Sur.

The remnants also surrendered a caliber KG9 sub-machine gun and one caliber .45 pistol.

Custodial debriefing is still on-going.

Major Gen. Roseller Murillo, 1st Infantry Division and Joint Task Force Zampelan (Zamboanga Peninsula and Lanao provinces) commander, commended the efforts of the troops that led to the surrender of Abu Dar's comrades. **(Francis Wakefield)**

2 Maute-ISIS remnants, sumuko

Dalawang pitaninuwalaang remnants ng Maute-ISIS ang sumuko sa militar sa Lanao del Sur, nitong Biyernes ng umaga.

Sa report ng militar, ang dalawang terorista ay sumirender sa kampo ng 55th Infantry Battalion (IB) ng Philippine Army (PA) sa Pagayawan, Lanao del Sur, nitong Biyernes dakong 9:00 ng umaga.

Isinuko rin umano ng dalawa ang isang caliber KG 9 sub-machine gun at isang cal. 55 pistol.

Ang dalawa ay kaanib ng grupo ni Abu Dar, ang naging lider ng Maute-ISIS malapos

ang matagumpay na military operations na nagwakas sa limang-buwang Marawi siege noong 2017.

"Based on our initial custodial debriefing, the two were tired of running and evading our troops," ayon kay 55th IB Commander, Lt. Col. Ian Ignes.

Ayon naman kay Col. Romeo Brawner, commander ng 103rd IB na nakabase sa Marawi, patuloy pa rin ang isinasagawa nilang operasyon laban sa mga terorista upang hindi maantala ang rehabilitasyon ng siyudad.

2 Francis T. Wakefield

Pangarungan named 2019 'amirul hajj'

By ALI O. MACABALANG

COTABATO CITY — National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF) Secretary Saldamen Pangarungan will serve as official "amirul hajj" or Philippine pilgrims' delegation head this year to the Holy Islamic shrines in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), the agency spokesperson announced Friday.

Pangarungan received a copy of his designation dated January 9 from President Rodrigo Duterte while he and his team were wrapping up on Thursday their 10-day activities in the KSA, NCMF Bureau of External Affairs Director IV Jun Alonto-Datu Ramos said.

The NCMF Charter, R.A. 6667, prescribes for the agency's automatic designation as "amirul hajj" while in office. But due to absence of full-fledged NCMF secretary last year, President Duterte had named Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) 1st Vice Chairman Ghazali Jaafar as 2018 "amirul hajj," it was learned.

The President appointed Pangarungan as NCMF head last July 9 and Datu Ramos as NCMF director three months earlier to "institute reforms in the commission long-dogged by anomalies, particularly in the conduct of the annual hajj operation," a Moro journalist covering for decades the defunct Office on Muslim Affairs and the succeeding NCMF.

Hajj is the Islamic pilgrimage to Makkah (Mecca), Saudi Arabia, one of the fifth pillars of Islam. Every adult Muslim is obliged to perform the hajj in one's lifetime. Its five-day rituals-filled advent is expected this August, roughly three months after the observance of Ramadhan fasting, another pillar of Islam.

Pangarungan and his entourage, which included Ramos, were expected to fly back home this weekend after their flight to KSA last January 2 for a 10-day trip required in the preparations for this year's hajj.

While in KSA, Pangarungan signed a 2019 "mother contract" with the Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah officials, and negotiated other host authorities on concerns relative to his campaign for "improved" Filipino pilgrims' plight this year and beyond, Datu Ramos said.

MILF to decommission warriors under new Bangsamoro law

ILIGAN CITY: The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) will start decommissioning the 40,000 combatants of its Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF) once the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) is ratified.

Republic Act 11054, known as the BOL, created the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) to replace the present Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, which is subject for approval in the plebiscites on January 21 and February 6.

Jannati Mimbantas, MILF North-eastern Mindanao Front commander, told *The Manila Times* that the negotiating peace panels of the government and the MILF created an international decommissioning body (IDB) that will be observed by an independent international monitoring team.

He said Turkey would lead the seven-member IDB with Brunei and Norway as members on the international side, General Reynaldo

Abu and Dr. Mario Abuja for the government, and Jannati and Jack Abbas for the MILF.

He said decommissioning would be done in three stages. The first, will be carried out immediately after the BOL is ratified with 30 per cent of the MILF combatants including their assorted arms and weapons being decommissioned.

The second, will be done after the formation of the Bangsamoro Police under the supervision of the Philippine National Police, wherein 35 percent of the combatants and assorted firearms will be decommissioned.

The third will take place when both parties have signed an exit document attesting that all their agreements have been fully implemented. A7

Mimbantas said the last decommissioning is expected in 2022 when the organic law shall have been fully implemented.

In 2022, the first elections of BARMM will be held.

MASIDING NOOR YAHYA

Troops foil bomb attempt in Kudarat

A TERRORIST attack in urban centers in Sultan Kudarat was foiled by security forces after they seized improvised bombs and triggering devices in Paglat, Maguindanao, on Saturday morning.

Members of the Philippine Army and the Philippine National Police seized four improvised bombs and three pistols in the village of Damakling around 5 a.m.

The counter-terrorist operation was

conducted after the state forces learned of the presence of bombs in the village, according to Lt. Col. Harold Cabunoc, the commanding officer of the 33rd Infantry (Makabayan) Battalion.

Cabunoc said they have been monitoring terrorist bombers, identified as Ustadz Yasser Saligan and his cohort, Sheikh Makakena alias Abu Jihan, who was also spotted in the area.

"Our informant showed us the pic-

tures of terrorist bombers Ustadz Yasser Saligan and his cohort, Sheikh Makakena, a.k.a. Abu Jihan as they detonated a bomb to test if it was lethal. We had been tracking the suspects since November 2018," he added.

The 33rd Infantry Battalion, 4th Special Action Battalion, Criminal Investigation and Detection Group, Autonomous Region in Muslim

A2

■ BOMBING FROM A1

Army, police foil bombing

Mindanao and Maguindanao Provincial Police Office swooped down on the terrorists' lair in Damakling around 3 a.m.

They arrested five people but Saligan and Makakena escaped by jumping into the murky waters of Liguasan Marsh upon sensing the presence of the security forces.

Authorities handed over the five unidentified suspects to village officials.

Two weeks ago, Cotabato City was shaken by a bomb attack on New Year's Eve that led to the death of two people.

One of the alleged suspects, Salipudin Lauban Pasanidalan, is in the custody of Police Regional Office-12 after he surrendered on January 6.

His cohort, identified as Alias Saed Nur Kasim, is at large.

Maute members surrender

Meanwhile, two members of the Maute Group under Abu Dar surrendered to government troops in Pagayawan, Lanao del Sur on Friday.

The two gave themselves up to the 55th Infantry Battalion (IB).

Lt. Col. Ian Ignes, 55th IB commander, said the duo got tired of running and evading government troops.

The two also surrendered a KG9 sub-machine gun and one caliber .45 pistol.

Maj. Gen. Roseller Murillo, 1st IB and Joint Task Force Zampelan (Zamboanga Peninsula and Lanao Provinces) commander, commended the efforts of government troops that led to Abu Dar's people surrendering to them.

"Our campaign against terrorists will be continuous in order to attain a just and lasting peace in our area of operation," he said.

Col. Romeo Brawner, 103rd IB commander, vowed to continue combat operations against the remaining forces of the Maute group.

"Our combat operation will be relentless and continuous so as not to hamper the recovery, reconstruction, and rehabilitation of Marawi," he said.

Abu Dar, who is also known as Owayda Benito Marohombsar, emerged as the leader of the Maute after Omar Maute was killed by government troops during the Marawi siege. **ROY D.R. NARRA**

Sultan Kudarat bombing plot foiled

An alleged bomb plot poised against urban centers in Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao was foiled after elements of the Philippine Army conducted a pre-dawn raid Saturday in Barangay Damakling in the province.

The raid resulted to the seizure of improvised explosive devices, triggers and the arrest of five people, according to Lt. Col. Harold Cabunoc, commanding officer of the 33rd Infantry Battalion.

The orchestrated counter-terrorist operation were launched after intelligence reports indicated the presence of bombs in remote Barangay Pagalad.

Bansil sent surrender feelers after learning of the presence of security forces.

Cabunoc said a military informant provided a photo of alleged terrorist bombers, whom he identified as Ustadz Yasser Saligan and his cohort, Sheik Makakena aka "Abu Jihad," showing the suspects as they detonated an explosive to test it.

"We have been monitoring the suspects since November 2018," Cabunoc said.

Combined elements of the 33rd Infantry Battalion, 4th Special Action Battalion, personnel from the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group-ARMM and the Maguindanao Provincial Police Office raided the known terrorist lair around 3 a.m.

Troops confiscated four improvised explosive devices and three caliber .45 pistols from the five suspects found in the area and taken into custody by the raiding team.

However, primary suspects Abu Jihad and Ustadz Yasser managed to elude arrest by jumping into the waters of the Liguasan Marsh upon sensing the arrival of government troops.

Meanwhile, the raiding teams also proceeded by mid-morning to Barangay Makains of General Salipada K. Pendatun town, to escort five members of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), who surrendered earlier.

Cabunoc said the five BIFF members were led by a certain Commander Mayogantong Bansil. He said Bansil sent surrender feelers after learning of the presence of security forces in the adjacent town of Paglat.

ANOTHER BOMB ATTACK FAILS IN SULTAN KUDARAT

By Francisco Tuyay

MILITARY and police forces foiled another planned bomb attacks, this time centered at urban centers in Sultan Kudarat—following the seizure of improvised explosive and detonating devices at a village in the province early dawn Saturday.

The terrorist plot was the third attempt by terrorists to sow violence in Mindanao ahead of the upcoming plebiscite on the Bangsamoro Organic Law after security forces foiled two bomb attacks in two areas in Maguindanao last Wednesday.

The first bomb plot was intended to disrupt the turnover of a school building by Maguindanao Gov. Esmael Mangudadatu to education officials in Radja Buayan town.

The explosive devices—three bundles of 81 mm mortar shells concealed in a plastic bag—were discovered by military personnel minutes before they went off during the event.

The second was to replicate the New Year's Eve explosion at the South Seas Mall in Cotabato City, but failed after army troops from the 40th Infantry Battalion intercepted three unexploded "Anti-Personnel Mines" from two Dawlah Islamiya terrorists shortly after an encounter.

Maj. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, commander of Joint Task Force Central, said the mines were supposed to be trans-

ported to the heart of Cotabato City or Midsayap town for an attack there.

Lt. Col. Harold Cabunoc, commander of the 33rd Infantry Battalion, said the planned attack was thwarted after military and police elite units launched counter-terrorist operations in a remote village of Pagalad where the bombs were kept.

Cabunoc said the motive of the terrorists to detonate bombs in high-populated centers was attested to by a civilian informant who showed security authorities a photo of two bombers testing the explosive devices.

"Our informant showed us the pictures of terrorist bombers Ustadz Yasser Saligan and his cohort, Sheikh Makakena a.k.a. Abu Jihad, as they detonated a bomb to test its lethality," Cabunoc said.

He revealed they had been tracking down the two bombers since November 2018.

Under cover of darkness, troops of the 33rd Infantry Battalion, 4th Special Action Battalion, Criminal Investigation and Detection Group-ARMM and Maguindanao Provincial Police

Office, swooped down on and raided the terrorist lair at around 3 a.m.

As troops approached their target, five persons who were in the area were arrested and seized from them four improvised bombs and three cal. 45 pistols. The suspects handed over to village officials.

However, the primary objective of the troops—Abu Kihad and Ustadz Yasser—eluded arrest by jumping into the murky waters of Liguasan Marsh.

Pursuit operations were launched against the fleeing high-profile terrorist.

Hours after the discovery of the explosives, the military pressure against terrorists in Mindanao had forced a commander of the Islamic State-inspired Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters and four of his followers to surrender.

Cabunoc said Commander Mayogantong Bansil, a notorious rebel involved in atrocities against government troops and the civilian population, along with his four members turned themselves over in Makainis Village in General Salipada K Pendatun.

Cabunoc said Mayogantong sent surrender feelers after knowing the presence of security forces in the adjacent town of Paglat 5 kilometers away.

"His relative contacted me by phone to confirm his willingness to lay down his arms. He was afraid that we will launch offensives against his group on the same day," Cabunoc

added.

Bansil and his men surrendered four high-powered firearms including a Cal. 50 Sniper Rifle, two M1 Garand Rifles, and a 40mm M79 Grenade Launcher which were presented to Brigadier General Robert Dauz, the commander of the 1st Mechanized Infantry Brigade, which has operational control over the 33rd Infantry Battalion.

"You have shown the expertise in handling the security threats without incurring casualties. Share these best practices in the conduct of operations to (sic) all Army units in Central Mindanao," said Dauz.

Sobejana, commander of the Army's 6th Infantry Division, said the BIFF terrorists had nowhere else to hide.

"We have won the support of the people in Central Mindanao. The people themselves have voluntarily provided information about the hiding places of the terrorists," said Sobejana.

The 33rd Infantry Battalion has facilitated the surrender of various threat groups both in Magulindanao and Sultan Kudarat through the employment of combat operations, community engagements, and civil affairs activities.

Since February 2017, the unit has successfully facilitated the surrender of 203 communist rebels and 37 BIFF fighters, setting a benchmark in the conduct of military operations in a 'two front war' against distinct threat groups, Sobejana said. A2

41 drug ring members surrender

Cabunoc said 17 of the surrenderers were drug traffickers while the rest were self-confessed drug users and peddlers

At least 41 members of an illegal drug syndicate reportedly indirectly supporting Islamic State-linked Moro rebels on Friday voluntarily yielded to government troopers in Sultan sa Barongis, Maguindanao.

Lt. Col. Harold Cabunoc, commander of the Army's 33rd Infantry Battalion, said the suspects gave themselves up in Barangay Bulod, after negotiations with representatives of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency and local civilian officials led by Mayor Ramdatu Angas.

Cabunoc said his unit had been using a combination of combat operations, community engagements and civil affairs activities in neutralizing threat groups in its area of operation.

The surrenderers were led by known drug ring leaders Teddy Blang, 55, and Anwaruddin Blang, 46, who were sourcing their stuff from the Islamic State-inspired Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), operating in the vast Maguindanao marshland.

Cabunoc said 17 of the surrenderers were drug traffickers while the rest were self-confessed drug users and peddlers.

"I am grateful that you have finally decided to support our government's campaign against illegal drugs. We will closely monitor your sincerity in reforming to become productive citizens of this

country," Cabunoc said.

Angas then urged the drug personalities to help eradicate the drug menace that had been haunting Bulod village.

"Help the authorities in tracking down the remnants of your group. Let us work together in transforming this village into a peaceful community," the mayor said.

The Philippine Army deployed the 33rd Infantry Battalion to Bulod in November last year, to address the terrorist threat and the proliferation of illegal drugs coming from the Liguasan Marsh.

Blang told Cabunoc that a BIFF member with the alias, "Kasili," was their main source of the prohibited drugs.

Major Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, commander of the Army's 6th Infantry Division, said that the surrender of the drug ring members would further weaken the BIFF terror group. **BR**

PEACE ADVISER SEEKS UN HELP IN MORO AREAS

PRESIDENTIAL Adviser on the Peace Process Secretary Carlito Galvez Jr. has urged the United Nations to continue its assistance in providing capacity development to key leaders in the Bangsamoro region.

"Our focus now is how to have good governance on the new Bangsamoro government. I would like to request the UN family to help us in mentoring key leaders on how to be efficient and effective in governance," Galvez told officials of various UN agencies who called on him at his office on Friday.

Galvez also thanked the UN for its continued support for the peace process in the Philippines.

"I think your projects that are people-centered and those on human resource development are good. I would like to thank you for helping us and sharing the same goal," he said.

Galvez cited the role of UN agencies in helping counter violent extremism, preventing the recruitment of child soldiers, empowering women, and developing the whole Mindanao region.

"I believe that if we have peace in Mindanao, we have peace in the Philippines. If we have development in Mindanao, we have development in the Philippines," he said.

The United Nations' partnership framework is anchored on the Sustainable Development Goals 2019-2023.

It aims to achieve outcomes related to people-centeredness, economic prosperity, and peace.

In his remarks during the courtesy call, UN Resident Coordinator Ola Almgren expressed interest in OPAPP's practices in the peace process.

"OPAPP has contributed a lot to the global practice. UN is looking forward to your experiences and best practices, hoping that you can participate in global fora and share them as well as to work with you and your staff," he said.

Among the UN agencies present in the meeting were the United Nations Development Program, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, UN Women, International Organization for Migration, and Prevention on Violent Extremism.

Grim scenarios on BOL

“The huge investment in time and resources by both government and rebels which painstakingly shepherded the BOL into its present shape will be put to waste if the court rejects it.

I went home to Lanao del Sur the other week to attend a court hearing. Along the highway from Iligan cutting across the mainland towards Cotabato City I saw outpouring of support for the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) or Republic Act 11054. Almost every strategic corner along the road is cluttered with tarps and giant streamers emblazoned with the words: “We Support BOL” (unfortunately, shameless enterprising *epal* candidates putting their names in bigger and bold print below these billboards is a letdown). To many, the forthcoming plebiscite is the Big Enchilada. But what if BOL suffers a hitch like being declared unconstitutional or rejected by voters?

Grim scenarios played out on my mind as we maneuvered the zigzagged Marawi-Malabang road. The ghost of the aftermath of the 2008 Supreme Court (SC) decision striking down as unconstitutional the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MoA-AD) haunts many. The siege and plunder of the towns of Kauswagan and Kolambagan, Lanao del Norte by Commander Bravo of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) simultaneously with depredations by Commander Amelil Kato of Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, a breakaway faction of the MILF in the Cotabato areas, was triggered by that decision.

The rebels took over the municipal hall and other government structures and held at bay government forces for days. They were repelled only after a pyrrhic battle. The cost was high in terms of lives lost and properties



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destroyed with civilians, as always, suffering the brunt of the mayhem. The MoA-AD is very much like the present BOL in substance and import now facing similar challenge of unconstitutionality. My disquiet was aggravated by another certiorari case

“Government should map out a plan ‘B’ if the BOL will not pass the gauntlet of the Supreme Court. It’s better to be prepared than be caught with pants down.

The huge investment in time and resources by both government and rebels which painstakingly shepherded the BOL into its present shape will be put to waste if the court rejects it. I shuddered at the thought of the flickering flame of hope for peace and better tomorrow for many Moros that will be jeopardized.

The media statement of MILF Chair Ebrahim Murad the BOL is a product of a long and tedious study and research by legal experts to avoid the fate of the MoA-AD is reassuring. Authors of the law have learned the lesson from the MoA-AD and it will be at the height of folly if they commit a similar mistake.

In fact, during the deliberation of the BOL, the *ratio decidendi* of the MoA-AD decision was foremost on everybody’s mind. Everybody agreed that the main hurdle of

the BOL is the constitutional crucible. All other issues are marginal and could be remedied by administrative fiat.

Reassuring likewise is the 100 percent batting average of Malacañang on policies it has seemingly pushed that underwent challenge before the SC, ranging from the Marcos burial to extensions of martial law. Legal pundits boldly predict it is unlikely the High Court will stray away from the trend.

When the MoA-AD was being addressed, government was fighting only one front – the MILF rebels. Now, it has to reckon with the emergence of an alien ideology advocating violence to establish an Islamic caliphate.

If BOL is struck down as unconstitutional, the remnants of the IS-inspired jihadists who escaped the Marawi war will ride on the forlorn of the Moros and accelerate their bloody campaign. This will compound the problem of our security and defense forces currently facing sporadic attacks from another front – the communist New People’s Army. Complexing the situation is the growing rebellion seeping on the mind of Marawi victims because of the inordinate delay in the promised-reconstruction of their city.

And as a grim foreboding, a bomb exploded in the commercial center of Cotabato City, the heartland of Morolandia on eve of New Year’s Eve where two people died and 32 others wounded with the police facing a blank wall. Theories about the bombing flew thick and wild, including premonition of more destabilization if the BOL is ratified.

Government should map out a plan “B” if the BOL will not pass the gauntlet of the SC. It’s better to be prepared than be caught with pants down.

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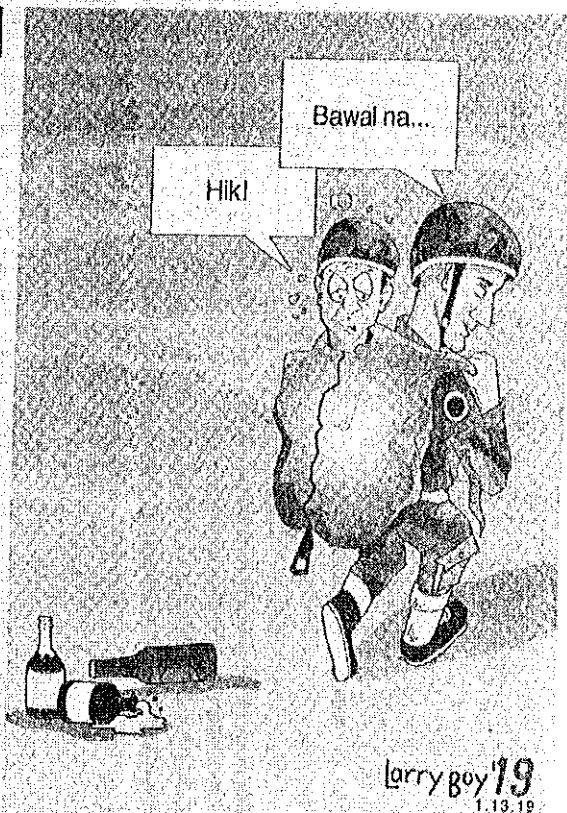
Editorial

Bawal na namang uminom sa publiko ang pulis at sundalo

NGAYON lang nalaman ni President Duterte na uminom sa publiko ang mga pulis at sundalo. Matagal nang ginagawa ito, Mr. President. Ito ang dahilan kaya mayroong mga nagbabarilan sa loob ng KTV bar, beerhouse o kahit sa simpleng inuman sa kanto o sari-sari store. Nagkakapikuman ang mga nag-iinuman na mga pulis at sundalo pa. Dahilan para magbarilan.

Dahil dito, iniutos ng Presidente na arestuhin ang mga pulis at sundalo na uminom ng alak sa publiko. Ayon sa kanya, kapag nalasing ang mga ito ay magugulo at nagbabarilan, Meron pa raw nag-aagawan sa mikropono kapag nagka-karaoke. Hindi raw maliwasan ang pagkakagulo kapag nag-iinuman sa pampublikong lugar kaya pinag-utos niyang ipagbawal ito.

Kakatwa ang utos na ito ng Presidente. Matagal nang



ipinagbabawal sa mga niyembro ng pulis at military ang pag-inom sa mga pampublikong lugar kaya dapat pa bang ulit-ulitin ito. Isa pa, alam naman ng pulis at sundalo na ang kanilang propesyon ay tagapagtupad ng batas kaya alam nila sa simula pa na ang pag-inom sa publiko ay bawal. Kailangan pa bang ulitin ito?

Pagkaraang ipag-utos 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 ipasusunod sa kanilang tauhan. Posibleng alam nila ito pero nagkukunwari silang hindi alam. At maaaring guilty sapagkat maaaring umiinom sila mismo sa publiko.

Paulit-ulit na lang ang ganitong pag-utos sa mga taong gobyerno. Kamakailan lang pinag-utos 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 at magsugal, hindi lang ang mga pulis at sundalo kundi pati mga opisyal ng gobyerno. Sa panibagong utos na namang ito, meron kayang maparusahan o balewala lang. Sa umpisa lang maghihigpit at sa susunod, luwag na naman!