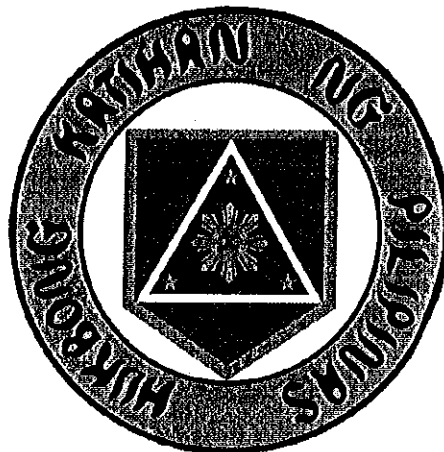


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NEWS CLIPPINGS

29 January 2019

Tuesday

Honor. Patriotism. Duty.

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DU30 ORDERS ALL-OUT WAR ON TERRORISTS

STORY BY JULIE ALIPALA AND JAYMEE T. GAMIL

Investigators, though not discounting politics, are treating the twin bombings at a Catholic church in Jolo as a likely terror attack, with the Islamic State-inspired Abu Sayyaf as the primary suspect.

A4

FROM A1

By Julie Alipala
and Jaymee T. Gamil
@Team_Inquirer

ZAMBOANGA CITY—President Duterte on Monday ordered the military in Sulu to wage an all-out war against terror groups, after the twin bombings at a church in Jolo on Sunday that killed at least 20 people and wounded 78 others.

Col. Gerry Besana, public affairs officer of the military's Western Mindanao Command, said the President gave the order during his visit to Jolo to see for himself the death and destruction from the bomb explosions at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and to visit some of the survivors.

"Basically, his marching order was all-out war [against] the terrorist groups. Run after those mass murderers and give justice to their victims," Besana told the Inquirer.

Terror attack

Interior Secretary Eduardo Año said investigators were treating the twin bombings as a likely terror attack.

The first bomb ripped through the cathedral as Mass was being celebrated on Sunday.

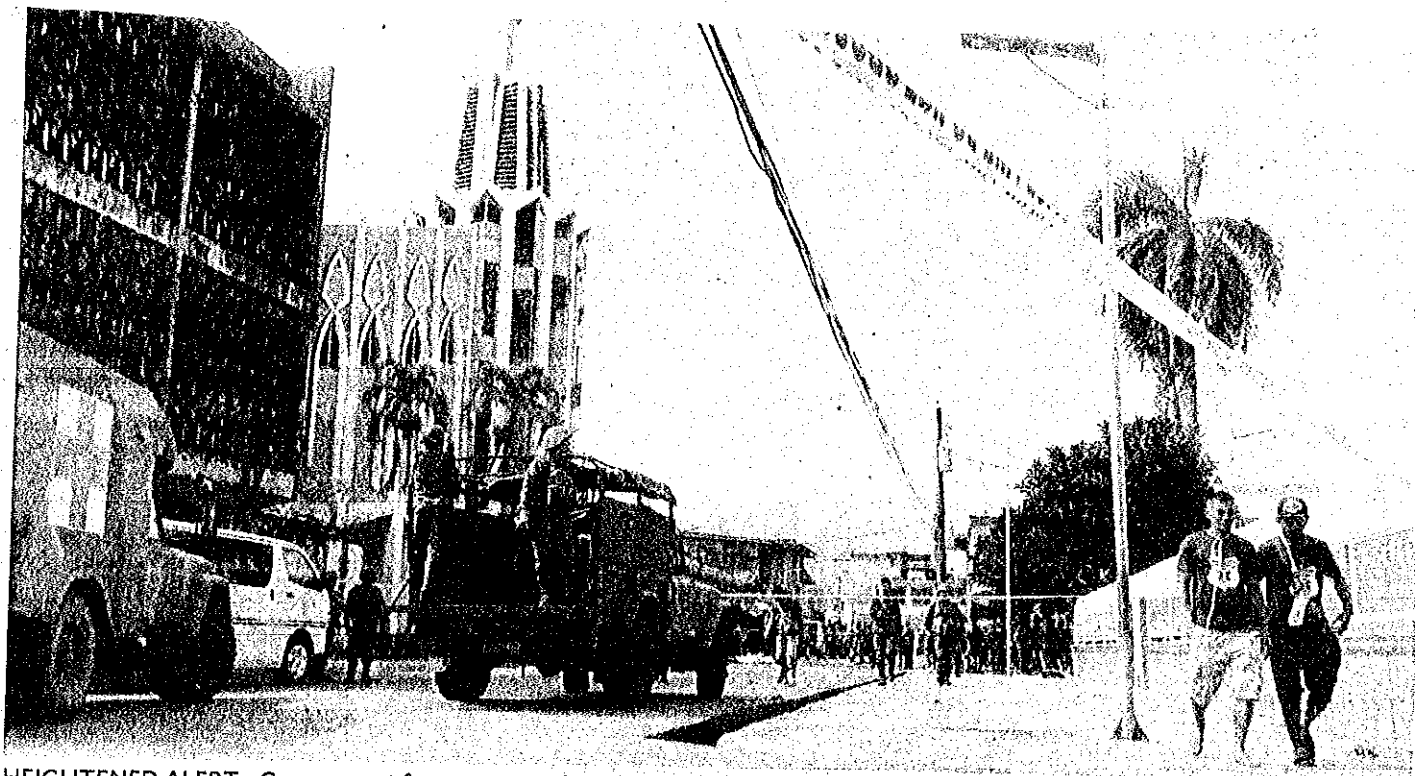
The second bomb went off at the parking lot in front of the cathedral as security forces were responding.

Jolo Mayor Kherkar Tan, citing a report from the municipal police, said on Sunday that the explosions killed 25 people and wounded 81 others.

The police report said 18 victims died at Integrated Provincial Hospital and seven died at Camp Bautista Trauma Hospital.

Police later reported 111 wounded—17 soldiers, two policemen, two coast guards, and 90 civilians.

But Besana told the Inquirer on Monday that the military officially counted 20 people killed and 78 wounded.



HEIGHTENED ALERT Government forces secure the vicinity of the Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel following Sunday's bomb attack that killed at least 20 people. President Duterte has ordered the military to "run after those mass murderers and give justice to their victims." —AP

"This is the official count as of Monday morning," Besana said.

IS claims responsibility

The Islamic State (IS) jihadi group in Iraq and Syria claimed responsibility for the attack through its news agency Amaq, describing it as twin suicide bombings that it said killed 120 people.

But the IS claim could not be independently verified and Philippine authorities were looking at the Abu Sayyaf bandit group in Sulu as the primary suspect.

Speaking to reporters in Jolo on Monday, Año said law enforcers were not discounting the political angle in the attack, because it happened just after the nation's Muslim minority approved a law that establishes a larger and more powerful autonomous region for them in Mindanao.

But the primary theory of investigators, he said, is that the bombings were carried out by a terrorist organization such as

the Abu Sayyaf or the Dalwah Islamiyah.

Año, a former chief of staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, said the attack was similar to the bombing at a military checkpoint in Lamitan City, Basilan province, on July 31 last year that was attributed to the Abu Sayyaf.

Speaking at the same news conference, Director General Oscar Albayalde of the Philippine National Police said the gap of just seconds between the two blasts indicated the bombs were set off electronically, similar to the Lamitan explosion that killed 11 people.

Bomb still unknown

Albayalde said the type of bomb used in Sunday's attack had yet to be determined. But going by parts recovered, he said galvanized iron sheet similar to the material used in building jeepneys was used in making the explosive device.

"It was probably as big as a 2-kilo container of powdered milk. No shrapnel had to be used because the GI sheet [itself served as] shrapnel," Albayalde said.

The PNP chief said investigators had a suspect, caught on security camera in the cathedral, but he added the attack was likely planned and carried out by a group.

Albayalde said no evidence had been found to indicate that the attack was a suicide bombing.

Año said the perpetrators were likely after mass murder of civilians, particularly Christians.

"When there is a religious [angle like that], it's [usually] allied with [IS]," Año said.

The Abu Sayyaf has pledged allegiance to IS, although the military says the move is more for propaganda to win support rather than actual alliance.

The military's Besana said the Ajang-Ajang group, which also pledged allegiance to IS, was a suspect in the twin bomb-

ings and it may have carried out the attack to spoil the peace process in Mindanao.

"Ajang-Ajang" is a Malay term that means "aping" but it has come to mean "Soldiers of the Martyrs," a subgroup composed of fathers and brothers of killed Abu Sayyaf fighters, said Rommel Banlaoi, chair of the Philippine Institute for Peace, Violence and Terrorism Research.

Security lapses

Albayalde said the authorities were also looking at possible "security lapses," as the cathedral had been receiving threats and actually attacked in recent years.

He said police had been posted around the cathedral and military troops had been assigned to the "inner perimeter" and at the gates.

"It's very unlikely you can just enter with a bag without being noticed," he added.

The Associated Press (AP)

reported that a government official had told it that an Abu Sayyaf commander, Hatib Sawadjaan, was a suspect.

At least four of Sawadjaan's men were filmed by security cameras near the bombed area, AP said, quoting the official who had spoken on condition of anonymity.

Sawadjaan is based in the jungles of Patikul town, near Jolo, and has been blamed for kidnappings for ransom and beheadings of hostages, including two Canadian men, in recent years.

His faction has aired ransom-demanding videos that used IS-style black flags as backdrops, AP said.

Four young men

Jolo's Mayor Tan said police were looking for four young men—possibly the same men mentioned in the AP report—filmed by security cameras going into the cathedral before the bombs went off.

"There are four young men in their early 20s in civilian clothes who entered the church and left when people started getting inside the church. Few minutes later, the church exploded," Tan said.

Jolo has been put on lockdown following Sunday's deadly attack.

"People are advised to stay home if they don't have business downtown. This is to cordon, sanitize and locate the culprits in the bombings," Panglima Estino Mayor Ben Estino told the Inquirer on Monday.

Estino said even telecommunication was being regulated.

"There are certain periods when the signal is down, especially after the incident. We support this measure because someone has to answer for what happened," Estino said.

Gov. Mujiv Hataman of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao said the regional government was raising funds to help the families of the victims. —WITH

REPORTS FROM BONG SARMIENTO, JEOFREY MAITEM, AP AND REUTERS INQ

29

January 2019

STAR

Page: 1

Jolo on total lockdown



By ROEL PAREÑO

ZAMBOANGA CITY—With the perpetrators of the deadly bombings at the Jolo cathedral still at large, authorities have placed the Muslim-dominated city on lockdown.

The two explosions at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral on Sunday killed 20

people, mostly churchgoers, and wounded 100. Of the fatalities, 13 were civilians, five were soldiers and two were Coast Guard personnel. The terror attack was considered the worst in recent years.

Philippine National Police (PNP) chief Director General Oscar Albayalde said the lockdown, which started yesterday, was ordered by Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana.

Albayalde did not explain the scope or

coverage of the lockdown or how long it would be in effect. "Maybe if the situation normalizes, probably we will lower the security," he said.

He announced the lockdown minutes after inspecting the blast site ahead of the arrival of President Duterte yesterday.

Lorenzana arrived earlier with National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr.

Turn to Page 2

Jolo

From Page 1

and Armed Forces chief of staff General Benjamin Madrigal.

"There will be restriction of people from outside coming in to contain the place," Albayalde told newsmen.

He said roadblocks and checkpoints have been set up as part of intensified security measures in the area.

Jolo is no stranger to lockdown. In 2000 at the height of the Sipadan hostage crisis, the entire Sulu was cordoned off to prevent or limit the movement of the kidnappers of 21 foreign tourists and resort employees taken from a dive resort in Sipadan, Sabah.

The PNP chief also assured the public they have enough security forces in Sulu, including two battalions of the elite Special Action Force (SAF), comprising at least 1,000 men.

He said terror groups, especially the Abu Sayyaf, might exploit the situation and launch attacks.

"We need to intensify the security operation to protect the community," Albayalde said.

He also said he sees no indications the cathedral blast was carried out by a suicide bomber. "Definitely this was electronically detonated because of the timing, that's the initial findings of our EOD (Explosives and Ordnance) experts," he said at a news briefing in Jolo.

"We still have no evidence this was perpetrated by a suicide bomber," he added.

Probers are looking into the possible involvement of the Abu Sayyaf and other like-minded groups in the bombing.

A security camera recording showed alleged bomb maker and Abu Sayyaf member known only as Kamah in the vicinity of the cathedral minutes before the explosion.

The Middle East-based Is-

lamic State (IS) had claimed responsibility for the attack but this could not be confirmed yet, said Albayalde.

"They can claim anything under the sun, but what happened was the handiwork of the Abu Sayyaf group," Col. Gerry Besana, spokesman and civil military operations chief of Western Mindanao Command, said.

The improvised explosive device contained shredded galvanized iron sheets, based on initial findings. Investigators have yet to determine the substance used in the twin explosions.

He said the bombings could not have been the work of just one individual. "There is a bomb maker, there's another who plants it and another one who detonates it. So it couldn't be just one person," he said in Filipino.

Chief Supt. Emmanuel Luis Licup, regional police director for Zamboanga peninsula, said they received information certain quarters were trying to disrupt the security situation and create a scenario against the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL).

"Our intensified security have been in place even before the incident because we got information that there are people wanting to spoil the BOL to make a scenario, whether they are for BOL or not," Licup said.

"I have directed the continuous checkpoints and inspections on suspicious individuals," he said.

"We should not be cowed by this threat act, instead we should be vigilant to help our authorities in securing our places," he added.

Security lapses

At Malacanan, presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said security lapses may have made the Jolo cathedral bombing possible.

"We will have to investigate how it happened. There may be some lapses in security.

How they were able to put there - is that a motorcycle with a bomb - despite the fact that there were soldiers securing the place," Panelo said at a press briefing.

"There is no other conclusion to reach. If you have security there and there is one or two bombs being placed inside, then there must be a lapse in security. There is no other reasonable conclusion," he added.

Panelo said the incident, which happened despite the implementation of martial law and the deployment of additional troops in Sulu, should prod government forces into imposing tighter security measures.

"You should be more strict in your security measure. Like that motorcycle, if you inspected that motorcycle before it got into that area, then there would have been no bombing," the presidential spokesman said.

Asked if he meant making security forces in Sulu accountable for the explosions, Panelo replied: "We will have to investigate. Mine is just a reasonable conclusion derived from the circumstances surrounding the bombing."

Mindanao has been under martial law since May 23, 2017. Placing Mindanao under martial law was meant to contain or eliminate terror groups responsible for the siege of Marawi in 2017.

Interior Secretary Eduardo Año admitted there had been security lapses. "All I can say is two bombs slipped past our security protocol," he said in Filipino.

NBI joins probe

Meanwhile, Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra has directed the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) to conduct a parallel investigation of the blast.

In Department Order No. 21 issued yesterday, Guevarra directed NBI Director Dante

Gierran to "conduct an investigation and case buildup on the bombing of the Cathedral of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in Jolo, Sulu, and if evidence so warrants, to file the appropriate charges against persons found responsible" for the attack.

Guevarra also required the bureau to submit progress reports on the investigation and case buildup.

The bureau has also been tapped to join police and military operations to hunt down perpetrators of the attack.

"Our NBI field operatives in Zamboanga have already been set to assist in the investigation, and additional law enforcement units have been deployed to hunt and bring the perpetrators to justice," he said in a text message.

Guevarra also condemned the incident, calling it a "mass murder and desecration of a place of worship."

Reports said that a mass in the cathedral was being celebrated at around 8:30 a.m. when an improvised explosive device went off inside.

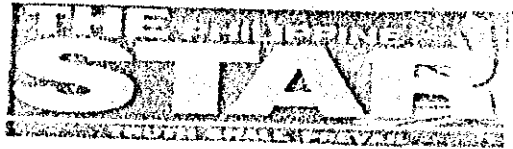
As troops responded to the incident, a second bomb exploded in the church's parking area.

The Philippine Red Cross (PRC), for its part, placed all its chapters on red alert as it mobilized its resources to attend to individuals affected by Sunday's violence.

"There are no sides for the Red Cross. The humanity must win. We pray and commiserate with our soldiers, fellow citizens and their families who have suffered from this bombing. We are acting at the Red Cross now. All chapters are on full alert," PRC chairman and Sen. Richard Gordon said.

A staff of the PRC Sulu chapter was among those injured in the blast.

- With Emmanuel Tupas, Alexis Romero, Non Alquitran



Australia to China: Abide by int'l rules

SINGAPORE – Australian defense minister Christopher Pyne urged China yesterday to resolve tensions in the South China Sea in accordance with international law, in a swipe after Beijing's sudden detention of a writer who holds dual citizenship.

Pyne said the artificial islands Beijing have been building in the disputed waters has "increased anxiety" and "not increased regional confidence in China's strategic intentions."

"On the other hand, resolving disputes in the South China Sea in accordance with international law would build confidence in China's willingness to support and champion a strategic culture that respects the rights of all states," he

added.

Pyne was speaking at a forum in Singapore attended by defense representatives from 24 countries. He said Australia was open to taking part in multilateral activities in "international waters" which are crucial for global commerce and rich in fish and potential oil and gas reserves.

China is pitted against smaller neighbors in those waters that it claims almost in its entirety. While Australia is "not interested in containing China," it wants Indo-Pacific countries to not have to make "choices between economic gain and sovereignty," Pyne said.

He added that the growing rivalry between the US and China should not be defined in "wholly adversarial terms"

or characterized as a new Cold War, as economies are far more mutually dependent than they were when the West contested the Soviet bloc.

"There is no gain in stifling China's growth and prosperity, and this is not an agenda in any capital that I know of," Pyne said.

Instead, Australia hopes to increase its engagement with the Indo-Pacific, which is home to the world's busiest searoutes and 50 percent of its population.

It will invest more than 90 billion Australian dollars (\$64.8 billion) in a fleet of attack class submarines, frigates and other ships to strengthen its maritime capabilities.

– AP

MARITIME DISPUTE

AUSTRALIA DEFENSE CHIEF URGES CHINA TO RESOLVE TENSIONS IN SCS

SINGAPORE—Australian Defense Minister Christopher Pyne urged China on Tuesday to resolve tensions in the South China Sea (SCS) in accordance with international law, in a swipe after Beijing's sudden detention of a writer who holds dual citizenship.

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Respect rights of all states

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Christopher Pyne —AP

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Increase engagement

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It will invest more than 90 billion Australian dollars (\$64.8 billion) in a fleet of attack class submarines, frigates and other ships to strengthen its maritime capabilities.

"Australia sees its role as one

of being able to talk to both China and the United States openly and frankly," he said. "We are clearly a very close ally of the United States ... but we don't believe we need to choose between security and prosperity, and we haven't in the past and we don't intend to in the future."

Pyne visited Beijing last week for a meeting with his Chinese counterpart Wei Fenghe. They discussed the detention of Chinese-Australian writer Yang Hengjun, whom China has accused of endangering its national security. AP

On Tuesday, Pyne said consular access to Yang, a 53-year-old novelist and online commentator "had been granted."

He did not give further details on the matter but said Australia's relations with China were in "positive shape." —AP

UPHOLDING PMA HONOR CODE

NEW CADETS TOLD: NO LYING, CHEATING, STEALING

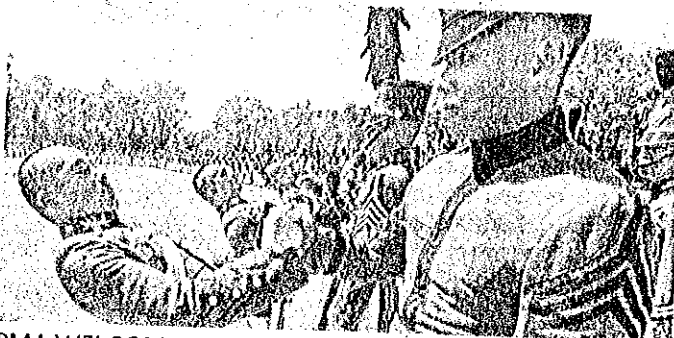
FORT DEL PILAR, BAGUIO CITY—The 315-member Philippine Military Academy (PMA) Class of 2022 on Sunday was told to always uphold the cadets' honor code to "never tolerate anybody for lying, cheating and stealing."

Lt. Gen. Rozzano Briguez, chief of the Philippine Air Force, called on the new cadets to keep the core values instilled during plebehood, as he led the recognition rites for them.

Rite of passage

They were incorporated into the cadet corps in a rite of passage, getting handshakes from their upperclassmen after a grueling six-month training.

"You know they (crooked



PMA WELCOME Members of the Philippine Military Academy (PMA) Class of 2022 are welcomed by senior cadets during a recognition program at Borromeo Field in Fort del Pilar, Baguio City. —KARLSTON LAPNITEN

cadets) do not deserve a place in the cadet corps nor the Armed Forces," said Briguez, a member of PMA Class of 1986.

The Class of 2022, called

Bagsikdiwa (Bagong Sibol sa Kinabukasan Mandirigma Hanggang Wakas), has 253 male and 62 female cadets.

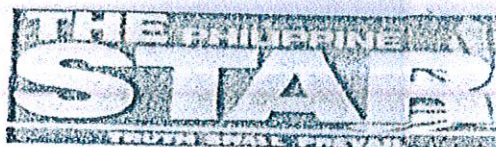
Records from the PMA

showed that of 17,482 applicants, only 15,502 took the entrance examinations. A total of 1,015 examinees passed but only 450 of them were selected. Only 315 actually showed up to be plebes.

Molding character

Recalling his plebehood, Briguez said the first year of training at the PMA was critical in molding the character of future military leaders.

Citing a 66-percent public trust rating in a 2017 survey, he noted this was the highest achieved in recent decades and was due to the military's ability to "stand guard in protecting people amid threats and turbulence." —KARLSTON LAPNITEN INQ



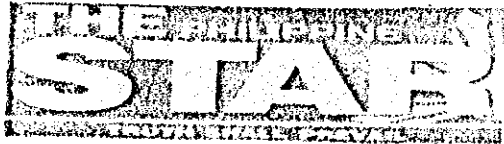
Japanese warship to visit Manila

A warship of the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force will arrive in the country today for a three-day goodwill visit.

The Murasame-Class destroyer *JS Ikazuchi* will dock at Pier 9 of Manila's South Harbor, said Capt. Jonathan Zata, Philippine Navy public affairs office chief.

The Philippine Navy will meet the *JS Ikazuchi* and its crew at the vicinity of Corregidor Island and escort them to Manila.

pd - Michael Punongbayan



SolGen seeks dismissal of other petitions vs ML extension

By EDU PUNAY

Solicitor General Jose Calida has asked the Supreme Court (SC) to junk three other petitions challenging the legality of the extension of martial law in Mindanao.

In a manifestation filed last Friday, he asked the high court to dismiss similar petitions filed by the Makabayan bloc led by Bayan Muna party-list Rep. Carlos Zarate, the group led by former Commission on Elections chair Christian Monsod and the group of *lumad* teachers and students represented by the Free Legal Assistance Group along with the first petition filed by opposition lawmakers led by Albay first district Rep. Edcel Lagman.

The SC is set to hear the case

in oral arguments today.

The solicitor general also submitted the confidential report of the Armed Forces that was used as basis for the assailed extension of martial law for another year or until December 2019.

Upon directive of the Court last week, Calida specifically submitted the Department of National Defense's Monthly/Periodic Reports addressed to Congress on the implementation of martial law from Jan. 1, 2018 to Dec. 31, 2018.

Contents of the report, however, were not released because they were considered "highly confidential matters involving national security."

The SC asked the solicitor general to submit the AFP report after Lagman and com-

pany claimed that they did not have access to such report on martial law when Congress approved the President's request for another extension last December.

Calida, who represents the respondents from the executive and legislative branches, has adopted the same arguments submitted in the government's comment to the petition of Lagman's group in seeking the dismissal of the three other petitions.

He stressed that all four petitions have exactly the same arguments and should be dismissed for lack of merit, adding the three other petitions did not raise new issues apart from those already discussed in the Lagman petition.

- With Artemio Dumlao

PALACE CITES SECURITY LAPSES

IS MARTIAL LAW REALLY WORKING IN MINDANAO? SOLON ASKS

President Duterte traveled to Jolo on Monday to see for himself the death and devastation from twin bombings that happened in the capital of Sulu province on Sunday despite his imposition of martial law on the entire island of Mindanao.

Government officials have argued that martial rule, which gives authorities extra powers, has been effective in taming the region that has been wracked by a Muslim separatist insurgency for decades.

But a day after two explosions rocked the Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Jolo, killing at least 20 people and wounding 78, Anakpawis Rep. Ariel Casilao asked on Monday whether martial law was really working in Mindanao.

Billions for military intel

In a statement, Casilao said billions of pesos in taxpayer money had been poured into the military's intelligence fund with little effect.

"We appeal to the people not to be swayed [by] the war-mongering viewpoint of intensifying military operations under the guise of antiterrorism, that will ultimately trigger mass abuses against the Moro people, and fuel the already intense social unrest in Mindanao," Casilao said.

Presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo, however, insisted that martial law in Mindanao remained effective despite the bombings that drew condemnation from Pope Francis and other world leaders.

There must have been laps-



Ariel Casilao

es in security, Panelo said, referring to the motorcycle parked outside the cathedral in whose utility box the second bomb was reportedly placed.

He said Mr. Duterte was "so angry," "outraged" and "so disappointed that despite the movement to tread the path toward peace and development, there's still certain forces in that region who sow terror and kill and murder people."

Visiting survivors

Mr. Duterte arrived in Jolo at 2:15 p.m. on Monday with Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, Interior Secretary Eduardo Año and Philippine National Police Director General Oscar Albayalde.

The President was also accompanied by his daughter, Davao City Mayor Sara Duterte, and his former special assistant, Christopher "Bong" Go.

The President met with some of the survivors and visited wakes for some of the dead. He left the city at 5:38 p.m.

Sunday's attack came nearly a week after the nation's Mus-



Salvador Panelo

lim minority voted to approve a law that would give them greater autonomy in Mindanao.

Magdalo Rep. Gary Alejano said on Monday the timing of the attack showed the perpetrators wanted to disrupt the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), which won the plebiscite in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and was up for a second vote on Feb. 6 in Lanao del Norte (except in Iligan City) and six towns in Cotabato that may want to become part of a bigger and more powerful Muslim homeland on the island.

Catholic bishops on Monday denounced the "cycle of hate" in the country that led to the attack on the cathedral in Jolo.

"For the past few months now, we have observed how the culture of violence has gradually prevailed in our land. The recent bombing of the cathedral of Jolo where scores of people were killed and several more were injured is further evidence [of] the cycle of hate that is destroying the moral fabric of our country," Davao Arch-

bishop Romulo Valles, president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, said in a statement issued by the group after its 118th plenary assembly in Manila.

'Cruel words'

"We have also been at the receiving end of cruel words that pierced [the] soul of the Catholic Church like sharp daggers," the bishops said without mentioning names but clearly referring to President Duterte, who had been badmouthing the Catholic prelates and the Church for criticizing his war on drugs that had taken nearly 5,000 lives.

The attack on the Jolo cathedral, the bishops said, "is very sad, very tragic, almost difficult to imagine that man can do to his... brothers and sisters."

"[Y]et as believers, as Catholics, we must go back to our faith, look inside our hearts. And how to respond to this evil deed, there is no question about that, with good. Conquer evil with good," they said.

In a separate statement, Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, the archbishop of Manila, urged the perpetrators of Sunday's attack to seek forgiveness from God and humanity.

"We urge those who planned and executed this brutal act to ask forgiveness of God and humanity, to leave behind their destructive ways and to start a new life of truthfulness, justice and love befitting true human beings," Tagle said. —REPORTS FROM CHRISTINE O. AVENDAÑO, JULIE M. AURELIO, DJ YAP, TINA G. SANTOS AND AFP INQ

SolGen seeks dismissal of petitions vs ML

THE Office of the Solicitor General has asked the Supreme Court to dismiss the three other petitions questioning the legality of the extension of martial law in Mindanao.

In a manifestation, Solicitor General Jose Calida appealed to the SC to junk the similar petitions filed by the Makabayan bloc led by Bayan Muna party-list rep. Carlos Isagani Zarate, the group led by former Commission on Elections chairman Christian Monsod and the group of Lumad teachers and students represented by the Free Legal Assistance Group along with the first petition filed by opposition lawmakers led by Albay 1st district Rep. Edcel Lagman.

Calida, who represents the respondents from executive and legislative branches, argued that all four petitions have exactly the same arguments and should be dismissed for lack of merit, saying the three other petitions did not raise new issues apart from those already discussed in the Lagman petition.

All petitions alleged that the latest extension of martial law in Mindanao is unconstitutional because the factual bases for the declaration no longer exist.

However, the Solicitor General asserted that rebellion, a key requirement for declaration of martial law under the Constitution, persisted in Mindanao. **Rey Requejo** 17

JOLO BOMBING 'TOO LITTLE' Martial law, epektibo pa rin – Malacañang

Ni Genalyn D. Kabiling

Epektibo pa rin ang uniliral na batas militar sa Mindanao sa kabila ng kamibal na pagsabog sa isang simbahan sa Jolo, Sulu nitong Linggo, inihayag ng Malacañang kahapon.

Dinepensahan ni Presidential Spokesman Salvador Panelo ang ipinatutupad na martial rule sa Mindanao, at sinabing ang insidente sa Jolo ang nagbigay ng "more reason" para panatilihin ang batas sa katimugan.

"They are saying that despite martial law, there has been bombing and therefore martial law should be lifted. With more reason martial law should in place because if you can do it under a martial law regime, then the more reason you should maintain it and be more strict in the implementation of security measures in that area," pahayag ni Panelo sa news conference sa Palasyo.

Nagbabala rin si Panelo na magkakaroon ng "chaos and anarchy" kung hindi idineklara ang martial law sa rehiyon.

Binanggit din niya na ang pambobomba sa Jolo ay isolated case, at "too little" umano ito para sabihing hindi

epektibo ang pagpapatupad ng martial law.

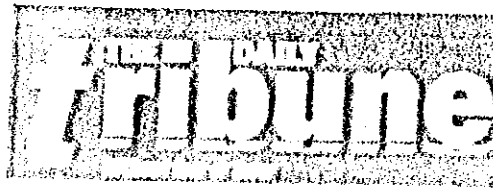
"The fact alone there is only one incident of bombing for the last one year plus, that means martial law is effective. Can you just imagine how many bombings there would have been if there was no martial law there in operation?" aniya.

"If there was no martial law there, there would be chaos and anarchy there. You see how they were able to get Marawi? There was no martial law then," dagdag pa ni Panelo.

Dalawang malakas na pagsabog ang yumanig sa isang simbahan sa Jolo nitong Linggo, na nagsulta sa pagkamatay ng 20 katao at pagkasugat ng maraming iba pa.

Naganap ang pagsabog bago pa man isagawa ang pagdinig sa Korte Suprema hinggil sa validity ng ikatlong extension ng martial law sa Mindanao.

Mayo 2017 nang nagdeklara ng martial law si Pangulong Duterte sa Mindanao nang salakayin ng Maute-ISIS sa tulong ng mga dayuhang terorista, ang Marawi City, Lanao del Sur.



SC denies Ombudsman petition

By Alvin Murcia

The Supreme Court has denied the Ombudsman's petition for certiorari assailing a Court of Appeals (CA) ruling reversing and setting aside the joint decision of the Ombudsman that found Army Officer Noel P. Misleng guilty of misconduct for allegedly conspiring with others in hatching a plot to kill the former town mayor in Abra.

Misleng, the Commanding Officer of the Army's 41st Infantry Battalion, together with Vicente P. Valera, the then Governor of the Province of Abra, and agents Mauro Durwin and Florencio Baharin of the Military Intelligence Group, were charged with grave misconduct before the Ombudsman for allegedly conspiring to kill the former Mayor of Lagayan, Abra, Cecilia S. Luna and her family.

They were also charged in relation to the shooting of complainants Corporal Eduardo Barcelona and Corporal Antonio Rosqueta of the Army's 41st Infantry Battalion where the latter was mortally wounded.

Barcelona's affidavit stated that he and Rosqueta (deceased) regularly reported to respondent for both official

and unofficial, as well as legal and illegal, instructions.

Respondent allegedly gave each of them a .45 caliber pistol in April 2004, and directed them to tail and assassinate Mayor Luna.

The Court held that the "petitioner's factual conclusions were indeed based solely on the allegations in the complaint-affidavits.

On 7 February 2007 the General Court Martial, where Misleng was also charged, rendered an order declaring him "Not Guilty."

The Court found that "the AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) General Court Martial's exercise of jurisdiction is to the exclusion of the Ombudsman exercising concurrent jurisdiction."

The Court said necessarily, the present petition must be denied.

The AFP and the Office of the Ombudsman signed a Memorandum of Agreement on 28 January 2004 delineating their lines of disciplinary authority, such that non-graft and corruption cases against military

personnel are to be endorsed by the Ombudsman to the AFP.

Even assuming that the Ombudsman validly exercised its jurisdiction, the Court held that it cannot agree that petitioner's Joint Decision was grounded on substantial evidence.

It stressed: "We note that petitioner failed to accord respondent due process. There is nothing on record to show that respondent was furnished with, or had otherwise received a copy of the complaint-affidavits on which petitioner's Joint Decision was based.

"Thus, it cannot be said that respondent had a fair opportunity to squarely and intelligently answer the accusations therein or to offer any rebuttal evidence thereto," it added.

The Court held that the "petitioner's factual conclusions were indeed based solely on the allegations in the complaint-affidavits."

"Compounding this observation with the fact that respondent was not furnished copies of the complaint-affidavits as would have afforded him the opportunity to present his side, the CA cannot be faulted for concluding that petitioner's Joint Decision was not supported by substantial evidence."

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Senate, House trade 'pork' claims but agree on 'pie'

**BY WENDELL VIGILIA
and RAYMOND AFRICA**

THE Senate and the House of Representatives yesterday accused each other of making "insertions" in the proposed 2019 budget, but later agreed to come up with a "pie" to share.

Camarines Sur Rep. Rolando Andaya, Jr., House appropriations committee chair and head of the House contingent to the budget

bicameral committee, said senators inserted P189.2 billion worth of amendments to the P3.757-trillion budget.

"The Senate version is seeking an amendment or a total net increase of around P190 billion and the House (is) requesting for P51 billion," Andaya told the bicameral conference committee at the Manila Polo Club in Makati City which was opened to the media.

Andaya has been insisting that

deliberations be opened to live media coverage because it is in the bicam that lawmakers are believed to be making "insertions" to increase the funds for their pet projects.

The call to televise the meeting was made after Sen. Panfilo Lacson questioned the huge allocations on the districts of Andaya and Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Last month, Lacson said a con-

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SENATE

gresswoman from Pampanga and a congressman from Camarines Sur had the biggest budget insertions in the 2019 budget, with the congresswoman's district getting P2.4 billion worth of projects while P1.9 billion was allocated for the Camarines Sur district.

"Every budget season, the House of Representatives has always been a favorite whipping boy of those obsessed with finding fault on the projects funded by the General Appropriations Act," Andaya later told reporters.

The P190 billion for the Senate and the P51 billion for the House is part of the P480-billion budget of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH).

However, Sen. Loren Legarda, Senate finance committee chair and head of the Senate group to the bicam committee, called the items "institutional amendments."

Legarda said P68 billion of the P190 billion were requested by agencies like the Office of the President, Office of the Vice President, Congress, and

the interior, agriculture, agrarian reform and health departments.

She said P50 billion was introduced by Lacson, finance committee vice chair who is known for his hard-line stand against "pork barrel."

"P68 billion of that (Senate changes) are unprogrammed appropriations while almost P50 billion of that were amendments of my vice chairman and I accepted his amendments," she told the bicam panel.

Legarda admitted to introducing an P800-million budget for the celebration of World Teachers' Day this October, insisting that it is not pork.

"Don't consider that as pork. There is institutional agency requesting (for it). It has been vetted by the regional development council, (there's) a request from barangay, local government units, and province. That can't be considered (pork barrel)," she said.

Lacson defended his amendment, saying one of the items worth P4.78 billion was for the "activation of an infantry di-

vision" in Jolo, Sulu to counter terrorist threats, as requested by the AFP and the PNP. "May I just clarify that these were not personal amendments. That is just to make matters clear," said the senator, a former PNP chief.

He said he introduced additional funding as requested by the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency for training of new anti-illegal drugs agents, and another additional budget for the Commission on Human Rights for construction of facilities.

He said he asked the respective agencies to submit their recommendations which he later discussed with his colleagues in the Senate.

Lacson said he can provide the bicam a detailed copy of the request for additional funding for transparency.

He said he sourced the P20 billion institutional amendments from the farm-to-market roads from a congressional district in Pampanga, which he said were "too many."

Lacson said yesterday's bicam was suspended so that the Senate panel and the House of Representative panel could talk among themselves and decide which items they will allow as either individual or institutional amendments.

Lacson appeared to have somehow softened his stand on introducing congressional allocations, acknowledging the House members' need to bring projects in their congressional districts.

"Why don't we agree on a pie? We also acknowledge that you congressmen have legislative districts to attend to. Let's have a certain figure to work on. It's up to you to fight for it among yourselves. Say one-thirds or two-thirds but not unlimited," he said.

He said he is open to provide funding for some congressional districts during the period of amendments as long as planning for the projects have been coursed through the proper channels and consultations done with the concerned government agency.

He said they would have to decide if they would retain the P60 million allocation for each of the 297 congressmen.

A senator is entitled to at least P200 million worth of projects, or a total of P4.8 billion for all 24 members while the 292 members of the House are entitled to at least P60 million each.

Lacson pushed anew for transparency in crafting the national budget by retaining the Unified Accounts Code Structure (UACS) in the budget bill

which helps track programs for funding in the budget but is usually gone by the time the budget bill is transmitted by the House to the Senate.

While it may be too late for the UACS in this year's budget, Lacson said the

Andaya, however, maintained that the "institutional amendments" are still "insertions," which Lacson branded as pork barrel.

"It's still an increase (so) it's still an insertion. Let's be fair here and observe transparency," he said.

The Senate earlier removed the P75 billion that Budget Secretary Benjamin Diokno inserted in the DPWH's budget after it was discovered by Andaya.

Lacson said the Senate realigned the P75-billion item.

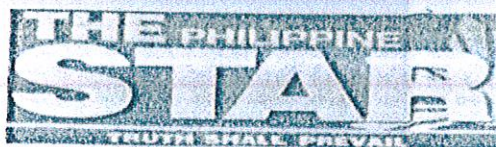
"In my case, I did not get funding from the P75 billion adjustment made by Budget Sec. Benjamin Diokno. I got it from a different source. For example, farm-to-market road which have P61 billion allocations, we took that off because it is too much. We also sourced it from the DILG budget which the agency cannot implement because the amount was not part of their planning. So, that's where we got P16 billion," he said.

He clarified that even his colleagues will not be spared from scrutiny as he said a number of senators' provinces got an allocation between P2.7 billion to P3.2 billion.

"How can you justify that a province of a senator, even if he has not district, will get P2.7 billion? If he or she can successfully and convincingly explain, we will adopt it as institutional amendments. But what we saw were flood control, multi-purpose (projects). So what kind of amendments are those?" he said.

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3 NPA rebels slain in Butuan clash

Three suspected New People's Army (NPA) rebels were killed in an encounter in Sitio Patagon, Barangay Anticala, Butuan City on Sunday.

Maj. Ronald Putol, civil-military operations officer

of the 402nd Infantry Brigade, said the encounter occurred at about 1:30 p.m. when personnel of the 29th Infantry Battalion responded to reports that communist rebels were extorting money from villagers.

Putol said the rebels escaped after a 10-minute gunfight, leaving behind their slain comrades, an AK47, two M16 rifles and an M203 grenade launcher.

|| - Michael Punongbayan, Ben Serrano

3 NPAs slain in Butuan encounter with AFP

CAMP BANCASI, Butuan City -- Three Communist New People's Army (NPA) terrorists were killed, while an undetermined number of other rebels were believed wounded as they were walloped by government forces in the far-flung forested Patagon area in Barangay Anticala here, according to 402nd Infantry Brigade (402nd IB) Civil Military Operation (CMO) officer Maj. Ronald C. Putol.

Putol said the troops of 29th IB responded to tips provided by local villages about the rebels extorting from them.

The encountered terrorists were members of Guerilla Front 21 of the CPP-NPA Northeastern Mindanao Regional Committee under a certain Commander Anub, Putol disclosed.

The gun battle erupted at 1:30 p.m. Sunday, but the overwhelming might as well as superior position of the government forces had the rebels retreating after only 15 minutes of encounter.

"The enemy scampered in different directions, leaving behind their three unidentified slain comrades-in-arms, dragging along with them their unaccounted number of wounded," Putol said.

The fleeing rebels left behind an AK47 rifle, two M16 Armalite rifles and an M203 grenade launcher, and assorted live ammunition.

"The dead bodies are yet to be identified and will be turned over to the barangay officials in Anticala and PNP personnel for identification and proper disposition, the 402nd CMO officer added.

"We extend our deepest sympathies to the families of those killed. It is disheartening that NPA terrorists will just leave their dead comrades behind. We will coordinate with the local government unit and local authorities to ensure that the slain CNTs will be delivered to their respective families for proper burial," Lt. Col. Warren C. Munda, commanding officer of 29th IB said. (Mike U. Crismundo) 29

3 sa NPA tepok; 7 sumuko

Patay ang tatlong miyembro ng New People's Army (NPA) habang hindi tiyak na bilang ng mga rebelde ang nasugatan nang makasagupa ng mga ito ang tropa ng 29th Infantry (Matalag) Battalion sa liblib na lugar ng Patagon area, Barangay Anticala, Butuan City nitong Linggo.

Sa pagbabahagi ni Maj. Ronald C. Putol, Civil Military Operation (CMO) officer ng 402nd Infantry (Stingers) Brigade ng Army sa BALITA, bahagi ng SYP 21-C of Guerilla Front 21 ng CPP-NPA Northeastern Mindanao Regional Committee sa ilalim ng isang "Commander Anub" ang nakaengkuwentro ng militar, bandang 1:30 ng hapon nitong Linggo.

Makalipas ang halos 15 minutong bakbakan, umatras ang mga rebelde.

Nakuha sa pinangyarihan ng krimen ang ilang gamit pandigma kabilang ang isang AK47 rifle, dalawang M16 Armalite rifles at isang M203 grenade launcher at iba't ibang bala.

Samantala, isang legal front leader at anim na rebelde ang sumuko sa militar kasama ng kanilang mga armas nitong nagdaang linggo.

Kabilang sa sumuko ang isang 'Alyas

Roy', na NPA legal leader at pinuno umano ng Panalipdang Mindanao at Vice Chairman of 'Indug Katawhan' noong 2014, sa command group ng 71st IB, ayon kay 1st Lt. Jhocell D. Asis, Civil Military Operation (CMO) officer ng Army's 71st Infantry (Kaibigan) Battalion.

Datin umano ng kolektor ng Weakened Guerilla Front 2 (WGF 2), Sub-Regional Committee 2 (SRC 2) ng CPP-NPA Southern Mindanao Regional Command (SMRC) noong 20015 ang sumukong rebelde, na isiniwalat pa sa militar ang ilang kanyang aktibidad bilang kolektor ng grupo.

Bukod kay alyas Roy, anim na dating

regular na miyembro ng NPA ang sumuko sa 51st Infantry Battalion (51st IB) sa Iligan City kamakalawa.

Isinauli ng mga rebelde ang isang M4 carbine rifle, sub-machine gun, caliber .22 at isang caliber .45 handgun.

Sasailalim ang mga nagbalik-loob na rebelde sa Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program o E-CLIP upang makakuha ng pangkabuhayaan at pinansiyal na suporta ang mga ito sa pamahalaan.

Dating nag-o-operate ang mga sumukong NPA sa probinsiya ng Bukidnon, Misamis Oriental at Iligan City.

Mike U. Crismundo

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3 NPA REBELS TODAS SA SAGUPAAN

Napatay ang tatlong miyembro ng mga teroristang New People's Army (NPA) nang makasagupa ang tropa ng mga sundalo sa liblib na bahagi ng Brgy. Anticala, Butuan City, Agusan del Norte kamakalawa ng ala-1:30 ng hapon.

Ang tatlong napatay ay mula sa grupo ng Samahang Yunit Propaganda (SYP) 21C, Guerrilla Front 21, North Eastern Mindanao Regional Committee (NEMRC) sa ilalim ng pamumuno ni Toto Anub alias Ka Makoy/Dongkoy na sangkot sa pangongotong sa mga residente at mga negosyante sa lugar. *Joy Cantos*

4 Reds killed in Mindanao clashes

By Francisco Tuyay

FOUR members of the New People's Army were killed while a wounded rebel was captured following two separate skirmishes with army troopers in Cotabato and Iligan City on Sunday.

The first clash occurred when army soldiers surprised a group of heavily-armed NPAs reportedly extorting from villagers in Sitio Kalo Kali, Brgy Bagumbayan, Magpet in Cotabato at around 1 p.m.

Col. Ehrlich Noel Paraso, commander of the 19th Infantry Battalion, said about 70 armed terrorists of Guerrilla Front 53 of the Southern Mindanao Regional Command scampered to different directions as troops opened fire at the rebel group.

Paraso said despite being outnumbered, the soldiers overwhelmed the rebel group in the firefight that lasted for about 30 minutes.

The rebels eventually retreated to different directions leaving behind a dead rebel and several wounded fighters.

An army soldier was also wounded in the fighting.

Paraso said a wounded rebel tried to evade soldiers who were conducting map-

ping operations after the fighting, but was intercepted in a military checkpoint in Brgy. Gubatan and was immediately brought by an ambulance for medical attention.

Recovered from the battle scene were an M14 rifle, an M16 rifle with an M203 grenade launcher, an anti-personnel landmine, 5 magazines with 20 rounds of ammunition, 2 flags each from the NDF, NPA and CPP, medical paraphernalia and subversive documents.

"We had been receiving reports from concerned civilians about the presence of the terrorist NPA in the area the reason why we launched our operations. This village was a former mass base of the terrorist group and they are trying to recover it by harassing the populace and threatening former rebels to rejoin them in their failed armed struggle," Paraso said.

Authorities had extended their sympathies to the family of the dead terrorist as they coordinated with the local government unit and the PNP counterparts to help find the family's whereabouts and those of the relatives of the wounded rebel.

"Members of the terrorist group have a choice—they can remain and accept their fate of being killed in an encounter against government troops, or they can go back to their families and return to the mainstream society," said Maj. Gen. Ronaldo Villanueva, commander of the 4th Infantry Division.

The second fighting took place in the outskirts of Butan City where army troops of the 29th Infantry Battalion battled CPP-NPA terrorist in Sitio Patagon, Brgy Anticala at about 1:30 p.m. Sunday leaving three terrorist killed. **AR**

6 teroristang NPA utas sa encounter

Anim na miyembro ng teroristang New People's Army (NPA) ang napaslang makaraang makasagupa ang militar sa magkakahiwalay na insidente sa Agusan del Norte, North Cotabato at Surigao del Norte kamakalawa.

Ayon kay Major Ronald Putol, Civil Military Operations (CMO) officer ng 402nd Infantry Brigade (IB) ng Phil Army, dakong ala-1:30 ng hapon nang mang-

yari ang bakbakan sa pagitan ng mga sundalo at mga rebelde sa Brgy. Anticala Butuan City, Agusan del Norte na tumagal ng 10 minuto. Nagsasagawa ng security operation ang mga sundalo nang masabat ang grupo ng Samahang Yunit Pampropaganda (SYP) 21 C, Guerilla Front 21, North Eastern Mindanao Regional Committee (NEMRC) sa ilalim ng pamumuno ni Toto Anub alyas "Ka Makoy"

o "Dongkoy" sa liblib na bahagi ng naturang barangay hanggang sa magbakbakan na ikinasawi ng tatlong rebelde.

Narekober sa encounter site ang isang AK-47 rifle, dalawang M16 rifles at isang M203 grenade launcher.

Sinabi ni Brig. Gen. Franco Nemesio Gacal, commander ng 402nd IB na sangkot ang mga rebelde sa talamak na pandanon-

tong sa lugar.

Samantala, tatlo pang NPA rebels ang napatay sa engkuwentro sa North Cotabato at Surigao del Norte.

Sa ulat ni Lt. Col. Elrich Noel Paraso ang commanding officer ng 39th ID, nakabakbakan ng kanyang mga tauhan ang 'di matukoy na bilang ng mga NPA na nagtagal ng 30 minuto bandang alas-9:20 kamakalawa ng umaga sa Sitio Paraiso Brgy. Basak, Magpet, North Cotabato.

Nakilala ang nasawi sa alyas "Dindon" na sinasabing taga-Tumanding, Arakan, North Cotabato habang

sugatan sina Jason Awig at alyas "Junard" o "Weng Weng". Isa naman ang nasugatang sundalo habang narekober sa lugar ang ilang mga armas kaga-

ya ng isang M14 rifle at isang M653 M16 rifle na may M203.

Samantala, nakubkob ng mga sundalo ang kampo ng NPA sa Sitio Little Baguio, Brgy. Payapag, Bacuag, Surigao del Norte,

alas-4:00 ng madaling araw kamakalawa.

Kasabay nito, natagpuan ang bangkay ng dalawang rebelde na nasawi sa isinagawang combat operations ng militar sa lugar.

Duterte recycles relieved labor official as NMP exec

BY JOCELYN MONTEMAYOR

PRESIDENT Duterte appointed former labor official Joel Maglunsod to a new position in government, this time as executive director III at the National Maritime Polytechnic.

Malacanang released yesterday the appointment paper of Maglunsod that was signed January 25.

Maglunsod was relieved as labor undersecretary last October over alleged irregularities in connection with labor strikes and negotiations, and amid the collapse of peace negotiations between the government and the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army-National Democratic Front of the Philippines.

He was a former Anakpawis party-list representative and the former secretary general of the Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU). He was among left-leaning personalities who were appointed by Duterte to government posts shortly after he assumed the presidency in 2016.

Duterte also appointed lawyer Ana Colting Dione, former regional director of the Labor department, as new labor undersecretary vice Maglunsod.

Duterte also appointed former Highway Patrol Group head and retired Chief Supt. Antonio Gardiola Jr. as member of the Land Transportation and Franchising Regulatory Board (LTFRB). He is a member of the Philippine Military Academy "Sinagtala" Class 1986 and formerly served as PNP Regional Office 5 Director.

Gardiola's appointment paper was signed last January 24 but was released only yesterday. He replaces Aileen Lourdes Lizada, who was appointed as commissioner of the Civil Service Commission (CSC) late last year.

Malacanang also released the ad interim appointment of Lizada that was signed on December 14, 2018.

The President also appointed Kelvin Lester King Lee as commissioner of the Securities and Exchange Commission, replacing Emilio Aquino, for a term

expiring on Dec. 2, 2023.

Duterte initially appointed Lee as an assistant secretary at the Office of Executive Secretary and later named as chairman of the Movie Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB).

Lee, who hails from Davao, was an associate lawyer for Siguion Reyna Montecillo & Ongsiako (SRMO) Law Office and was a partner at the Teves Cabiten Polinar Lee & Partners Law Office (TCPL LAW). The appointment paper of Lee to the SEC was signed last January 25.

Also appointed on January 25 was lawyer Paul Christian Mendoza Cervantes as member of the Energy Regulatory Commission, replacing Geronimo Sta. Ana, for a term expiring on July 10, 2020.

Cervantes, a partner at accounting firm Reyes Tacandong & Co., had been handling tax and corporate cases and advisory works to various corporate groups for the past 10 years. He was a former senior associate at the SGV & Co accounting firm.

The President also appointed on Janu-

ary 25 Francis Laurel as a member of the University of the Philippines Board of Regents for a term expiring on Nov. 14, 2020; Rodolfo Ruiz Drapete as a member of the Profession Regulatory Board of Dentistry for a term of three years, replacing Rannier E. Reyes; Alain Russ Gavino Dimzon as a part-time commissioner at the Commission on the Filipino Language; and Edgardo Bernardo Quito as assistant director at the National Library of the Philippines.

On January 24, Duterte appointed Terecita Cruz Daza as ambassador to Chile with jurisdiction over Peru and Ecuador, and Noel Servigon as ambassador and representative to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

The appointment papers of Daza and Servignon were released yesterday along with the ad interim appointments of Interior Secretary Eduardo Ano and Social Welfare and Development Secretary Rolando Bautista that were signed last December 14, 2018.

Ano and Bautista served as AFP chiefs under Duterte. 02

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ACT files 2nd complaint vs PNP, DILG

BY PETER TABINGO

CRIMINAL and administrative complaints were filed yesterday by the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) against Interior Secretary Eduardo Año and PNP chief Oscar Albayalde for the illegal profiling of its members.

The 59-page complaint filed with the Ombudsman was signed by ACT national chair Joselyn Martinez, secretary general Raymond

Basilio, ACT-National Capital Region treasurer Vladimir Quetua, Manila Public School Teachers' Association (MPSTA) president Solita Daz, and ACT Region 3 Union legal officer Fabian Hallig.

Aside from Año and Albayalde, also named respondents were PNP Directorate for Intelligence Director Gregorio Pimentel; NCR Police Office Dir. Guillermo Eleazar; Police Regional Office (PRO) 1 Dir. Romulo Sapitula; PRO Cor-

dillera Dir. Rolando Nana; PRO 3 Dir. Amador Corpus; PRO4-A Dir. Edward Carranza; PRO4-B Dir. Emmanuel Luis Licup; PRO5 Dir. Arnel Escobal; PRO6 Dir. John Bulalacao;

PRO10 Dir. Timoteo Pacteb; PRO12 Dir. Eliseo Rasco; PRO13 Dir. Noli Romana; Zambales Provincial Police Intelligence Branch officer-in-charge Pancho Doble;

See ACT ► Page B3

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ACT

Manila Police District intelligence branch chief Rexson Layug; Muntinlupa City Police Intelligence Section chief Peter Aquino; Baguio City Police Office Station 2 station 2 commander Arnold Lising; Angono Municipal Police Station acting chief Glenn Magsino; Cagayan de Oro City Police Intelligence Section chief Marvin Bolanio; Antipolo City acting police chief Villaflores Bannawagan; and Rizal Police Provincial Office Intelligence Branch chief Noel Campos.

This is the second case filed by ACT against authorities. Last January 17, it also asked the Court of Appeals to stop the PNP from profiling its members.

Among the respondents in the initial complaint were Año, Albayalde, and Eleazar.

Early this month, Albayalde sacked three police intelligence officers who leaked information on the reported profiling of ACT teachers, after ACT denounced the profiling.

ACT's petition with the CA, filed through the National Union of Peoples' Lawyers, asked the CA to declare illegal and unconstitutional a PNP memorandum order that allows the collection of information about ACT members from public schools nationwide.

The latest complaint said the

DILG and PNP officials violated the Data Privacy Act through "large scale and unauthorized access" to their personal information and engaged in partisan politics and electioneering penalized under the Election Code.

They said the respondents acted in violation of Code of Conduct for public officials as well as with oppression, misconduct, conduct prejudicial to the best interest of the service and other offenses under the Administrative Code.

They were also accused of violating the constitutional rights of teachers to assemble, petition the government for grievances, privacy, freedom of expression and protection to labor.

According to the group, the PNP started inquiring into the leaders and members of ACT in December 2018 although the earliest official moves were reported to them only this month when a copy of the PNP memoranda was leaked.

It said persons representing themselves as police or military personnel requested for list of teachers or list of ACT members as well as other pertinent information from school principals and teachers.

Among the areas reportedly targeted were Negros Occidental, Baguio City, Sorsogon, Bulacan, Zambales, Tarlac, Angeles City, Rizal, Quezon, Calapan City, Camar-

rines Sur, and Cagayan de Oro City.

In Metro Manila, similar activities were reported in the cities of Manila, Malabon, Las Pinas, Muntinlupa, San Juan, Navotas, Pasig, and Valenzuela.

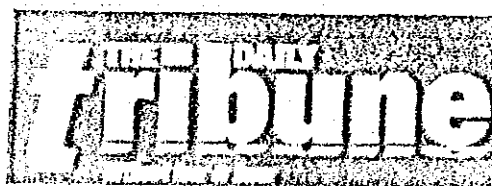
Citing the coordinated moves from police authorities, the ACT said the order could only have come from the top level, noting that public school teachers form the biggest sub-sector in the civil service while private school teachers number around 200,000 nationwide.

"From these factual circumstances, it can be concluded that there is an order coming from the national level of the PNP to conduct an inventory of all members of and teachers affiliated with ACT, in public and private schools," it said.

Two members of the group -- Basilio and ACT Central Luzon Coordinator Aurora Santiago -- said they have received calls telling them to cooperate under threat of being hunted down.

It said the profiling "has caused teachers to fear for their liberty and safety," constituting a grave violation of their rights under the 1987 Constitution.

The group said it is filing the complaint to drive home the point that "activism or speaking out for one's rights and welfare is not a crime."



'Leftist' exec given new hat

By Elmer N. Manuel

Months after President Duterte ordered him relieved from his post, former Department of Labor and Employment (DoLE) undersecretary Joel Maglunsod is back with the agency - but this time, in a different post.

Duterte appointed Maglunsod as Executive Director III at the National Maritime Polytechnic - which is still under the DoLE - in a document released by Malacañang on Monday.

The appointment letter was dated 25 January 2019.

Maglunsod was earlier fired from the agency after peace talks between Manila and the communist party leadership bogged down. He was the last of the leftists to leave the Duterte Cabinet last October.

The President had earlier appointed several former left-wing lawmakers and activists to government positions after Communist Party of the Philippines founding chairman Jose Ma. Sison supported his 2016 presidential campaign.

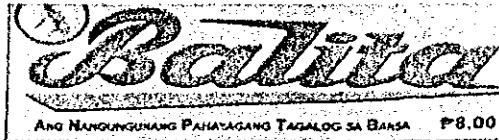
Attempts at reviving negotiations to end the decades-old communist insurgency hit several roadblocks and ties between Duterte and Sison soured, leading to the leftists' departure from the Cabinet.

He was the last of the leftists to leave the Duterte Cabinet last October.

Lawmakers had also rejected last year the appointments of Social Welfare Secretary Judy Taguiwalo and Agrarian Reform Secretary Rafael Mariano, a former Anakpawis partylist representative. Former Kabataan partylist Rep. Terry Ridon was fired as Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor chair over alleged excessive travels and former Gabriela partylist Rep. Liza Maza resigned as National Anti-Poverty Commission chairperson.

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Nagkunwaring NPA para sa kotong, huli

CAMP MARCELO ADDURU, TUGUEGARAO CITY - Nadakip ng Police Regional Office (PRO)-2 ang dalawang umano'y extortionist sa isang entrapment operation sa San Mariano, Isabela.

Kinilala ni PRO-2 Director Chief Supt. Jose Mario Espino ang mga inaresto na sina Fernando Gannaban, 39 anyos; at Nido Bulan, 28, kapwa ng Barangay Gangalan, San Mariano, Isabela.

Nagsagawa ng entrapment operation kahapon ang pulisya kasunod ng reklamo ni Julius Baltero na kinikikilan umano siya ng P150,000 ni Gannaban, alias "Ka Frank", na miyembro umano ng New People's Army (NPA).

Subalit sa entrapment, tanging si Gannaban ang nahuli, habang nakatakas naman si Bulan.

Nakuha umano mula sa suspek ang isang granada, isang pakete ng dried marijuana leaves, isang Nokia cell phone na may SIM card, at bungkos ng pera.

Kalaunan, sa hot pursuit operation ng Naguilian Police kahapon ng umaga, ay naaresto rin si Bulan sa Bgy. San Antonio, Cabagan, Isabela.

Sa huli, inamin ni Gannaban na hindi siya kasapi ng NPA, at sinabing gnagamit lang niya ang nasabing patusot upang makapangikil sa mga negosyante at pulitiko.

Liezie Basa Inigo

World leaders denounce Jolo blasts

Pope Francis has condemned the twin bombings that killed at least 20 people and wounded 78 others during Catholic Church service in Jolo, Sulu province, on Sunday as a "terrorist attack" and prayed that God would convert the hearts of those who carried it out.

Francis, speaking on Sunday at a hospice for AIDS sufferers on the last day of his trip to Panama, expressed his "firm condemnation of this act of violence that causes more mourning in the Christian community."

"I pray for the dead and the injured. May the Lord, prince of peace, convert the hearts of the violent ones," he said.

Other world leaders, the United Nations, United States, European Union, Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the World Bank also condemned the attack on the Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in the Sulu provincial capital.

'Despicable act of cowardice'

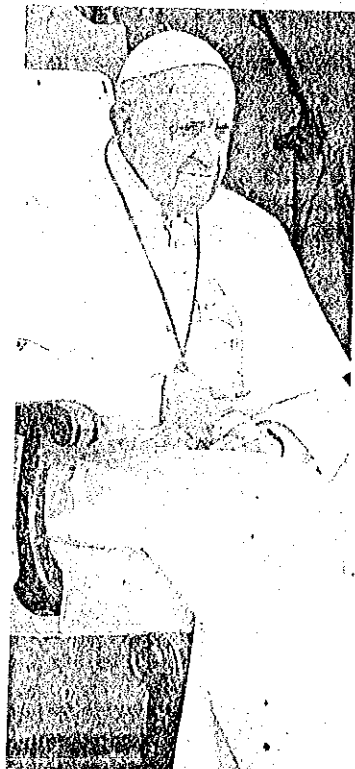
Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau took to Twitter to denounce the attack as "a despicable act of cowardice" and express his condolences to the families of the victims.

In a statement, Russian President Vladimir Putin said the "crime committed against civilians who had congregated for church services is shocking in its cynicism and cruelty."

Putin said Russia expected "the masterminds and perpetrators of this crime will sustain the punishment they deserve."

In a post on Twitter, US Ambassador to the Philippines Sung Kim deplored "the senseless violence" and said the United States would "do everything possible to support the Armed Forces of the Philippines."

Australia's Foreign Minister Marise Payne sent her government's condolences to the victims through Twitter.



Pope Francis —AFP

"We stand with the government of the Philippines in condemning acts of terror and in striving for a lasting peace in Mindanao," Payne said.

Human tragedy

The European Union described the bombings as a "human tragedy" and "an attack

against the basic right to practice one's religion."

"The European Union fully supports the Mindanao peace process and last week's plebiscite on greater Bangsamoro regional autonomy. The EU plans to continue such support in the future," it said in a statement.

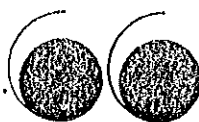
The OIC, the world body of Muslim-majority countries, issued a statement strongly condemning the bombings.

Yousef Al-Othman, general secretary of the 57-member group, expressed his "deep indignation" and said the OIC firmly rejected "all forms of violence, extremism and terrorism, whatever their sources or motives."

The World Bank said in a statement that it was "saddened by these attacks" that marred "the otherwise peaceful and successful plebiscite" for the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law, charter of the proposed Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. *KS*

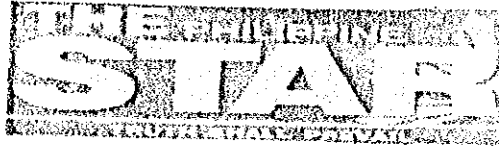
The world lender said it was ready to extend support to the Philippines "through our long-standing and ongoing partnerships for peace and development in Mindanao." —REPORTS

FROM INQUIRER RESEARCH AND REUTERS INQ



The European Union fully supports the Mindanao peace process and last week's plebiscite on greater Bangsamoro regional autonomy. The EU plans to continue such support in the future

European Union



World leaders condemn 'terrorist attack' on Sulu

By PIA LEE-BRAGO

The Philippines assured the international community yesterday that it would bring to justice those responsible for the bombing of the Roman Catholic cathedral in Jolo, Sulu that killed at least 20 people and wounded a hundred others.

"Those responsible for this crime will not go unpunished. We will find them and bring them to justice," the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said in a statement as it condemned the attack.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the United States, European Union, United Kingdom, Australia and China strongly condemned the twin bombings that ripped through the

Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral on Sunday morning.

In a statement, the OIC, the second largest inter-governmental organization after the UN with a membership of 57 Muslim countries and the collective voice of the Muslim world, strongly condemned the attack.

Yousef Al-Othaimen, OIC secretary-general, expressed his deep indignation at the terrorist attack and conveyed the solidarity of the OIC with the people of the Philippines.

He also offered his sincere condolences to the families of the victims of this "vicious act" and wished quick recovery to the wounded as he renewed the OIC's firm rejection of violence, extremism and terrorism

in all its forms, whatever the sources or motives.

The United Nations also issued a statement condemning the terrorist attack and called for the perpetrators to be brought to justice.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres expressed his sincere condolences to the families of the victims and wished a speedy recovery to the wounded.

"The Secretary-General calls for the perpetrators of these crimes to be swiftly brought to justice," the statement said.

It added that Guterres reiterated the UN's support to the Philippine government and people in their efforts to fight terrorism and violent extremism, and to carry forward the peace process in Bangsamoro

region.

The UN noted that the attack came just days after voters approved the creation of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in majority-Muslim areas of southern Philippines. In July, it welcomed the signing of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), calling it a "landmark achievement on the road to lasting peace in southern Philippines."

"But reports suggest that voters in Sulu province, where Jolo is located, rejected it," the UN said.

The BOL will create a new Muslim regional entity and replace the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). President Duterte hopes this will end years of separatist violence in the area.

2 -- With Rey Galupo

World condemns Jolo church blasts

By ROY C. MABASA

World leaders on Monday condemned the twin bombings that killed at least 20 people during a Catholic Church service in the Philippines as a "terrorist attack."

The attack also wounded at least 81 and was one of the deadliest in recent years in a region long plagued by instability.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin

Trudeau called the bombings "a despicable act of cowardice."

He said Canada "strongly condemns" the bloody incident Jolo and offered his "deepest condolences to all the families affected by this tragedy."

For his part, Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) Secretary General Yousef Al-Othaimen expressed his "deep indignation" at the Sunday morning twin blasts, saying that the 57-nation body rejects all forms of

violence, extremism and terrorism.

In Manila, United States Ambassador to the Philippines Sung Kim also condemned the Jolo incident, calling it a "senseless violence" even as he conveyed his government's readiness to do everything possible to assist the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

Meanwhile, Hungary's ambassador to the United Nations Katalin Bogay also conveyed her sympathy

to the victims of the bombing in Jolo.

"Our condolences to the victims of bombing Jolo Roman Catholic cathedral in Philippine, during Sunday Mass," Bogyan said in a tweet.

On Sunday, the United Nations and the European Union also sent its condolences and sympathy to the families of the victims as well as those who were affected by the bloody incident.

Chinese Ambassador to the Phil-

ippines Zhao Jianhua offered condolences to the families of the blast victims in Jolo, Sulu last Sunday.

"Let me begin by expressing sympathies to the families who suffered loss of lives and injuries in the barbaric blasts that happened in Jolo," Zhao said.

The diplomat then assured his government's continued support to the peace efforts of the Duterte administration. (With a report from Ria Fernandez) 5

Rody angry, disappointed over cathedral attack

By EDITH REGALADO
and ALEXIS ROMERO

DAVAO CITY – An enraged President Duterte spewed out expletives as he inspected the bombed out Jolo cathedral and condoled with the victims' relatives yesterday in Sulu.

"Anger was written all over the President's face. *Talagang galit* (Really angry). And he took a long time talking with the survivors as well as the families of those who died in the attacks," a source told **The STAR**.

The source said Duterte blamed the terrorist Islamic State and let out

a hail of "*pagina*" as he declared war on IS.

Duterte's spokesman in Manila talked of the Chief Executive's feeling "outraged" and "disappointed."

"Of course he was so angry, for one. For another, he is so disappointed that despite the movement to tread the path toward peace and development, there are still certain forces in that region who sowed terror and killed and murdered people," presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said.

He said Duterte has instructed the military

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Rody From Page 1

"to secure the safety of the citizenry" and "to attend to the injured and to provide succor to the families of the victims."

Panelo declined to comment on claims the bombings had something to do with the recent plebiscite on the Bangsamoro Organic Law, which was rejected by Sulu residents on Jan. 21.

"He will wait for the investigation. Of course, one Islamic State is claiming responsibility. I read it in one of the briefers, that one terrorist group is claiming responsibility for that. But we have to wait for the investigation," the spokesman said.

Panelo also said it would be unfair to accuse Moro National Liberation Front founder Nur Misuari of plotting the bombing.

"We cannot enter into the realm of speculation. It could be unfair and not good to be speculating. I know that Nur Misuari wants federalism better than BOL but he didn't oppose it actively. In fact, he was non-committal with respect to the plebiscite," he added.

Panelo claimed the bombings in Jolo are "isolated" incidents and main-

tained that the martial law being implemented in Mindanao had been effective in curbing threats.

"They (critics) are saying that despite martial law, there has been bombing and therefore martial law should be lifted. With more reason, martial law should be in place because if you can do that under a martial law regime, then the more reason you should maintain it and be more strict in the implementation of security measures," he said.

"The fact alone that there is only one incident of bombing for the last... how many, one year plus? That means martial law is effective. Can you imagine how many bombings there would have been if there was no martial law there in operation?"

When reminded that an explosion rocked Cotabato City last Dec. 31, Panelo said the bombings were "little" compared to the "chaos" that would have ensued in Mindanao without military rule. At least two people died and 35 others were hurt in the Cotabato explosion.

"If there was no martial law there, then there would have been chaos and anarchy. You see how they were able to get Marawi? There was no martial law then," Panelo said, referring to the occupation of Marawi by local terrorists in 2017.

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Blasts anger Duterte

Outraged about the twin blasts in Jolo, Sulu, President Duterte has ordered the military to implement more stringent safety measures to prevent a repeat of the incident amid lapses in security.

Presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo said the President wanted the troops to ensure the safety of the people after deploring attempts by groups to sow terror and derail peace efforts in the South.

Duterte is scheduled to visit Jolo yesterday afternoon, a day after the explosions at a church left several people dead and wounded.

"He's outraged," Panelo said during a Palace press briefing when asked about the President's reaction to the Jolo bombings.

"Of course, he was so angry for one, for another he is so disappointed that despite the movement to tread the path towards peace and development, there are still some forces in that region who sow terror and kill and murder people," he said.

"He has issued directive to the Armed Forces of the Philippines to secure the safety of the citizenry and to attend to the injured and to provide succor to the families of the victims," he said.

He added that the President directed the military "to undertake measures so that this incident will not happen again."

Panelo said an investigation into the Jolo blasts was under way but he acknowledged the possible security lapses in the area. (Gena-lyn Kabiling)

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DUTERTE GALIT NA GALIT SA JOLO BLAST

Galit na galit umano si Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte sa naganap na magkasunod na pagsabog sa loob at labas ng Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral na ikinasawi ng 20 katao at pagkasugat ng 112 iba pa na itinaon pa sa pagmimisa.

Ito ang inihayag ni Presidential Spokesman Salvador Panelo at kumbinsido ang Malacañang na naging maluwag ang ipinatupad na security measures ng pulisya at militar sa Jolo, Sulu kaya't nakalusot na nakapagtanim ng bomba sa loob at labas ng nasabing simbahan.

"President Duterte is so angry at Jolo blast; disappointed that there are still forces sowing terror despite efforts for peace. It is reasonable to conclude that security lapses were committed in Jolo", wika ni Panelo.

"There's now 'more reason' for Martial Law to take place in Mindanao. Imagine how many bombings there would have been if there were no Martial Law there," dagdag pa ni Panelo.

Sinabi naman ni PNP Chief Director General Oscar Albayalde na maaaring naging relaxed na ang security dahil sa marami nang taon na walang nangyayaring insidente na ang huli ay noong 2011 na inilagay sa altar ng nasabing simbahan ngunit walang nasugatan at marahil na hindi naisip na ipapasok ito sa isang lugar na ang mga tao ay nagsisimba.

Hihintayin pa rin ng Pangulo ang resulta ng imbestigasyon ng mga otoridad upang matukoy kung sino ang nasa likod ng nasabing twin blasts sa Jolo kahit inamin ng ISIS sa isang statement na sila ang nasa likod ng pambobomba. -Rudy Andal, Joy Cantos-

Bombings won't stop

2nd BOL plebiscite

By MAYEN JAYMALIN

The Commission on Elections (Comelec) does not see the need to place Jolo under its control and defer the Feb. 6 plebiscite on the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) following the twin blasts in a Catholic church while mass was ongoing on Sunday.

Comelec spokesman James Jimenez yesterday said the midterm polls are still four months away and the agency has not received any recommendation to place Jolo under its direct supervision.

Jimenez said the deadly incident will also unlikely affect the plebiscite on the BOL.

"Our preparation is normal. If anything, the police will probably just be on greater watchfulness," Jimenez disclosed at a press briefing.

Jimenez said the Comelec will await the findings of the Philippine National Police (PNP) on whether the Jolo bombings were related to the BOL that will create the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

"But ultimately, it will not affect the outcome of the elections since the plebiscite is already over and result has already been released," Jimenez noted.

The Feb. 6 plebiscite will just determine what other

areas will be included in the BARMM that will replace Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao or ARMM, Jimenez said.

Truly inclusive

As this developed, Vice President Leni Robredo urged the government to look into the "concerns" of those who voted against the BOL even as she supports its ratification.

Robredo said the government must ensure that "all voices are heard" as it moves forward with the establishment of the BARMM.

Isabela City, the capital of Basilan province, and Sulu rejected the BOL during the plebiscite held last week.

The Vice President stressed the BOL is not an "all-in-one" solution to the decades-old problem in Mindanao like what many are saying, "but we don't look at it as a solution but an instrument to find a solution."

Former president and now Manila Mayor Joseph Estrada, for one, said the BOL will not guarantee lasting peace in Mindanao.

Robredo stressed though that BOL can be considered as one of the vital instruments for the people of Mindanao, who she said for the longest time thought they were taken for granted, to express themselves.

"It's important to have a platform that will give voice to the voiceless," she said.

For his part, Estrada said during the 118th anniversary of the Manila Police District (MPD) that there should only be one Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and one flag.

Estrada waged an all-out war against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and other secessionist forces in Mindanao during his term as president.

The Manila mayor expressed hopes that no other bombings will happen in Mindanao because "President Duterte can handle things and he has political will."

Estrada said he is confident that the incident in Jolo will not spill into Metro Manila or any part of the country because the PNP and the AFP are vigilant.

Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III, who was conferred a title of datu and named an honorary member of Bangsa Maranao in Davao City yesterday, is confident the BOL ratification would finally clear the way for Mindanao's rapid and sustainable development after decades of conflict.

Like Robredo, however, Dominguez pointed out the resounding approval of the BOL and the creation of BARMM are not instant solutions to the

problems that have plagued Mindanao for almost a half-century.

According to him, the future success of the new autonomy setup is contingent on the hard work that all sectors are willing to undertake together over the long term.

"We must be aware... that there is no easy path to redemption. There is no magic wand that will instantly cure the malaise we confront – not a new configuration of governance and certainly not a single political speech," he said.

Dominguez also said the success in rehabilitating and reconstructing the damaged city of Marawi after the bloody conflict in 2017 will symbolize the larger effort of rebuilding the communities in Mindanao that were ravaged by many years of conflict and ensuring a good future for the next generations of Mindanaoans.

The destruction of Marawi, which was the result of the urban warfare waged by government forces to expel militants planning to occupy the city, "was personally traumatic for me," said Dominguez. "To me, this embodied all the destruction that befell Mindanao communities over the years of trouble."

Dominguez said he exerted his best efforts to gather funding support from multilateral

institutions and the Philippines' friends in the global community to help the city get back on its feet, raising close to P40 billion, or about half of what is required to rehabilitate and reconstruct the area.

Russian President Vladimir Putin sent condolences to president Duterte in connection with the bombing in Jolo.

The United Kingdom, in a statement released by the British embassy in Manila, Norway and labor group Federation of Free Workers (FFW) welcomed the ratification of the BOL and condemned the deadly bombings in Jolo.

The UK congratulated the Philippines, saying the BOL ratification "presents a truly historic opportunity for lasting peace and prosperity in Mindanao."

"The UK has directly supported the peace process for many years, and stands ready to continue this support during the creation of the (BARMM)," the statement read.

UK's Minister for Asia and the Pacific Mark Field and British Ambassador Daniel Puce condemned the attacks in Jolo.

Field and Puce said their thoughts and prayers were with the victims and their loved ones.

"The UK stands with the Philippines against terror and

hatred," Field said.

Norwegian Ambassador Bjørn Jahnsen posted on Twitter that "Norway sends its deepest condolences to the families of those who lost their lives" in the bombings.

"We fully support the Bangsamoro peace process and we are an ally for long-standing peace and development in the Philippines," Norway said.

FFW president Sonny Matula, for his part, said lasting peace in the country cannot be attained through an all-out war with rebel groups.

"With the adoption of the BOL and the transition under the MILF leadership as well as the decommissioning of its armed group, we can now move forward in a faster phase in national development and lasting peace in southern Philippines," Matula said.

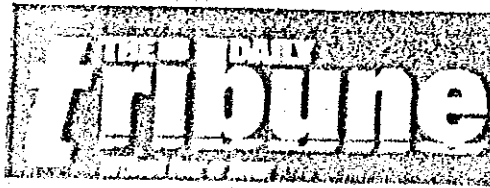
FFW also described the incident in Jolo as an act not of Muslims or Christians but "terrorists and barbarians."

"The Philippine authorities need to pursue the perpetrators relentlessly and arrest them to face accountability in the bar of justice," Matula said.

Meanwhile, MPD director Chief Supt. Vicente Danao Jr. has ordered the police to enhance security measures in Manila and increase visibility. – With Helen Flores, Rey Galupo, Lawrence Agcaoili

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Blast won't stop Feb. plebiscite

By Raymart T. Lolo

Despite the church bombing incident in Jolo, Sulu last Sunday, the Commission on Elections (Comelec) announced that the second round of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) plebiscite for the inclusion of Lanao del Norte and North Cotabato in the Bangsamoro Region will push through as scheduled on 6 February.

Comelec spokesman James Jimenez said the poll body will prepare as normal for the BOL plebiscite in the

remaining areas despite the possible threats.

"We will prepare as normal (preparations go). If anything, the police will probably be on greater watchfulness," Jimenez said.

The bombing killed about 20 people and wounded over a hundred.

Jimenez, however, refused to claim that the bombing incident was in line with the BOL ratification.

"It is still up in the air whether or not it is BOL-related. However, we heard

that there are several attempts to link them," Jimenez said.

"The situation is very volatile, it is easy to throw blame, but as far as Comelec is concerned, we will prefer that the police handle this investigation and for us to make the determination whether these blasts are BOL-related to a later date," he added.

"But ultimately, it (Jolo cathedral blasts) would not affect the outcome of the BOL plebiscite because the Comelec already released the official results, "

Jimenez said.

It is still up in the air whether or not it is BOL-related. However, we heard that there are several attempts to link them.

The 6 February plebiscite will cover the six municipalities of Lanao del Norte namely Baloi, Munai, Nunungan, Pantar, Tagaloan and Tangkall and 39 barangays of North Cotabato located in the municipalities of Aleosan, Carmen, Cabacan, Midsayap, Pigkawayan and Pikit.

The first round of the BOL plebiscite was held in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), Cotabato City and Isabela City in Basilan last 21 January.

The "Yes" vote to BOL ratification won with 1.5 million votes in the ARMM, paving the way for ARMM abolition and establishment of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region with an expanded land and water jurisdiction, fiscal autonomy, increased share in national government resources.

Jolo under total lockdown

Duterte orders military to prevent repeat of terror attack

By **MARTIN A. SADONGDONG, AARON B. RECUENCO, and GENALYN D. KABILING**

The entire town of Jolo in Sulu province has been placed on total lockdown following the two explosions that hit a

church, killing at least 20 individuals and injuring 112 others, the Philippine National Police (PNP) said Monday.

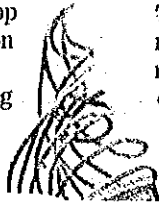
Outraged by the twin blasts in Jolo,

President Duterte ordered the military to implement more stringent safety measures to prevent a repeat of the incident amid lapses in security.

PNP chief Director General Oscar Albayalde said the lockdown was

agreed upon by the police top brass to contain the situation in the area.

"Nagbigay order ang NHQ [National Headquarters] para sa lockdown.



Total lockdown sa Jolo, Sulu, kaya makita natin walang tao at sarado ang mga tindahan (The National Headquarters ordered the lockdown. Jolo, Sulu was placed under total lockdown that's why we can't

►7

Jolo under total...

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see people around and business establishments are closed)," said Albayalde, who flew to Jolo to personally oversee the ongoing investigation.

"Kapag nag-normalize, doon tayo mag-lower ng alert status (If the situation goes back to normal then that's the time we lower the alert status)," he added.

Luzon, Visayas on alert

Police forces in Luzon and the Visayas were also placed under heightened alert status in an apparent attempt to prevent a spillover of bomb attacks.

Presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said the President wants the troops to ensure the safety of the people after deploring attempts by groups to sow terror and derail peace efforts in the south.

Duterte is scheduled to visit Jolo Monday afternoon, a day after the explosions at a church left several people dead.

"He's outraged," Panelo said during a Palace press briefing when asked about the President's reaction to the Jolo bombings.

"Of course, he was so angry for one, for another he is so disappointed that despite the movement to tread the path towards peace and development, there are still some forces in that region who sow terror and kill and murder people," he said.

"He has issued directive to the Armed Forces of the Philippines to secure the safety of the citizenry and to attend to the injured and to provide succor to the families of the victims,"

he said.

He added that the President directed the military "to undertake measures so that this incident will not happen again."

Who's behind the attack?

A top Philippine government official told The Associated Press that an Abu Sayyaf commander, Hatib Sawadjaan, is one of the main suspects. At least four of Sawadjaan's men were filmed by security cameras near the bombed area, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the investigation.

Sawadjaan is based in the jungles of Patikul town, near Jolo, and has been blamed for kidnappings for ransom and beheadings of hostages, including two Canadian men, in recent years. Sawadjaan's faction has aired ransom-demanding videos that used Islamic State-styled black flags as backdrops.

The SITE Intelligence monitoring group said an IS communique claimed the attack was carried out by two of its suicide bombers who wore explosive belts, one detonating inside the church and the other in the parking lot. The claim could not be independently verified.

Post-blast probe

According to Albayalde, investigators are having difficulty finding pieces of evidence at the blast site since the explosion caused a massive destruction.

As of writing, only parts of a mobile phone were discovered inside the church so police are considering that the bombs were detonated electroni-

cally. Earlier, police claimed the bombs used were improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

"Wala pang masabi kung anong klase ng bomba dahil walang ma-recover na residue although may mga nakuha silang parts na cellphone. Pero hindi pa nila masabi kung cellphone-dettonated, most probably cellphone detonated. Ang timing ng blast is 12 to 15 seconds so talaga itong electronically detonated (We cannot say what type of bomb was really used because there was no residue although we found parts of a cellular phone. However, we cannot say that it was cellphone-dettonated, most probably it was. The timing of the blast is 12 to 15 seconds so it is probably electronically detonated)," Albayalde said.

He also said around two kilos of explosives were used in the bomb attack.

According to ground reports, a mass was ongoing at the Jolo Cathedral when the first bomb exploded at 8:58 a.m. Sunday.

Lax security?

Whether the bomb was already installed prior to the mass or it was thrown by the suspect is a matter that has yet to be determined by the authorities.

As such, concerns were raised whether the security troops manning the cathedral have committed lapses.

According to Albayalde, the soldiers and police ensuring the security at the cathedral have shifting schedules.

"Kapag may nagma-mass, ang arrangement sundalo ang nasa inner perimeter at mga pulis ang nasa labas (If there is a mass, the soldiers are assigned at the inner perimeter while the police are outside)," Albayalde said. (With a report from AFP)

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Jolo cathedral bombing sparks peace process worries

The Islamic State (IS)-claimed bombing of a Catholic cathedral that killed 20 in the Philippines' restive south put fresh pressure Monday on peace efforts aimed at ending decades of separatist violence.

Two explosions tore through the cathedral, shattering pews and windows, on the Muslim-majority island of Jolo, killing worshippers at Sunday mass and security forces in one of the nation's worst bombings in years.

Experts voiced concern on Monday over the impact the attack would have on a decades-long push for peace that culminated last week in voters approv- ▶3

Jolo cathedral bombing... ◀1

ing expanded Muslim self-rule in the south.

The vote was the result of negotiations started in the 1990s with the nation's largest rebel group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), and will give it considerable power over the so-called Bangsamoro region.

The IS claim, in a formal communiqué, said two suicide bombers had detonated explosive belts, according to the SITE Intelligence Group, which monitors jihadist activities.

But a military report said the second bomb was left in the utility box of a motorcycle in the parking area outside the church. Police said they believe the explosives were detonated remotely, but did elaborate.

Despite the contradictions, authorities have not ruled out IS involvement.

Jihadist factions aligned with the group – including the notorious Abu Sayyaf kidnap-for-ransom group – which were not part of the peace process, are prime suspects in the bombing.

The remote island of Jolo is a base of the group, which is blamed for deadly bombings, including an attack on a ferry in Manila Bay in 2004 that claimed 116 lives in the country's deadliest terror assault.

'Opportunities squandered'

"This is a big challenge for the Bangsamoro government," said Rommel Banlaai, chair of the Philippine

Institute for Peace, Violence and Terrorism Research.

The former rebels need to show they will be able to pull the region toward peace in order to attract much-needed investment to alleviate poverty and counter extremism, he told AFP.

"MILF needs to prove it can make a difference... the gravity of the problem faced by MILF is wow, so overwhelming," he added.

The church attack came despite President Rodrigo Duterte putting the southern Philippines under martial rule after pro-IS militants seized the southern city of Marawi in May 2017.

Government officials have argued that martial rule, which gives authorities extra powers, has been effective in taming the perpetually restive region.

Meanwhile, condolences poured in from around the world for the victims at the cathedral, which has been repeatedly targeted by grenade attacks that did not prove fatal.

Pope Francis, speaking in Panama, expressed his "strongest reprobation" for the violence. Once again, he said, "the Christian community has been plunged into mourning."

But experts were also worried about how the attack would impact the hopes for new development in the region, which were spurred by the self-rule vote victory.

"It's a terrible human tragedy, it's also a development tragedy," World Bank economist Andrew Mason told

broadcaster ABS-CBN.

"When we see conflict areas, when we see ups-and-downs and negative impacts due to violence and conflict, what we see is also these are development opportunities that are squandered." (AFP)

29 January 2019

The Manila Times

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JOLO ON LOCKDOWN,
PH-WIDE ALERT ORDERED

IS owns up to Jolo blasts

BY AL JACINTO

ZAMBOANGA CITY: The Islamic State (IS) has claimed responsibility for the deadly twin blasts at the Catholic cathedral of Jolo, which, it said, was carried out by a pair of suicide bombers.

IS, in a statement released by its Amaq News Agency, said the first bomber detonated an explosive belt, while the second

►BlastsA2

IS owns

attacker blew himself up outside the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral on Sunday, killing and wounding dozens of people, including soldiers deployed in the area.

The SITE Intelligence Group, a US company that tracks online activity of jihadist organizations, reported that IS, also known as ISIS or the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, had owned to the bombings.

The *Long War Journal* also reported that IS describes its target in Jolo as a "Christian temple," saying that it was bombed during a "gathering of the Crusaders to perform their polytheist rituals."

Both reports and Amaq did not say whether the suicide bombers were foreign fighters or Filipino militants.

Brig. Gen. Edgard Arevalo, Armed Forces spokesman, described the IS claim as "propaganda," a day after the military said the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) could have been responsible for the Jolo blasts.

"They have been doing false claims in the past. An example is the Resorts World incident," he said in a text message to reporters, citing the lone-wolf attack by a deranged ex-government employee on the Resorts World complex in Pasay City in 2017.

Several military sources also dismissed the claim of the IS, saying the real perpetrators had to be determined.

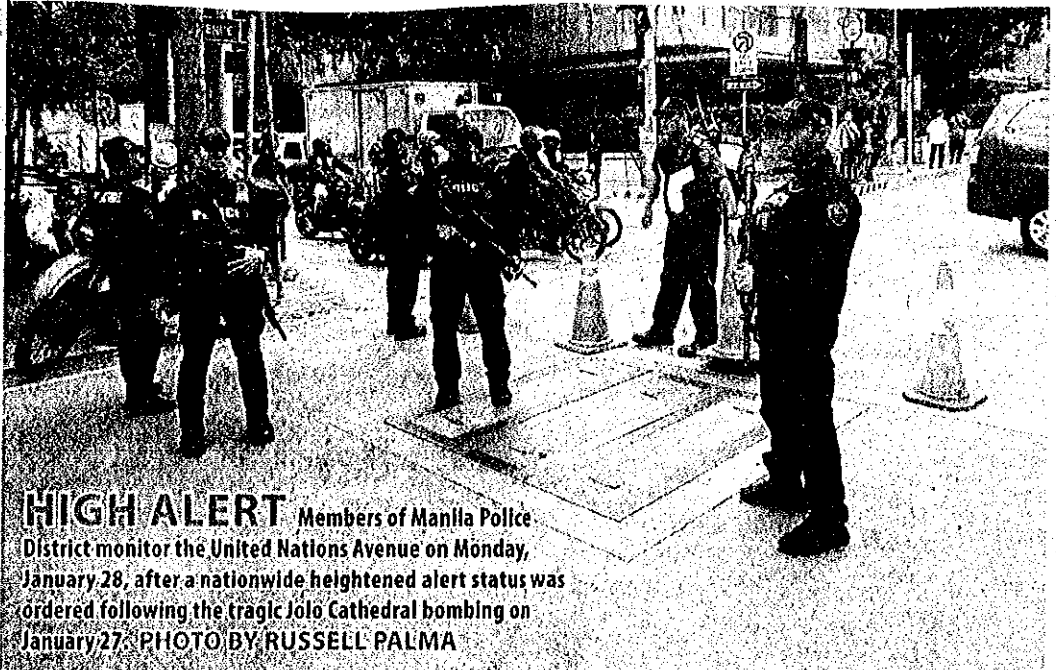
"Not ISIS. They always [claimed responsibility], whenever there are attacks but it's not true. Most likely, ASG," one source said.

Another source said a group led by Hatib Sawadjaan was being eyed as the primary suspect.

'Ajang-Ajang Group' responsible?

The Philippine military has largely blamed the "Ajang-Ajang Group," a unit of the Abu Sayyaf, whose leaders have pledged allegiance to IS, and vowed to fight for the establishment of a caliphate in the restive region.

Authorities are investigating six persons of interest, as well as several terror groups, National



HIGH ALERT Members of Manila Police District monitor the United Nations Avenue on Monday, January 28, after a nationwide heightened alert status was ordered following the tragic Jolo Cathedral bombing on January 27. PHOTO BY RUSSELL PALMA

Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr. said on Monday.

Esperon cited the closed-circuit television (CCTV) footage obtained from the nearby establishments, in which at least six persons were seen to be acting "suspicious" when the improvised explosive device (IED) exploded inside the church.

The IEDs were "most probably" cellphone-detonated, according to Philippine National Police (PNP) chief Oscar Albayalde.

This was because of the mere 12 to 15 seconds of difference between the two bomb explosions past 8 a.m. on Sunday.

Lt. Col. Gerry Besana, a military spokesman, said two bombs went off in the church. One of the bombs was hidden under the seat of a motorcycle parked outside the cathedral.

Authorities said 20 people were killed and over 100 others wounded in the blasts.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana and Albayalde flew to Jolo on Monday to oversee the investigations into the attacks. Albayalde admitted that the local police force failed to implement tight security.

The bombings prompted the police to impose a nationwide alert to pre-empt any acts of terrorism, and a lockdown of Jolo.

President Rodrigo Duterte, who flew to Jolo on Monday, had ordered soldiers to annihilate the ASG, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said.

Palace spokesman Salvador Panelo said there could have been lapses in security and that the

President was awaiting the results of investigations.

"He was so angry, for one. For another, he is so disappointed that despite the movement to tread the path towards peace and development, there are still some forces in that region that sow terror and kill and murder people," he said.

Sulu Gov. Abdusakur Tan 2nd on Monday again condemned the twin bombings and called them a "dastardly act committed inside a place of worship and wrecked deaths and devastations beyond imaginable reasons, and deserve the strongest of condemnation. Words elude us at this moment of profound grief."

Poor security

It was unclear how the improvised explosives were smuggled inside the church.

The bombings happened despite an extended martial rule in the whole of southern Philippines, and the attacks only showed how poor the security was in the capital town.

On New Year's Eve, an improvised explosive also went off outside the South Seas Mall in Cotabato City that left dozens of casualties.

A member of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters was arrested by authorities during President Duterte's visit to Cotabato to campaign for the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law providing greater autonomy in Muslim Mindanao. His family has denied all accusations against him.

The latest attack in Jolo was

not the first time for Catholic churches in the predominantly Muslim province. In August 2013, a grenade explosion outside the cathedral wounded two civilians. In the previous year, a fragmentation grenade exploded at the cathedral's roof.

Previous attacks on churches were largely blamed by the authorities to the Abu Sayyaf, a small but the most notorious among rebel groups operating in the troubled region.

In December 2010, Abu Sayyaf militants bombed another church inside the police base in Jolo, killing at least six worshippers. The militants scaled the church wall undetected under cover of darkness and planted the bomb and waited the next morning before detonating the powerful explosive during a mass.

Two people were also killed and 17 others wounded when militants detonated a huge bomb planted outside the cathedral in July 2009. Another bomb was found near the church and had been disarmed by Filipino and US troops helping the military fight terrorism.

In July 31 last year, a Moroccan ISIS soldier, Abu Katheer al Maghribi, exploded his van filled with explosives in Laminan City in the volatile Muslim province of Basilan, several nautical miles south of Zamboanga and a known stronghold of the Abu Sayyaf.

The Islamic State claimed responsibility for the suicide attack that left over a dozen casualties.

**WITH DEMPSEY REYES,
ROY D.R. NARRA AND
CATHERINE S. VALENTE**

ISIS owns up to Jolo blasts

- Sayyaf member's brod, a bomb maker, also a person of interest
- Police, military, OTS heighten nationwide alert level
- More reason to keep martial law in Mindanao—Palace

By Francisco Tuyay
and Nat Mariano

THE Islamic State terrorist group has claimed responsibility for the double bomb attack on a Catholic church in Jolo, Sulu, that killed 20 people and wounded scores of others, but police said they suspect the blasts were the work of the brother of a slain Abu Sayyaf leader.

SITE Intelligence Group, which monitors jihadist activities, said ISIS issued a formal communique Monday claiming two suicide bombers had detonated explosive belts Sunday inside and outside the church.

But Philippine National Police chief Oscar Albayalde said CCTV footage showed Alias Kamah, a bomb maker and brother of bandit leader Surakah Ingog, and several other suspects near the church shortly before the two blasts.

Investigators said the two kilos of explosives used in the attack were probably set off by a cellphone.

Next page

ISIS...

From A1

Sunday's bomb attack came a week after most voters in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao—except for Sulu province—ratified the Bangsamoro Organic Law in a plebiscite. The law creates a new Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao in which Muslims will have greater autonomy.

President Rodrigo Duterte visited the Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Cathedral Monday afternoon and, surrounded by coffins of those who died in the attack, spoke to the people gathered near the ruins of the church.

His spokesman said the President was outraged by the attack and disappointed that, despite the steps toward peace, there were still those who sowed terror and murdered people.

Presidential Spokesman Salvador Panelo said they were aware of the ISIS claim of responsibility, but rather than speculate, they would await the results of an investigation to determine who was behind the attack.

Panelo also fended off suggestions that martial law was not effective, since it did not stop the church attack. He said attacks such as this were all the more reason to keep martial law in place in Mindanao.

Following the blast, the PNP and AFP put their forces on heightened alert nationwide.

"Regional directors were instructed to initiate further security measures to preempt and prevent similar incidents [in their] areas," said PNP director for operations, Mao Aplasca.

AFP spokesman Brig. Gen. Edgard Arevalo, meanwhile, played down the ISIS claim, saying it was "still propaganda at this time."

"They have [made] false claims in the past," he said, citing the Resorts World incident in 2017 in which a lone gunman went on a rampage.

The PNP had enforced a lockdown in the Jolo town proper, setting up several checkpoints along its perimeter. Anyone entering the area will be subject to inspection.

Commercial establishments remained

closed in downtown Jolo while residents in the outlying towns opted to stayed home.

Government officials led by Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, AFP chief Gen. Benjamin Madrigal, Acting Interior Secretary Eduardo Ano and Albayalde flew to Jolo to inspect the blast site.

National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon said they were looking to two groups as persons of interest, including Kamah.

Albayalde played down the possibility that it was a suicide attack.

"It's very unlikely that a suspected suicide bomber carrying a big bag with explosives in it would penetrate inside without having been noticed by churchgoers," he said.

He said cellphone parts were found at the blast site suggesting a phone was used as the detonator.

Metro Manila, too, was put under heightened alert.

National Capital Region Police Office Director Guillermo Eleazar ordered all police commanders in Manila and Quezon City, and the Eastern, Southern and Northern Police districts to intensify checkpoint operations at entry and exit points of Metro Manila.

"I have placed the NCRPO in full alert status," he said.

In the next few weeks, he said, the NCRPO will increase the number and frequency of checkpoints including its ongoing "Oplan Sita."

"We will deploy our police men and women in strategic areas of Metro Manila to increase police presence and visibility, to discourage, prevent and deter any evil plots from unfolding," added Eleazar.

He said there was no reason for the public to be alarmed and asked people to continue with their daily routines.

"I encourage you to remain alert and vigilant. Report any suspicious person or behavior, report any new or unfamiliar face in the neighborhood to the nearest policeman," Eleazar said.

At the Ninoy Aquino International Airport, personnel of the Office for Transportation Security are also on alert and are screening all passengers entering at the initial and final security check thoroughly.

With AFP

Robredo, Arroyo offer aid to victims of Sulu blast

BY GLEE JALEA

VICE President Maria Leonor "Leni" Robredo and House Speaker Gloria Macapagal Arroyo have offered assistance to families of victims of the blasts at the Catholic cathedral of Jolo in Sulu over the weekend.

"When I heard about the bombing, I alerted our teams to monitor and prepare for a possible deployment to immediately assist the victims and their families," Robredo said on Sunday evening during her visit in Cagayan de Oro.

At least 20 people were killed and more than 100 were injured by the twin bombings during Sunday Mass at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral.

Robredo lamented that the bombings came on the heels of the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) in the Autonomous Region in Muslim

Mindanao (ARMM) and other key areas just last week.

"It is saddening how this happens in a period when we are all hoping to end conflict in Mindanao," she said.

Sulu was the lone province under the ARMM to reject the BOL, which allows the people in the region to govern themselves under the peace deal of the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). However, its "no" vote did not affect the rest of the provinces who approved to ratify the measure.

Arroyo, on the other hand, assured that she would find out

immediately what Congress could do from its end to investigate the "tragic" incident.

"Please do not lose heart, I'm sure the government will do everything to make things right," Arroyo addressed the people of Sulu during her briefing in Cagayan de Oro.

Other congressmen denounced the bombings and called for a swift resolution to serve justice to the victims.

"I call upon the military and police to bring the perpetrators to justice as soon as possible," said Sulu caretaker Jericho Nograles, who also represents Puwersa ng Bayaning Atleta (PBA) party-list.

Anak Mindanao party-list Rep. Amihilda Sangcopan urged the authorities to conduct an independent and thorough investigation into the alleged role of some armed groups in the area in Sunday's blast.

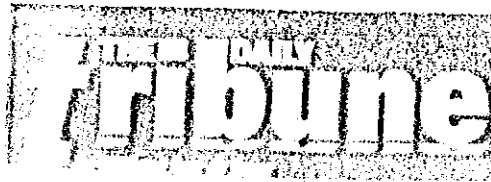
"Our people deserve to be fully informed, not misinformed just to serve the whims of some," said Sangcopan.

Members of the Makabayan bloc reminded fellow lawmakers not to use the Sulu bombings as an excuse to push through with extreme measures that may trigger abuses in the region.

ACT Teachers party-list Representatives France Castro and Antonio Tinio added that provisions of Republic Act 9372 or the "Human Security Act" might be abused and not address the root of terrorism in the region.

Gabriela Rep. Emmi de Jesus noted that the definition of "terrorism" is too vast, and may likely be used by the government to block the rights of the people to protest.

"We appeal to the people not to be swayed of the warmongering viewpoint of intensifying military operations under the guise of anti-terrorism, that will ultimately trigger mass abuses against the Moro people and fuel the already intense social unrest in Mindanao," Anakpawis party-list Rep. Ariel Casilao added.



All-out war vs terror

*Attack to be
paid in kind*

He expressed outrage over certain forces who still chose to sow terror

By Kristina Maralit, Mario J. Mallari and Kathleen Mae Bulquerin

A livid President Rodrigo Duterte ordered troops to wage an all-out war against terror groups and to finish them off before his term ends following the death of 20 persons from an attack on a cathedral in Jolo, Sulu.

Turn to page 2

Based on the CCTV footage recovered by authorities, the Ajang-ajang group perpetrated the said bombing incident

From page 1

He promised to pay the terrorists back with equal force the way they slaughtered church goers.

"Putangina n'yo (son of a bitch), don't think that you are the only ones who can cultivate evil. If you can do it, I can do it," Mr. Duterte said.

The President issued the all-out war order the moment he landed in Sulu.

The Palace will withhold any conclusion pending the outcome of the joint probe being conducted by the military and police.

Six terror suspects undertook the attack on Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral that took the lives of 20 persons, with four having been identified, security officials told Mr. Duterte.

Presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said Mr. Duterte who was at the site of the incident was angered and disappointed over the attack that happened during a Sunday Mass.

The Chief Executive was joined by security officials, former Special Assistant to the President Christopher Lawrence "Bong" Go and Davao City Mayor Sarah Duterte in inspecting the bombing site.

He expressed outrage over "certain forces" who still chose to sow terror despite the government's efforts to "tread the path towards peace and development."

"He has issued a directive to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to secure the safety of the citizenry, and to attend to the injured and to provide succor to the families of the victims," Panelo said.

One of the suspects was identified as a member of the Ajang-ajang group based on a closed-circuit television (CCTV) footage.

The AFP Western Mindanao Command said the suspect was seen before the bombing occurred.

IS owns up

The Islamic State group had claimed responsibility for

the deadly attacks that hit the Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

Authorities are said to be looking into the involvement of the Abu Sayyaf and smaller renegade groups from Mindanao.

Panelo, however, reiterated the Palace will withhold any conclusion pending the outcome of the joint probe being conducted by the military and police.

The Department of National Defense (DND) also ordered a "total lockdown" in Jolo as part of the efforts to identify and



Perfect as art Artist sketches Manila Bay scene amid the rehabilitation efforts. BOB DUNGO JR.

track down the perpetrators of Sunday's twin explosions.

Philippine National Police (PNP) chief Director General Oscar Albayalde said Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana ordered the "total lockdown" in Jolo, the capital town of Sulu province.

"The SND (secretary of national defense) ordered a total lockdown here in Jolo, Sulu, that's why there are not much people outside, shops are closed," said Albayalde.

Albayalde explained that "total lockdown" means authorities will have to contain the area.

"We have roadblocks, checkpoints... We have enough troops both from the PNP and AFP. We have two battalions of the Special Action Force also here," the chief PNP said.

Remote detonation

Initial investigation by government Explosives and Ordnance Disposal (EOD) showed that the two improvised explosive devices (IED) went off with less than 15 seconds interval - one right inside the cathedral while the other was placed at a motorcycle parked in the church's parking lot.

"The EOD suspects that it was

electronically detonated... Most probably cell phone detonated," said Albayalde.

The chief PNP, however, said that EOD teams have yet to identify what specific type of IED were used in the attack.

Albayalde said that identifying the type of bombs used could also lead investigators to the group behind the bombing.

"If and when we recover or reconstruct the IED used, then from there, most probably we can identify who was behind this... The composition and the

whose breakaway Moro Islamic Liberation Front have just been granted wider self-rule to the Muslim minority in the region following the plebiscite to ratify the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL).

Sulu, known to be "Misuari country," overwhelmingly voted against the BOL.

"We cannot enter into the realm of speculation. It would be unfair," Panelo pointed out. "I know that Nur Misuari wants Federalism better than (the) BOL but he didn't oppose it actively. In fact, he was non-committal with respect to the plebiscite," he added.

Prior to the plebiscite, Mr. Duterte himself called Misuari a "true friend" and expressed optimism he and the Moro leader would be able to resume their peace negotiations at the soonest possible time.

Panelo, meanwhile, hit back at those criticizing martial law, which is currently in place in the whole of Mindanao.

"(They are) saying that despite martial law, there has been bombing and therefore martial law should be lifted. With more reasons, martial law should be in place," Panelo said.

The SND (secretary of national defense) ordered a total lockdown here in Jolo, Sulu.

"(B)ecause if you can do that under a martial law regime then the more reason you should maintain it and be more strict in the implementation of security measures in that area," he added.

In the meantime, rather than speculating, he said the President is more concerned with the people affected and how to help their respective families.

"We express our sincerest and heartfelt sympathies to the families of the victims and we will do everything possible to give justice to those who have perished... All government agencies have been directed to attend to the families," Panelo said.

He likewise thanked those countries, including Australia, Canada and United Kingdom, which expressed their support and condolences following the bombings.

"I'd like to acknowledge receipt of expressions of sympathies, condolences and support from many countries of the world in relation to the tragic bombings," Panelo said.

With Kathleen Mae Bulquerin, Alvin Murcia, Nell Alcober

MNLF Involvement?

The spokesman also aired caution about directly pinning the blame on Nur Misuari's Moro National Liberation Front,

'Total lockdown' in Jolo

Abu Sayyaf, Ajang-Ajang groups
eyed behind cathedral blasts

BY VICTOR REYES

MILITARY and police forces have placed Jolo town in Sulu under "total lockdown" as authorities blamed the Abu Sayyaf and an affiliate group for Sunday's bomb attacks at the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral.

PNP spokesman Senior Supt. Bernard Banac said a lockdown "means that we are intensifying our checkpoint operations."

"Those who will be coming and going out of Jolo proper will undergo further inspection and strict implementation

of security measures," he said, adding a lockdown is being implemented "to put emphasis on the strict implementation of security measures in Jolo, Sulu."

The Armed Forces and the PNP said the twin bombings that killed 20 people, including five soldiers, and injured around 100 others may have been perpetrated by the Abu Sayyaf and its ally, the "Ajang-Ajang" group.

One bomb exploded inside the church while mass was ongoing while the other exploded a minute later in front of the church.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana

said President Duterte, who visited the blast site yesterday, reiterated his order for the military to "crush" the Abu Sayyaf, a bandit group involved in bombings and kidnappings and is notorious for beheading its hostages.

Asked if the President's directive was in relation to suspicions the Abu Sayyaf was involved in the cathedral blasts, Lorenzana said, "Yes, and for all the atrocities they have committed so far."

The Abu Sayyaf is composed of around 300 to 400 members, who are mostly in Sulu where the group is holding several foreign and Filipino kidnap

victims.

Lorenzana and AFP chief Gen. Benjamin Madrigal were among the top security officials who accompanied the President during the visit.

Lorenzana said there are indeed six "persons of interest" in the bombings, confirming a statement from National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr.

"Yes, as seen in the CCTV," said Lorenzana.

Communications Secretary Martin

See ABU > Page B3

ABU

Andanar said on Sunday investigators have CCTV footage that could help identify the bombers.

PNP chief Oscar Albayalde, who also flew to Jojo yesterday, said the PNP "national headquarters" and Lorenzana gave the PNP and the military the orders for a lockdown.

"When the situation normalizes, then probably we'll lower our alert status," he said.

Albayalde said checkpoints have been put up by soldiers and policemen under the security set-up.

As to the suspects, Albayalde said: "We are looking at threat groups... There are many threat groups who may be involved here and when we reconstruct the IED (improvised explosive devices) used, most probably we'll know who did this."

As to why the suspects were able to carry out the bombings when soldiers and policemen were around the church, Albayalde said troops may have grown used to "normal" or peace in the area.

"For so many years, there has been no incident. They (troops) may have relaxed in their security," said Albayalde. He said the last bombing at the church was in 2011 although no one was reported harmed.

NOT ISIS

Islamic State, via its Amaq news agency, claimed responsibility for the attack, although details it gave were not consistent with those from authorities. The group said the attack was twin suicide bombings, rather than remotely detonated devices, and its death toll appears to be exaggerated.

AFP spokesman Brig. Gen. Edgard Arevalo said the ISIS claim is "propaganda as at this time."

"They have been doing false claims in the past," he added.

Sources from the intelligence community said the attack was probably staged jointly by the Abu Sayyaf and the Ajang-Ajang group.

"Not ISIS. They always (claim responsibility) whenever there are attacks but it's not true. Most likely, it's the ASG with the new local terror group called Ajang-Ajang. But its members are also from the ASG and have strong links with them," a security official said.

Like the Abu Sayyaf, the source said, Ajang-Ajang is into kidnappings and other terror activities like bombings, raids, ambushes, attacks on government forces, and extortion.

"The real perpetrators are still being checked, confirmed based on initial data like CCTV footage and post-blast investigation but ground intelligence points to the ASG and Ajang-Ajang," the source added.

Col. Gerry Besana, spokesman of the military's Western Mindanao Command, said, "Based on the CCTV footage recovered by authorities, the Ajang-Ajang group perpetrated the said bombing incident. Ajang-Ajang is a notorious group linked to the Abu Sayyaf Group in the province of Sulu."

A senior military official said the Ajang-Ajang group, which has 50 to 60 members, was founded in 2014 by one Sonny Boy Sadjarin "who is a battered son who grew up with a rebel mind."

It is composed of teenagers and was initially involved in drug dealing, extortion, and small time kidnap-for-ransom activities, and only in Jolo.

Years later, the Abu Sayyaf saw "potential" in the group and used it for the kidnapping of prominent victims.

"They (Ajang-Ajang) kidnap people and turn them over to the Abu Sayyaf who eventually demand ransom," said the official.

"I know them for their involvement in extortion, kidnapping and drug trading and liquidations, sometimes when they are ordered by the Abu Sayyaf... It's possible they evolved into the higher level bombings," he said.

An intelligence official, meanwhile, said the Abu Sayyaf and the Ajang-Ajang "perpetrated the attack (based) on CCTV camera."

MOTIVE

Police believe Ajang-Ajang carried out the attack in revenge for the deaths of relatives killed during military operations against the Abu Sayyaf.

According to Rommel Banlaoi, head of the Philippine Institute for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, the group's members consider themselves "soldiers of martyrs" and appear highly capable, having pulled off such a

devastating attack when security was tight for the referendum.

"This group outsmarted law enforcement authorities," Banlaoi said. "Sulu has been receiving threats coming from this group. This will inspire other groups to do some more."

Esperon said government is looking at two groups and six persons of interest based on CCTV footage and some intelligence reports.

Esperon, in an interview over CNN Philippines, said based on the footage, the persons of interests were engaged in "suspicious movements" after the explosions at the church. He said that instead of checking out the explosion, the group was seen moving away from the blast site.

He said one of the members of the group resembled a relative of one of the "commanders" of one of the armed groups in the province. He declined to give names.

On the Ajang-Ajang, Esperon said the group refers to relatives, including children, of members of the Abu Sayyaf and they are "probable suspects."

ABU SAYYAF DEFEAT LIKELY?

Not soon. Offensives from 2001 by the Philippine military with help of US special forces under "Operation Enduring Freedom" made some progress in killing senior commanders but that led to splintering and increased kidnapping to raise funds. In recent years, the Abu Sayyaf has started to engage more in piracy.

President Duterte has offered talks but has also promised to wipe them out. He has created a Jolo-based infantry division, to be composed of 4,500 troops by 2022, to go after the Abu Sayyaf and last month oversaw the deployment of its first 840 personnel.

Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Salvador Panelo said the President was angered by the twin explosions.

"He was so angry for one. For another, he is so disappointed that despite the movement to thread the path towards peace and development, there are still certain forces in that region, who sowed terror and killed and murdered people," said Panelo, concurrent presidential spokesman. — *With Jocelyn Montemayor and Reuters*

Jolo placed on lockdown

By MARTIN SADONGDONG

A total lockdown has been put into place in Jolo, Sulu as police investigators scour for more clues on the twin bombings that hit the Jolo Cathedral and killed at least 20 persons and injured 112 others.

PNP chief Director General Oscar Albayalde said the lockdown was decided to contain the situation in the area.

"Nagbigay order ang NHQ [National Headquarters] para sa lockdown. Total lockdown sa Jolo, Sulu kaya makita natin walang tao at sarado ang mga tindahan," said Albayalde, who flew to Jolo to oversee the ongoing investigation.

"Kapag nag-normalize doon tayo maglower ng alert status," he added.

In a press briefing in Camp Crame, Senior Supt. Bernard Banac, PNP spokesman, allayed fears of Jolo residents, saying the measure is for their own safety.

"It only means that we are intensifying our checkpoint operations. Those who will be coming and going out of Jolo proper will undergo further inspection and strict implementation of security measures. Aside from that, there's really nothing anymore from the term lockdown but to put emphasis on the strict implementation of security measures," he explained.

Banac, however, said there is no direct order for residents to stay home.

"Kaya lang nalintindihan natin na nandoon ang kanilang pangamba kaya walang lumalabas. Pero ang ating panawagan sa lahat ng mamamayan ng Jolo na sila ay lumabas at magpatuloy ng kanilang pang araw araw na pamumuhay at wag magpadala sa takot," Banac said.

Albayalde said investigators have difficulty finding pieces of evidence at the blast site.

Only parts of a mobile phone were discovered inside the church,

bolstering theory that the bombs were detonated electronically.

Earlier, police claimed improvised explosive devices (IEDs) were used in the attack.

"Wala pang masabi kung anong klaseng bomba dahil walang marecover na residue although may mga nakuha silang parts na cellphone. Pero hindi pa nila masabi kung cellphone-dettonated, most probably cellphone detonated. Ang timing ng blast is 12 to 15 seconds so talaga itong electronically detonated," Albayalde said.

He also said around two kilos of explosives were used in the bomb attack.

The first bomb exploded at 8:58 p.m. while Mass was ongoing, according to police.

"Halos nasa second reading pa lang daw nang pumutok itong IED. Halos puno ang simbahan. Sa thinking ng pari, mga nasa 100 nasa loob," Albayalde said.

Following the explosion, soldiers

and cops responded immediately to rescue the victims, but were greeted with a second blast at the parking area of the cathedral.

The second bomb was reportedly installed at a parked motorcycle but police have yet to confirm this information.

It is not clear whether the bomb was already placed before the Mass or was left by the suspect.

This raised suspicion that security was lax.

Albayalde said the soldiers and police providing security at the cathedral work on shifts.

"Kapag may nagma-mass, ang arrangement sundalo ang nasa inner perimeter at mga pulis ang nasa labas," Albayalde said.

"Probably naging normal na rito ang security for so many years kasi walang insidente kaya medyo relax ang security. At the same time, sino ba mag-aakala? Hindi nila naisip na ipapasok ito sa place of worship," he added.

Albayalde said they have yet to identify the suspect or suspects behind the grim attack.

The military earlier pointed to the Ajang Ajang Group of the Abu Sayyaf Group as the possible perpetrators of the incident. The Islamic State (ISIS) has already claimed responsibility for the attack.

"May mga tintingnan tayong mga threat groups. May mga nagsasalita na sila ang may gawa pero tintingnan pa natin," Albayalde said.

A person of interest has been identified through a closed-circuit television (CCTV) footage obtained by the military.

However, there were no other details provided on the person's identity.

PH naka-full alert; total lockdown sa Jolo

Nina AARON B. RECUENCO at MARTIN A. SADONGDONG

Isinailalim ng Philippine National Police sa full alert status ang buong puwersa nito sa Luzon kasama ang Metro Manila at Visayas upang maiwasan ang spillover ng magkasunod na pambobomba sa isang cathedral sa Jolo, Sulu nitong Linggo, na ikinasawi ng 20 katao, habang mahigit sa 100 ang nasugatan.

Sinabi ni Senior Supt. Bernard Banac, tagapagsalita ng Philippine National Police (PNP), na sa bisa ng alert status order, inaatasan ang lahat ng hepe ng pulisya na magpatupad ng kinakailangang preventive measures upang mapigilan ang mga kaparehong pag-atake sa kani-kanilang nasasakupan.

"The alert condition aims to ensure that no similar plans of terrorist groups will be carried out in other regions," sabi ni Banac.

Sa ilalim ng heightened alert status, ang lahat ng hepe ng pulisya ay dapat na handa sa anumang banta sa seguridad, at dapat na 50 porsiyento ng mga tauhan nito ay magsasagawa ng mga kinakailangang preventive security measures.

"The heightened alert condition also called for intensified checkpoint operations and strict implementation of gun ban," sabi pa ni Banac.

"Regional directors were instructed to initiate further security measures to preempt and prevent similar incidents to happen," dagdag pa ni Banac. "Our regional directors were also given discretionary authority to raise alert conditions in their areas of responsibility as deemed necessary."

Kasalukuyang napapailalim sa martial law ang buong Mindanao, simula noong Mayo 2017.

Kasabay nito, isinailalim sa total lockdown ang buong Jolo, batay sa

napagpasyahan ng pinakamatataas na opisyal ng PNP.

"Nagbigay order ang NHQ [National Headquarters] para sa lockdown. Total lockdown sa Jolo, Sulu kaya makita natin walang tao at sarado ang mga tindahan," sabi ni PNP chief, Director General Oscar Albayalde, na nagtungo sa Jolo kahapon.

"Kapag nag-normalize, doon tayong mag-lower ng alert status," aniya.

Sinabi naman ni Banac na hindi dapat katakutan ng mga taga-Jolo ang ipinatutupad na lockdown.

"It only means that we are intensifying our checkpoint operations. Those who will be coming and going out of Jolo proper will undergo further inspection and strict implementation of security measures. Aside from that, there's really nothing anymore from the term lockdown but to put emphasis on the strict implementation of security measures," ani Banac.

Samantala, sinisilip na ng PNP ang posibilidad na nagkaroon ng kapabayaansa

pagpapatupad ng seguridad sa paligid ng cathedral nitong Linggo, gayung matagal nang nakatanggap ng banta mula sa mga terorista ang nasabing simbahan.

Sa katunayan, ayon kay Albayalde, ito na ang ikawalong beses na inatake ang Jolo Cathedral.

"Some of these attacks in the past were grenade-throwing while some are assassinations of Church helpers. The priests (in Sulu) are constantly under threat ever since," ani Albayalde.

Ayon kay Chief Supt. Graciano Mijares, director ng Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) regional police, inaalam nanila kung nagkaroon ng kapabayaansa sa ipinatutupad na seguridad sa simbahan.

"We are looking if there are lapses on the part of the PNP and the Armed Forces of the Philippines in securing the area. This will be part of the investigation," sinabi ni Mijares nang kapanayamin sa DZMM.

May ulat nina Fer Taboy at Bella Gamotea

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Lockdown sa Jolo

Isinailalim na sa total lockdown ang buong Jolo, Sulu kaugnay ng pambobomba sa isang simbahan dito kamakalawa.

Ang total lockdown ay inutos ni Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, martial law administrator, kaugnay ng implementasyon nito sa buong rehiyon ng Mindanao.

Kasabay nito, tinukoy naman ni Armed Forces of the Philippines-Western Mindanao Command Spokesman Col. Gerry Besana na ang Ajang-Ajang terror group na kaalyado ng mga ekstremistang Abu Sayyaf ang nasa likod ng madugong pambobomba sa nasabing simbahan na itinaon pa sa sagradong pagmimisa dito.

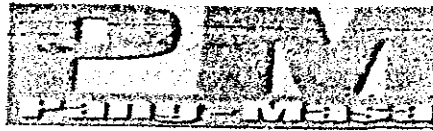
Ang grupong Ajang-Ajang, ayon sa opisyal, ay sangkot sa pagpatay sa mga law enforcers partikular na sa mga sundalo at pulis sa Sulu at maging sa iba pang uri ng paghahasik ng terorismo tulad ng kidnapping for ransom at pambobomba.

Sinabi naman ni Philippine National Police Chief Director General Oscar Albayalde na inutos rin ng PNP ang 'total lockdown' sa buong Jolo, ang kapitolyo ng lalawigan kung saan sarado ang mga tindahan at iba pang mga establisyemento habang isinasagawa pa ang masusing imbestigasyon sa kaso hanggang sa magbalik sa normal ang situwasyon ng seguridad sa lugar.

Ayon pa kay Albayalde pinaigting rin ang mga checkpoint at chokepoints operations kung saan halos walang mga tao na nasa labas habang naglagay rin ng mga roadblocks. (Joy Cantos)

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TOTAL LOCKDOWN SA JOLO

Isinailalim na sa "total lockdown" ni Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana ang buong Jolo, Sulu matapos ang magkasunod na pagsabog sa loob at labas ng Our Lady of Mt. Carmel noong Linggo ng umaga na ikinasawi ng 20 katao at pagkasugat ng 112 iba pa.

"I have directed our troops to heighten their alert level, secure all places of worships and public places at once, and

initiate pro-active security measures to thwart hostile plans", mariing direktiba ni Lorenzana sa tropa ng militar.

Tinukoy naman ni AFP- Western Mindanao Command (AFP-Westmincom) Spokesman Col. Gerry Besana na ang grupo ng Ajang-ajang terror group na kaalyado ng mga ekstremistang Abu Sayyaf ang nasa likod ng madugong pambobomba sa nasabing simbahan na

Ni JOY CANTOS

itinaon pa sa araw ng misa.

Anim na persons of interest ang natukoy sa CCTV na posibleng may kinalaman sa pambobomba matapos makita na kahina-hinalang tumatakas sa blast site.

Nabatid pa sa opisyal na Agosto pa lamang ng nakalipas na taon ay may natanggap ng intelligence report na magpapasabog ang teroristang grupo.

Tinukoy naman na kapatid ng isa sa mga lider ng Abu Sayyaf na isang alyas Kamah, kapatid ng lider ng Abu Sayyaf Commander Surakah Ingog ang isa sa naispitan sa CCTV at ang grupo ng Ajang Ajang na kaalyado ng mga ekstremistang Abu Sayyaf Group ang nasa likod ng pagpapasabog.

Ang grupo ay sangkot din sa pagpatay sa mga law enforcers partikular na sa mga sundalo at pulis sa Sulu at maging sa

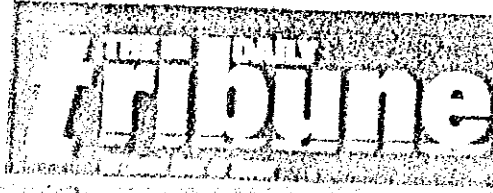
iba pang uri ng paghahasik ng terorismo tulad ng kidnapping for ransom at pambobomba.

Ipinag-utos din ng PNP ang "total lockdown" sa buong Jolo, ang kapitolyo ng lalawigan kung saan sarado muna ang mga tindahan at iba pang mga establisyemento habang isinasagawa pa ang masusing imbestigasyon hanggang sa magbalik sa normal ang sitwasyon ng seguridad sa lugar.

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Support pours for peace bid

By Pat C. Santos

The international community made known its solidarity with the country against terrorism as Chinese Ambassador to the Philippines Zhao Jianhua said China stands firm in supporting the nation's peace initiative.

Several sectors expressed belief that the bombings of a cathedral in Jolo, Sulu that killed 20 individuals was undertaken as a response to the successful holding of the plebiscite that enacted the Bangsamoro Organic

Law (BOL).

The terror group Islamic State (IS) militant group has claimed responsibility for the bombing.

The IS had issued a formal communique saying two suicide bombers detonated explosive belts at the Jolo Cathedral, according to the SITE Intelligence Group and while the military is not discounting the claim, initial reports said that the bombs were planted at the church, not strapped to suicide bombers.

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China stands firm with the Filipino people in supporting the peace initiative the Duterte administration is pursuing.

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According to Western Mindanao Command chief Lt. Gen. Arnel de la Vega, the first explosion on Sunday went off during a Mass, leaving bodies strewn across the cathedral where pews and windows shattered, while a second bomb exploded at the parking area moments later as troops rushed to help the wounded.

The United States, Australia, the European Union, Canada and UN all sent messages strongly condemning the twin explosions.

But while the IS had made the claim, the military said they are pointing to the Abu Sayyaf as the ones responsible for the deadly attack that left Jolo in disarray.

"Based on the CCTV footage recovered by authorities, the Ajang-Ajang group perpetrated the said bombing incident," the Western Mindanao Command said in a statement. The Ajang-Ajang faction is linked to the Abu Sayyaf Group in Sulu.

Cops gets Chinese help

Zhao was at the 118th founding anniversary of the Manila Police District yesterday to hand over electric vehicles that cops can use in patrolling the streets.

"China stands firm with the Filipino people in supporting the peace initiative that the Duterte administration is pursuing. China condemns all acts of violence and will continue to support all peace efforts and participate in the economic growth of Mindanao," Zhao said.

The United States, Australia, the European Union (EU), Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Antonio Guterres all sent messages "strongly condemning" the twin explosions.

In a tweet on his official page, the Canadian leader described the attack as a "despicable act of cowardice" and stressed that Canada strongly condemns the cathedral bombing.

"My deepest condolences to all the families affected by this tragedy," Trudeau said.

Swift justice urged

In a statement, Guterres called for the perpetrators of the crime to be "swiftly brought to justice."

This, as he reiterated UN support for the government to fight terrorism and violent extremism and to carry forward the peace process in the Bangsamoro region.

US Ambassador to the Philippine Sung Kim committed America's support to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

"We condemn this senseless violence and we will do everything possible to support the Armed Forces of the Philippines," he

said.

Tagging the Department of Foreign Affairs and Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr., Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne also sent Canberra's condolences to those affected by the bomb attacks.

"We stand with the government and people of the Philippines in condemning acts of terror and in striving for a lasting peace in Mindanao," Payne said in a tweet.

Meanwhile, the EU, through spokesman for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Maja Kocijancic, described the blasts as a "human tragedy" and an "attack against the basic right to practice one's religion."

"The European Union sends its sincere condolences to the many victims of today's bombing during Mass in the Cathedral of Jolo in the southern Philippines," Kocijancic said.

The EU official also relayed the bloc's support to the Mindanao Peace Process and last week's plebiscite on greater Bangsamoro regional autonomy. "The EU plans to continue such support in the future," the official said.

Religious friction targeted

Former Special Assistant to the President Christopher Lawrence "Bong" Go said what made the attack more condemnable was that it was meant to incite religious friction. "It was undertaken inside a Church when our countrymen were praying," Go said in a radio interview.

Guterres called for the perpetrators of the crime to be swiftly brought to justice.

Go said Mr. Duterte's presence in Jolo is expected to buoy the morale of victims and residents of the Sulu capital.

He said the President would likely provide assistance to the local government, so it could attend to the needs of the victims.

Go bared that he and those from the private sector will also provide assistance and support to the victims and their families.

Go noted that despite speculations the threat may not be over, Mr. Duterte wanted to go to Jolo to ensure the situation would quickly go back to normal.

Look beyond obvious

The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) is urging the government to conduct an intelligent and in-depth probe and not to be misled by the "apparent and obvious."

In an interview, lawyer Emmanuel Fontanilla, spokesman of the MNLF, stressed the need for investigators of the Philippine National Police and AFP to dig deeper into the bomb attack.

"They should not be misled by the apparent and the obvious. They have to be intelligent and look deeper into this," Fontanilla told the *Daily Tribune* yesterday.

"There are a lot of interests for Mindanao, not only Sulu... These are chained interests that are deeply rooted," he stressed.

The bombing came immediately after the government declared as successful the plebiscite for the ratification of the BOL last week.

**With Mario J. Mallari,
Perseus Echeminada**

Bombing more reason to keep ML in Mindanao, says Palace

By GENALYN KABILING

The martial law proclamation in Mindanao remains effective and necessary even after the twin explosions that hit a church in Jolo, Sulu Sunday, Malacañang said yesterday.

Presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo defended the martial rule prevailing in Mindanao, saying the Jolo incident was "more reason" to keep the proclamation in the South.

"They are saying that despite

martial law, there has been bombing and therefore martial law should be lifted. With more reason martial law should in place because if you can do it under a martial law regime, then the more reason you should maintain it and be more strict in the implementation of security measures in that area," Panelo said.

Panelo warned that there would have been "chaos and anarchy" if martial law was not declared in the region.

He also noted that the Jolo blast was an isolated incident, describing

it "too little" to claim the martial law was ineffective.

"The fact alone there is only one incident of bombing for the last one year plus, that means martial law is effective. Can you just imagine how many bombings there would have been if there was no martial law there in operation?" he said.

"If there was no martial law there, there would be chaos and anarchy there. You see how they were able to get Marawi? There was no martial law then," he added.

The bombings occurred ahead

of the oral arguments challenging the validity of the third extension of martial law in Mindanao before the Supreme Court.

The government has condemned the "act of terrorism" and vowed to pursue the "godless criminals" behind the brazen attack.

President Duterte first declared martial law in Mindanao when local terrorists aided by foreign fighters attacked Marawi City in May 2017. Congress granted the President's request to extend martial rule until the end of 2019.

AJANG-AJANG NG SAYYAF, SINISILIP Pambobomba, inako ng ISIS

Inako ng grupong Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) ang magkasunod na pambobomba sa loob at labas ng Mt. Carmel Cathedral sa Jolo, Sulu, nitong Linggo ng umaga.

Sa inilabas na ulat sa Amaq News Agency ng ISIS, sinabi ng grupo ng mga terorista na sila ang responsable sa magkasunod na pagsabog sa loob at labas ng simbahan sa Jolo, na ikinasawi ng 20 katao.

Cayunman, hindi pa kinukumpirma ng Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) at Philippine National Police (PNP) ang nasabing pag-ako ng mga terorista sa pambobomba.

Sa kabila nito, sinabi ng AFP na

posibleng ang Ajang-Ajang Group ng Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) ang may kagagawan sa pagsabog, batay sa nakuhang CCTV footages sa isa sa mga suspek.

Sinabi ni Col. Gerry Besana, tagapagsalita ng Western Mindanao Command (WestMinCom), na magiging basehan at malaking tulong ang nasabing footage sa isinagawang pagsisiyasat ngayon ng mga awtoridad.

Kinumpirma naman kahapon ni Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra na tumutulong na rin ang National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) sa imbestigasyon.

Ilan pang taga-NBI ang tumutulong din sa manhunt operation laban sa mga nasa likod ng pambobomba.

Samantala, kinondena ng Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) ang trahedya, na tinawag ni MILF Chairman Mohagher Iqbal na "criminal act".

Una nang iniuugnay ang pagsabog sa katatapos na plebisito nitong Enero 21 para sa ratipikasyon ng Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), na bahagi ng kasunduang pangkapayapaan ng gobyerno sa MILF.

Bagamat nagwagi ang "Yes" votes at naratipika ang BOL, nanalo ang "No" votes sa Sulu, na nangangahulugang tutol ang lalawigan na mapasailalim sa bagong regional autonomy na ipapalit sa Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

Fer Taboy at Beth Camla

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Jolo Cathedral blast **6 'bombers' naispatan sa CCTV?**

Anim na persons of interest ang natukoy ng mga awtoridad na sangkot sa dalawang insidente ng pagpapasabog sa Mount Carmel Church sa Jolo, Sulu kamakalawa na kumitil ng buhay ng 20 katao habang 112 pa ang nasugatan.

Sinabi ni National Security Adviser ret. Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr., na anim na persons of interest ang natukoy sa CCTV na

posibleng may kinalaman sa pambobomba.

Inihayag niya na nasa anim ang persons of interest na nakita habang kahinahinalang tumatakas sa blast site.

Nabatid pa sa opisyal na Agosto pa lamang ng nakalipas na taon ay may natanggap nang intelligence report na magpapasabog ang teroristang grupo.

Kaugnay nito, tinukoy naman na kapatid ng isa sa mga lider na

NI JOY CANTOS

Abu Sayyaf na isang alyas Kamah, kapatid ng lider ng Abu Sayyaf

Commander Surakah Ingog, ang isa sa naispatan sa CCTV.

Nabatid na si alyas Kamah ay isang bomb

expert ng mga bandido na nakabase sa lalawigan ng Sulu. (May dagdag na ulat si Rhoderick Beñez)

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NBI, CHR pasok sa 'bombing'

Papasukin na rin ng National Bureau of Investigation at ng Commission on Human Rights ang imbestigasyon sa pambobomba sa Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Cathedral sa Barangay Walid, Jolo, Sulu kamakalawa na ikinasawi ng may 20 tao.

Inatasan na ng Department of Justice ang NBI na taliman ang imbestigasyon sa naturang insidente.

Ayon kay Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra, nagpadala na ang NBI-Zamboanga City ng field operatives sa lugar na pinangyarihan ng krimen para magsagawa ng malalimang imbestigasyon.

May karagdagan na rin aniya silang tauhan

na idineploy para tugisin ang mga nasa likod ng krimen.

Sinabi naman ni CHR Spokesperson Jacqueline de Guia na bumuo na sila ng joint team mula sa CHR Central Office at CHR-Region IX para mag imbestiga sa naturang insidente.

Pinasisiguro din ng CHR sa gobyerno na mapapanagot ang may gawa ng pagpapasabog na tinawag ni de Guia na barbaric act kasabay ng pagkondena sa nasabing insidente.

Samantala, sa Malakanyang, sinabi ni Presidential Spokesman Salvador Panelo na galit na galit si Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte sa naganap na twin blasts sa Jolo Cathedral. Ayon kay

Panelo, nagkaroon ng kakulangan sa seguridad sa Jolo.

Nalusutan ang pulisya at military ng mga terorista habang umiiral ang Martial Law sa Mindanao na pinalawig pa hanggang Disyembre 31, 2019 ng Kongreso.

Siniguro rin kahapon ng Malacañang sa pamilya ng mga biktima ng mga pambobomba na tutulungan sila ng pamahalaan, ayon kay Presidential Communications Secretary Martin Andanar.

Kaugnay pa nito, pinuntahan kahapon ni Pangulong Duterte ang pinangyarihan ng pagsabog at ang mga sugatang biktima. (*Doris Franche, Gemma Garcia at Rudy Andal*)

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Jolo Cathedral twin blast inako ng ISIS

Inako kahapon ng Islamic State of Iraq (ISIS) ang dalawang insidente ng pambobomba sa Jolo Cathedral kamakalawa na kumitil ng buhay ng 20 katao habang 112 pa ang nasugatan.

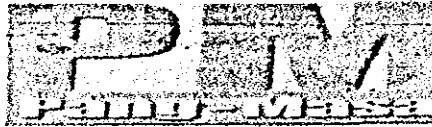
Base sa ipinoste sa website ng Site Intelligence Group na nagmomonitor sa aktibidad ng mga terror groups sa buong mundo, inamlin ng Islamic State East Asia Province na dalawa sa kanilang miyembro ang nasa likod ng suicide bombing, isa sa loob ng Mt. Carmel Church at isa pa sa parking area.

Sa panig naman ni AFP Spokesman Brig. Gen. Edgard Arevalo, sinabi nito na bahagi lamang ng propaganda ng ISIS ang pag-ako sa madugong insidente.

Ipinahiwatig pa ni Arevalo na dati nang ginagawa ng ISIS ang ganitong propaganda na nagkukunwaring ang mga ito ang may kagagawan ng ilang insidente tulad ng sa nangyari noon sa Resort World. (Joy Cantos)

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ACT-CIS partylist magbibigay ng P.5-M sa Ikakaaresto ng Jolo bombers

Sa layuning maresolba sa madaling panahon ang may kagagawan nang pambobomba sa Our Lady of Mt. Carmel sa Jolo, Sulu noong Linggo ng umaga na ikinasawi ng 20 katao at pagkasugat ng 112 iba pa ay nag-alok ng P500,000 pabuya ang Anti-Crime and Terrorism through Community Involvement and Support (ACT-CIS) partylist sa sino mang makapagtuturo at ikadarakip ng mga bombers.

Sa isang pulong balitaan sa QC ay sinabi ni ACT-CIS party-list first nominee Eric Yap, na kaisa sila ng buong sambayanan sa pagdadalamhati sa malagim na terorismo matapos ang dalawang magkasunod na pagpapasabog ng bomba sa loob at labas ng nasabing simbahan.

Ayon kay Yap, na kinokondena ng ACT-CIS ang madugong insidente, na isang malinaw na terorismo at kaisa sila ng pamahalaan na dapat agad mapanagot at maparusahan ang mga tao na nasa likod ng karumaldumal na gawain.

Idinagdag pa ni Yap, na prayoridad ng ACT-CIS ang pagsusulong ng mga batas na magbibigay ng pangil laban sa kriminalidad at terorismo at matapos ang madugong pambobomba sa Jolo ay mas lalo lamang tumibay ang adhikain na ipagpatuloy ang matagal na nasimulan na mga programa laban sa krimen at terorismo. - *Mer Layson*

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Pope seeks prayers for victims

By EVELYN MACAIRAN

Pope Francis yesterday called for prayers for those who perished in the twin bombings in Jolo, Sulu.

In his official Twitter account, the pope asked the Catholic faithful to offer prayers for the victims of the blast that killed 20 people and wounded about 100 others during Sunday mass.

"Let us pray for the victims of the terrorist attack on the Cathedral of Jolo, in the Philippines. May the Lord, Prince of Peace, convert the hearts of the violent and

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Pope

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grant the inhabitants of that region a peaceful coexistence," Francis said.

Meanwhile, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, at the end of its 118th plenary assembly issued a statement calling the bombing "a further evidence to the cycle of hate that is destroying the moral fabric of our country."

"We hope that the bombing of the cathedral would not sidetrack us, the majority communities of both Muslims and Christians, from the task of a lasting peace through the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL)," Cagayan de Oro Archbishop Antonio Ledesma said.

Manila Archbishop Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle in a statement said they are one with the victims of the twin blasts at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Jolo, Sulu at around 8 a.m. last Sunday.

"You are in our prayers. Be assured that you will be given divine justice. We are one with the families of the dead and the wounded and the community of Jolo. You have a family in us. We are ready to assist you in your needs," Tagle added.

Bombing condemned

Authorities must speed up their investigation to identify and track down those responsible for the twin bombings, Vice President Leni Robredo said yesterday at the Laguindingan airport in Cagayan de Oro city.

"What happened in Jolo is sad. We hope it won't happen again. It is imperative that the perpetrators be identified and the victims be given justice. Otherwise, it will only embolden others to do the same attack," she said in Filipino.

But Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) Gov. Mujiv Hataman, in a separate interview also at the

Laguindingan Airport before he departed for Manila Sunday afternoon, maintained that the attack was not related to the ratification of the BOL.

Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Carlito Galvez Jr. yesterday also condemned the bombing.

Galvez said the government has come a long way in its journey to achieve enduring peace in Mindanao.

"Now is not the time to cower and be intimidated by such a selfish and cowardly deed. Instead, let us show that we can work together and push through with our collective aspiration for a peaceful, united and progressive Mindanao," Galvez said.

Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and several members of the House of Representatives also denounced the blasts.

"That's really very tragic. Please do not lose heart. I'm sure the government will do everything to make things right," Arroyo told reporters in a chance interview at the Laguindingan Airport in Cagayan de Oro City yesterday.

Other House members followed suit.

"This is an un-Islamic and inhuman act. The one who is responsible for this terrorist attack should be put to firing squad," Deputy Speaker Munir Arbison of Sulu's second district said.

"These terrorists must not go unpunished. Let's give justice to the victims," said Ilocos Norte party-list Rep. Mikee Romero. "It's sad that they have to do this at a time where we are working for peace in the region that has for the longest time been suffering from armed conflict." — With Helen Flores, Gerry Lee Gorit, Delon Porcilla, Jose Rodol Clapano, Rainier Allan Ronda, John Unson, Rhodina Villanueva, Cecille Suerte Felipe

MORO AUTONOMY

BLASTS RAISE WORRIES
ABOUT PEACE PROCESS

The bomb explosions at a Catholic cathedral that killed 25 people in Jolo, Sulu province, on Sunday put fresh pressure on Monday on peace efforts aimed at ending decades of Muslim separatist violence.

Two explosions tore through the Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in the Sulu provincial capital, shattering pews and windows and killing worshippers at Sunday Mass and responding security forces in one of the Philippines' worst bombings in years.

Impact on peace process

Experts voiced concern on Monday over the impact the attack would have on a decades-long push for peace that culminated last week in voters approving expanded Muslim self-rule in Mindanao.

The vote was the result of negotiations started in the 1990s with the nation's largest rebel group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), and will give it considerable power over the Bangsamoro region.

Sulu, home to a faction of the smaller Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) led by Nur Misuari, voted against the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), charter of the proposed Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

The MNLF signed a peace agreement with the government in 1996 and opposed the

BOL, the ratification of which was the last step to completion of a peace accord signed with the government by the MILF.

Sulu is also home to the Abu Sayyaf bandit group blacklisted by the US and Philippine governments as a terrorist organization because of years of bomb attacks, kidnappings and beheadings of foreigners.

The group has pledged allegiance to the Islamic State jihadi group in Iraq and Syria, but the Philippine military sees the move as propaganda to attract support rather than actual alignment of forces.

The Abu Sayyaf and small cells militants in the region that are not part of the Mindanao peace process are prime suspects in Sunday's bombings.

Big challenge

"This is a big challenge for the Bangsamoro government," said Rommel Banlaoi, chair of the Philippine Institute for Peace, Violence and Terrorism Research.

The former rebels need to show they will be able to pull the region toward peace in order to attract much-needed investment to ease poverty and counterextremism, Banlaoi told Agence France-Presse (AFP).

"[The] MILF needs to prove it can make a difference ... the gravity of the problem faced by [the] MILF is wow, so overwhelming," he added. —AFP

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Cycle of hate destroying moral fabric of country — CBCP

By LESLINE ANN G. AQUINO

The cycle of hate is destroying the moral fabric of the country, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines said in a pastoral statement yesterday.

Entitled "Conquering Evil with Good," the CBCP led by its president Davao Archbishop Romulo Valles, cited the recent bombing of the Jolo cathedral in Sulu as an example.

"The recent bombing of the cathedral of Jolo where scores of people were killed and several more were injured is further evidence to the cycle of hate that is destroying the moral fabric of our country," read the statement.

Without naming anyone, the bishops said have also been at the receiving end of cruel words which pierced into the soul of the Catholic Church like sharp daggers.

Saying that they respect freedom of conscience and religion, the CBCP stressed that freedom of expression is not a license to insult other people's faith, especially their core beliefs.

"We know that this cuts deeply into the souls of our people, especially the poor, because faith is the only thing they have to hold on to. It gives them hope and strength to continue living and working despite all the odds that come their way," the statement read.

Catholic prelates, however, admitted that they are also to blame when people do not understand essential doctrines as Roman Catholic Christians.

"It could also mean we failed in our preaching. Perhaps we have not been effective enough in our catechesis about the faith?" the statement read.

The bishops believe the celebration of the 500th year of Christianity in the Philippines in 2021 could serve as a perfect opportunity to embark on a renewed integral evangelization in world and witness.

In the said statement, the CBCP also revealed that there are people who warned them about being critical of the government's fight against illegal drugs.

"Like most Filipinos we had high hopes that the government would truly flex some political will to be able to use the full force of the law in working against this terrible menace," the CBCP said.

"It was when we started hearing of mostly poor people being brutally murdered on mere suspicion of being small-time drug users and peddlers while big-time smugglers and drug lords went scot free, that we started wondering about this 'drug war'," they said.

"As bishops, we have no intention of interfering in the conduct of State affairs. But neither do we intend to abdicate our sacred mandate as shepherds to whom the Lord has entrusted his flock. We have a solemn duty to defend our flock, especially when they are attacked by wolves," said the CBCP.

The statement was released at the end of the CBCP's 118th Plenary Assembly in Manila.

CBCP laments 'cycle of hate'

BY GERARD NAVAL

THE Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) yesterday said it is disturbed by the "cycle of hate" prevailing in the country.

In a Pastoral Statement after the CBCP Plenary Assembly, the bishops said the bombing of a cathedral in Jolo while mass is ongoing proves the "cycle of hate" that is destroying the moral fabric of our country.

The bishops also said President Duterte's "cruel words" against the clergy and the Church's teachings "pierce into the soul of the Catholic Church like sharp daggers." The three-page statement was signed by CBCP president Archbishop Romulo Valles.

Manila Archbishop Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle condemned the bombing in Jolo, saying he cannot understand how people can commit such "senseless" and

"inhumane" acts.

On Sunday, 20 people, including five soldiers, died while 111 others were wounded after two improvised bombs exploded at the Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Cathedral in Jolo town in Sulu.

"That it happened during the Eucharistic celebration on a Sunday, the commemoration of Jesus' triumph over death, makes it abominable because it violates the sense of God present in every human heart. Shock, anger, and sadness envelope our hearts. What has happened to humanity? Is there no more room for decency and conscience?" asked Tagle.

Jolo Apostolic Administrator Fr. Romeo Saniel said they continue to be in disbelief over what transpired at the Jolo cathedral. Considered as the highest decision-making body of the CBCP, the

See CBCP ► Page B3

CBCP

Plenary Assembly is composed of all active and retired archbishops and bishops. It meets in January and in July.

INSULTING FAITH

The CBCP stressed that while they respect the freedom of expression, it does not give the license to insult the belief of others.

"We respect the freedom of expression of our fellow citizens in this country, including their personal opinions about faith and religion. But as far as we know, the freedom of expression does not include a license to insult other people's faith, especially our core beliefs," he said.

The prelates reiterated that they never claimed to be perfect and thus be insulated from criticisms.

"Like the leaders and members of any other human institution, no doubt, we, your bishops and priests have our own share of failures and shortcomings as well," said the CBCP.

They said they have long made

the admission and have vowed to hold those found to be in violation accountable.

The CBCP reiterated that it is not against the Duterte administration's war on illegal drugs, but is critical about is the direction it is headed.

"We do respect the fact that it is the government's duty to maintain law and order and to protect its citizens from lawless elements. We have long acknowledged that illegal drugs are a menace to society and that their easier victims are the poor," it said.

"It was when we started hearing of mostly poor people being brutally murdered on mere suspicion of being small-time drug users and peddlers while the big-time smugglers and drug lords went scot-free, that we started wondering about the direction this 'drug war' was taking," added the CBCP.

They assured the Duterte administration that they are not out to interfere in State affairs, "but neither do we intend to abdicate our sacred mandate as shepherds to whom the Lord has entrusted his flock." "We have a solemn duty to defend our flock, especially when they are

attacked by wolves," said the CBCP.

While it will not be pushing for specific bets, the CBCP urged the faithful to campaign for "good candidates" in the May 13 mid-term elections.

"Participation in politics for Christian lay people is not just to be limited to non-partisan involvement. Christians are also encouraged to engage in principled partisan politics," said the CBCP statement.

"This means that they can campaign for good candidates as an exercise of their Christian faith," it added.

This, the bishops said, means pushing for the election of public officials, who are principled, courageous, and who have the common good as their main concern and not their own political interests.

"Let us not just be on-lookers, but let us be involved," said the CBCP.

In order to be able to determine who the good candidates are, the prelates said it is best to join in discernment circles among the laity.

This, the CBCP stressed, would be better than relying on campaign promises of candidates.

Pope, OIC leader condemn blasts at Jolo Cathedral

PANAMA CITY: Pope Francis on Sunday (Monday in Manila) expressed his "strongest reprobation" for the twin blasts at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral in Jolo, which killed 20 and wounded more than

100 people.

Once again, he said, "the Christian community has been plunged into mourning."

Francis also prayed for the dead and

► **CondemnA2**

Pope, OIC leader

wounded during his Sunday blessing, delivered from Panama where he was wrapping up the World Youth Day festival.

The head of the world's largest body of Muslim-majority countries also strongly condemned the bombing.

The general secretary of the 57-nation Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Yousef Al-Othaimen, expressed his "deep indignation" at Sunday's terrorist attack.

He said the OIC firmly rejects all forms of violence, extremism and terrorism, whatever their sources or motives.

Condolences poured in from around the world for the victims of the explosions, which has put fresh pressure on peace efforts aimed at ending decades of separatist violence.

Experts voiced concern on Monday over the impact the attack would have on a decades-long push for peace that culminated last week in voters approving expanded Muslim self-rule in the south.

The vote was the result of negotiations started in the 1990s with the nation's largest rebel group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), and will give it considerable power over the so-called Bangsamoro region.

"This is a big challenge for the Bangsamoro government," said Rommel Banlaoi, chairman of the Philippine Institute for Peace, Violence and Terrorism Research.

Evangelicals joined religious groups in condemning the attacks.

In a statement on Monday, the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), led by Filipino Bishop Efraim Tendero, said the incident went against the peaceful teachings of Islam and Christianity.

"The WEA strongly condemns this evil act that runs against the peaceful teachings of both Islam and Christianity who both respect each other's places of worship and prayer," the alliance said.

On Sunday, Davao Archbishop Romulo Valles, Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines president, said, "We condole with the families of the several soldiers and civilians who were killed by the explosions."

Manila Archbishop Luis Antonio

Cardinal Tagle said the incident was "senseless because it is inhuman."

He assured the victims that there would be "divine justice."

The Apostolic administrator of Jolo in Sulu asked for prayers for the victims of the twin blasts.

"Please pray for the victims of Our Lady Mount Carmel Cathedral bombing in Jolo. [Former bishop] Lito Lampon and I were attending the 118th CBCP Plenary in Manila when we heard the tragic news," Fr. Romeo Sanial said in a Facebook post.

PH grateful

The Philippine government expressed gratitude for the outpouring of sympathy and solidarity from the international community for the victims of the bombing of the Jolo cathedral.

"We grieve over the unnecessary loss of so many lives in this act of violence that can only be perpetrated by the forces of evil," said Foreign Affairs Assistant Secretary Elmer Cato.

United States Ambassador to Manila Sung Kim, in a tweet, said, "My deepest sympathies for the tragic loss of life in Jolo."

The European Union (EU), in a statement, on Sunday said the Jolo bombing was a "human tragedy and an attack against the basic right to practice one's religion."

Maja Kocijancic, EU spokesman, said: "The EU supports the Mindanao peace process and last week's plebiscite on greater Bangsamoro regional autonomy. The EU plans to continue such support in the future."

"Filipinos have always been resilient, steadfast, and collaborative," said EU Ambassador to Manila Franz Jessen.

"And I am certain that these values will see them through in this sad situation. I express my solidarity with the Filipino people during these trying times," Jessen said.

The United Nations System in the Philippines likewise expressed its "deepest condolences with the victims of this attack, civilian and security personnel alike and offer our sympathy to all affected communities in Sulu."

AFP, AP, ARIC JOHN SY CUA AND BERNADETTE TAMAYO

Pope Francis, US, EU condemn Sulu bombings

POPE Francis, the United States, the European Union, Australia, and Canada yesterday condemned the bombings at a cathedral in Sulu, which killed 20 persons and injured 112 others.

The Pope, speaking in Panama City at a hospice for AIDS sufferers on the last day of his trip there, called the bombings at the Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Cathedral in Jolo town a "terrorist attack."

He expressed "firm condemnation of this act of violence that causes more mourning in the Christian community."

"I pray for the dead and the injured. May the Lord, prince of peace, convert the hearts of the violent ones," he said.

The Pope visited the Philippines, the most Catholic country in Asia, in 2015.

The Department of Foreign Affairs assured the international community that the perpetrators will be brought to justice.

"We grieve over the unnecessary loss of so many lives in this act of violence than can only be perpetrated by the forces of evil. We will find them and bring them to justice. Those responsible for this crime will not go unpunished," the DFA said in a statement.

The United States Embassy in the Philippines said it also sends its condolences to the families of the victims and "hope the injured make a quick recovery."

The EU said, "A human tragedy, this is also an attack against the basic right to practice one's religion."

It also said it will continue its work with the Philippine government in its effort to secure peace in the region.

Canada said the attack should not undermine efforts to secure peace in Mindanao.

"We convey our deepest sympathies to the victims and their families and wish a prompt recovery to the injured. These reprehensible acts will not undermine the desire of the Filipino people in Mindanao and throughout the country for peace and security," it said.

Australia said, "Our thoughts are with those who lost loved ones and those affected by the attack on the cathedral in Jolo, Sulu. We reaffirm Australia's strong condemnation of all acts of terror."

Japanese Ambassador Koji Haneda offered his condolences and condemned the bombings.

"I am greatly shocked and cannot help feeling strong indignation... Such terrorist attacks shall never be tolerated," he said.

On Sunday night, the United Kingdom again advised its residents against traveling to certain areas in Mindanao. — *Ashzel Hachero and Reuters*

Pope Francis, world leaders condemn attacks

By Rey E. Requejo

POPE Francis condemned Sunday's bombing of a Catholic church that killed 20 people in Jolo, Sulu.

"I reiterate my strongest reprobation for this episode of violence who is once again plunging the Christian community into mourning," Pope Francis said during an Angelus message as he wound up World Youth Day celebrations in Panama.

The United States, European Union, Australia and Canada on Monday also condemned Sunday's bombing but vowed to continue to support the peace process in Mindanao.

The Department of Foreign Affairs assured the international community that the perpetrators of the cathedral bombing would be brought to justice. *Next page*

Pope Francis...

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"We grieve over the unnecessary loss of so many lives in this act of violence than can only be perpetrated by the forces of evil. We will find them and bring them to justice. Those responsible for this crime will not go unpunished," the DFA said in a statement.

Despite the attack, the DFA said the government will continue its efforts to bring peace to Mindanao.

"This terrorist act comes at a sensitive and yet hopeful period following the ratification by an overwhelming majority of the Bangsamoro Organic Law that seeks to bring peace and progress to Mindanao," it said.

"The Philippine government remains steadfast, along with international partners and other stakeholders, in achieving lasting peace in the Bangsamoro, particularly in the Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi," it added.

In a statement, the US Embassy said:

"The US Embassy in the Philippines condemns the bombings in Jolo. We offer our sincere condolences to the families of the victims and hope the injured make a quick recovery."

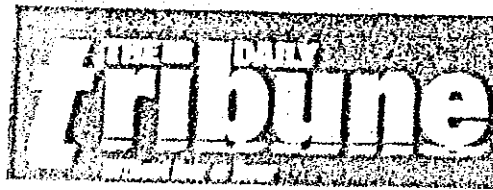
The EU described the bombing as "a human tragedy" and "an attack against the basic right to practice one's religion."

"The EU fully supports the Mindanao peace process and last week's plebiscite on greater Bangsamoro regional autonomy. The EU plans to continue such support in the future," it said.

Canada said that the attack should not undermine the efforts to secure peace in Mindanao.

"We convey our deepest sympathies to the victims and their families and wish a prompt recovery to the injured. These reprehensible acts will not undermine the desire of the Filipino people in Mindanao and throughout the country for peace and security," it said in a statement issued by its embassy in Manila. **With Maricel V. Cruz and Nash B. Maulana**

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Pope, OIC hit heinous act

By Raymart T. Lolo

Pope Francis led religious leaders yesterday in assailing the violence that claimed 20 lives, branding it the "most heinous desecration" of a place of worship. Speaking during his visit to Panama for

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Pope, OIC hit heinous act

From page 1

a World Youth Day rally, the Pope expressed sorrow for victims of "the latest episode of violence that once again strikes this Christian community."

"I raise my prayers for the dead and wounded. May the Lord, Prince of peace, convert the hearts of the violent and give the inhabitants of that region peaceful coexistence," Pope Francis said.

The bombing was the most heinous desecration of a sacred place, on a sacred day and at a sacred moment of worship.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) during its plenary assembly yesterday said the act of terrorism took place only a few days after the plebiscite on the Bangsamoro Organic Law.

"As we begin a new phase in the peace process with the creation of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, we ask our Christian brethren to join hands with all peace-loving Muslim and Indigenous People communities in the advocacy against violent extremism," it said.

May the Lord, Prince of peace, convert the hearts of the violent and give the inhabitants of that region peaceful coexistence.

"May all religions of peace guide us in our quest for a brighter future for the peoples of Mindanao," it added.

OIC indignant

The head of the world's largest body of Muslim-majority countries also strongly condemned the bombing.

The general secretary of the 57-nation Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Yousef Al-Othaimen, has also expressed his "deep indignation" at Sunday's terrorist attack.

He says the OIC firmly rejects all forms of violence, extremism and terrorism, whatever their sources or motives.

We strongly appeal to our security and military forces to flush out the perpetrators of this barbaric crime.

Separately, the OIC also welcomed the results of a recent referendum in the southern Philippines, which provides expanded autonomy for the region's minority Muslims in the hopes of ending nearly five decades of a separatist rebellion that has left 150,000 people dead.

Satanic act

Retired Cotabato Archbishop Cardinal Orlando Quevedo and former Jolo Bishop Angelito Lampon described the incident as "a satanic act." They said the bombing was "the most heinous desecration of a sacred place on a sacred day and at a sacred moment of worship."

"It is truly a satanic act that all sacred religions must condemn," Quevedo and Lampon said in a joint statement.

Quevedo once served as parish priest of the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral, which was targeted in the attack while Lampon was the bishop of the Jolo vicariate up to 16 December last year. Pope Francis assigned him to head the Archdiocese of Cotabato.

Flush out culprits

"We strongly appeal to our security and military forces to flush out the perpetrators of this barbaric crime and bring them to justice," they said.

CBCP President Davao Archbishop Romulo Valles said, "I beg and urge all of you to offer a special and sincere prayer for the people and for the situation in Jolo."

Fr. Romeo Saniel, Apostolic Administrator of Jolo, said that most of those who died were his personal friends.

"They bravely stayed in Jolo in spite of the threats and insecurities. I believe they have died for their Christian faith," said Saniel.

"No words can describe the sorrow and pain that we feel these days. May they be given justice in God's time," he said.

Saniel was attending the bishops' plenary assembly in Manila when the "tragic" incident happened. He promptly returned to Jolo yesterday.

The assembly, which started on Saturday, was set to end today.

"I know that the friends of the victims, both Muslims and Christians, are mourning and in deep sorrow today," he added.

Saniel also called for prayers for the families of the soldiers who died while securing the cathedral.

May they be given justice in God's time.

In light of the "heinous desecration" of the cathedral, the members of the World Apostolate of Fatima of the Philippines (WAFP) were urged to pray a novena of rosaries from 28 January to 5 February.

Bishop Guillermo Afable of Digos, WAFP national spiritual director, said the prayer is in reparation "for the sin against God and His people."

Checkpoints doubled in MM after Sulu blasts

By NON ALQUITRAN

The National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) would double its checkpoint operations in Metro Manila to prevent incidents similar to Sunday's bombing at a cathedral in Sulu that left scores of people dead and wounded, an official said yesterday.

"We will increase the number and frequency of our checkpoints including our Operation Plan Sita (Oplan Sita) to prevent the sneaking in of bombs and explosives," NCRPO chief Director Guillermo Eleazar said.

"We would deploy our po-

licemen and women in strategic areas of Metro Manila to increase police presence and visibility, in order to discourage, prevent and deter any evil plots from unfolding," he added.

Police and military officials said at least 20 people were killed while 100 were wounded in the twin explosions at the Mt. Carmel Cathedral in Jolo, Sulu.

Calling the incident a threat to national security, Eleazar said he placed the NCRPO on full alert to utilize "all our resources to the maximum, to help ensure that no such incidents happen in Metro Manila."

He urged the public to continue with their daily routines but to "remain alert

and vigilant. Report any suspicious person or behavior, or any new unfamiliar face in the neighborhood to the nearest policeman you can reach or communicate with personally or through the NCRPO's hotlines."

Eleazar asked for patience and understanding from the public since the doubling of checkpoint operations may cause traffic slowdowns.

"Together, let us make Metro Manila a secure and safe place for our children, relatives and friends," he said.

NAIA on alert

Meanwhile, the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) terminals were placed on heightened alert following the Jolo cathedral bombing.

Government security agencies, particularly the Office for Transportation Security (OTS), doubled security checks on luggage brought by departing passengers to ensure that no firearms or explosives are smuggled into the airport terminals.

"We are still on Security Condition 1 though on heightened alert," Ed Monreal, head of the Manila International Airport Authority, said.

Security Condition 1 means the NAIA terminals would have minimum appropriate protective security measures maintained at all times.

The OTS sets the security level for ports within the Philippine territory and for all ships carrying the Philippine flag. /O- With Rudy Santos

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Cops on heightened alert status

Police in Luzon and the Visayas were placed under heightened alert status to prevent a spillover of bomb attacks following the deadly cathedral bombings in Sulu Sunday.

Senior Supt. Bernard Banac, spokesperson of the Philippine National Police, said the alert status order mandates all police commanders to implement the necessary preventive measures that would deny any group to carry out similar attacks in their turfs.

"The alert condition aims to ensure that no similar plans of terrorist groups will be carried out in other regions," said Banac.

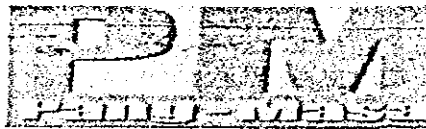
Under the heightened alert status, all police commanders are directed to ensure the readiness of at least 50 percent of their manpower and other resources for any eventuality and preventive security measures.

The police commanders are also tasked to review and update their respective intelligence data and gathering.

"The heightened alert condition also called for intensified checkpoint operations and strict implementation of gun ban," said Banac. (Aaron Recuenco) 2

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PNP NASA NATIONWIDE HEIGHTENED ALERT

Matapos ang malagim na pagpapasabog sa Our Lady of Mt. Carmel sa Jolo, Sulu noong Linggo ng umaga na ikinasawi ng 20 katao at pagkasugat ng 112 iba pa ay isinailalim na kahapon sa nationwide heightened alert ni PNP Chief P/Director General Oscar Albayalde ang 180,000 malakas na puwersa ng kapulisan sa buong bansa.

Sinabi ni PNP Spokesman P/Sr. Supt. Bernard Banac, epektibo alas-12:00 ng hatinggabi noong Linggo ay isinailalim sa nationwide heightened alert ang puwersa ng pulisya.

Kabilang sa 20 nasawi ay 5 sundalo, isang

miyembro ng Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) at 14 sibilyan habang kabilang naman sa mga nasugatan ay 2 pulis, 18 AFP personnel, 2 Coast Guard at 90 sibilyan na kasalukuyang nilalapatan ng lunas sa pagamutan.

Ang nationwide alert status ay naglalayong hindi na muling maulit pa o hindi magkaroon ng spillover ang pambobomba ng mga terorista sa iba pang lugar.

Masusing tinitingnan ng mga otoridad ang lahat ng anggulo upang matukoy ang motibo ng pagpapasabog sa Jolo Cathedral habang nanawagan na rin sa mga sibilyan na manatiling kalmado at maging

vigilante upang maiwasan ang maging biktima ng pag-atake ng teroristang grupo.

Nabatid na ang Jolo Cathedral ay 8 beses nang dumanas ng pambobomba nitong mga nakalipas na taon na hinahagisan lang ng granada ang labas at ang nangyari kamakalawa ang pinakamadugo.

Naganap ang pagpapasabog sa nasabing simbahan ilang araw matapos na matalo sa plebisito ang Yes vote para sa Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) na isa rin sa sinisilip sa imbestigasyon. Joy Cantos.

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PNP inalerto sa buong bansa

Isinailalim na kaha-
pon sa nationwide
heightened alert ni Phil-
ippine National Police
Chief P/Director Gen-
eral Oscar Albayalde
ang 180,000 malakas na
puwersa ng kapulisan sa
buong bansa matapos
ang malagim na pagpa-
pasabog sa Our Lady of
Mt. Carmel sa Jolo, Sulu
na kumitil ng buhay ng 20
katao habang 112 pa ang
nasugatan kamakalawa
ng umaga.

Sa press briefing sa
Camp Crame, sinabi ni
PNP Spokesman P/Sr.
Supt. Bernard Banac na
epektibo alas-12:00 ng
hatinggabi nitong Enero
27, 2019 ay isinailalim sa
nationwide heightened

alert ang puwersa ng
pulisya.

Kabilang sa 20 na-
sawi ay limang sundalo,
isang miyembro ng Phil-
ippine Coast Guard at 14
sibilyan habang kabilang
naman sa mga nasuga-
tan ay dalawang pulis,
18 AFP personnels, 2
Coast Guard at 90 mga
sibilyan.

Ang mga nasugatan
ay kasalukuyan nang
nilalapatan ng lunas sa
pagamutan.

Naganap ang pagpa-
pasabog sa Jolo Cathe-
dral ilang araw naman
matapos na matalo sa
plebisito ang Yes vote
para sa Bangsamoro
Organic Law (BOL) kung
saan "solid no vote" ito

sa buong lalawigan ng
Sulu.

Ayon kay Banac ang
nationwide alert status
ay naglalayong hindi na
muling maulit pa o hindi
magkaroon ng spillover
ang pambobomba ng
mga terorista sa Jolo Ca-
thedral sa iba pang lugar.

Inihayag pa ng opis-
yal na lahat ng anggulo
ay masusing tinitingnan
upang matukoy ang mo-
tibo ng pagpapasabog
sa Jolo Cathedral ha-
bang nanawagan rin
ito sa mga sibilyan na
manatiling kalmado at
maging vigilante upang
malwasan ang maging
biktima ng pagatake ng
teroristang grupo. (Joy
Cantos)

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Mortal enemies then, partners now for peace and unity under BARMM

By BONITA L. ERMAC

MUNAI, Lanao del Norte – It was farthest from Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) commander Hadji As-sadullah Macapaar's mind that Maigo Mayor Rafael Rizalda would be coming to visit Camp Bilal last January 22.

For Macapaar, also known as Commander Bravo, he expected that there would be so much rancor and ill-feeling in Rizalda because they had been mortal enemies in the past, particularly in 2000 when he led a team of rebels in attacking the coastal town of Maigo in Lanao del Norte.

And neither could the same feeling escape Rizalda.

"Hindi ko akalain, I didn't expect na dito mismo sa Camp Bilal sa kampo ni Kumander Bravo ako makapunta", Rizalda said as all his anxiety was broken when Macapaar welcomed him with a tight embrace in his visit

to the camp.

Rizalda came to the camp with a group of Christian leaders from Lanao del Norte's coastal towns who campaigned for inclusion in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

He was with officials of Tagaloan, Munai, Balo-I, Tangkal, Pantar and Nunungan, although his own town will not be among the places which will be seeking inclusion in BARMM.

But in the spirit of peace and unity under the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), Rizalda was the only non-Muslim mayor among the Lanao del Norte officials to endorse the inclusion to BARMM.

"Nang dahil sa 'cause' natin na peace and unity, for the lasting peace in Lanao del Norte and the whole island of Mindanao", the Maigo mayor said.

"Ito, nagtipon-tipon tayo, Muslim at Christian, isang puso, isang dibdib

tayo. Now is the time that Muslim and Christian magkasundo na through the BOL," he added.

As such, Rizalda said he was optimistic that the six municipalities here will be included in the BARMM through overwhelming "yes" votes on plebiscite day come February 6.

Macapaar felt good about the visit of Rizalda, who he now calls by his nickname Paeng.

"Mas maganda iyong naramdaman ko sa pagdating ni Mayor Paeng, pakiramdam niya ay para sa kapayapaan at katahimikan dito sa Lanao del Norte," the MILF commander said.

He also shared the same feeling with Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Carlito Galvez who also visited Camp Bilal with Lanao del Norte Rep. Abdullah Dimaporo last January 13.

Thus, he noted opposite feelings to Congressman Dimaporo's visit last January 13 together with OPAPP secretary Carlito Galvez, Jr.

Macapaar also singled out President Rodrigo Roa Duterte, who he continues to refer to as Mayor Duterte.

"Sa tumutulong, tulad ni MRRD (Mayor Rodrigo Roa Duterte), ina-assure niya na nasa likod niyo siya," Macapaar said. 9

BOL plebiscite part 2 to forge ahead—Comelec

THE second round of the plebiscite to ratify the Bangsamoro Organic Law will push through on Feb. 6 as scheduled despite the bombing of a Catholic church in Jolo on Sunday, the Commission on Elections (Comelec) said Monday.

"That has not been discussed. It is not being discussed. It is not being considered," Comelec spokesman James Jimenez said when asked if the vote would be deferred.

"We will prepare as normal. If anything, the police will probably be on greater watchfulness," he said.

The Feb. 6 plebiscite will cover the six municipalities of Lanao del Norte: Baloi, Munai, Nunungan, Pantar, Taga-loan and Tangkall, and 39 barangays of North Cotabato in the municipalities of Aleosan, Carmen, Cabacan, Midsayap, Pigkawayan, and Piklit.

The first round of the plebiscite was held Jan. 21, covering the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, Cotabato City and Isabela City in Basilan.

The "yes" vote prevailed overwhelmingly.

Next page

BOL...

From A1

Sulu province, which voted "no," will still be included in the new Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao because it is part of the ARMM. On the other hand, Isabela City, which also voted "no," will remain in Region IX.

Following the deadly blast in Jolo, Sulu that left 20 people dead and scores wounded Sunday, the Armed Forces of the Philippines said it would take "extra precautionary round of the BOL plebiscite."

"We will take extra precautionary measures in the advent of the Jolo incident. Meanwhile, our troops are advised to be always on the alert for any changes in the security protocols to anticipate the fluid situation. All other security arrangements stay the same," AFP public affairs office chief Col. Noel Detoyato on Monday said in a text message.

The military has allocated some 10,000 troops and support units to help secure the plebiscite, along with the Philippine National Police.

A leader of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, meanwhile, dismissed talk that it or any other "revolutionary group" was behind the Jolo blast.

"Let us wait for the final result of the investigation by the government because to conclude at this time who did it is speculation," said MILF vice chairman Ghazali Jaafar.

"No revolutionary group or members of a true revolutionary organization will do that because when you plant bomb in the middle of a population, there will be victims—some will die, some will get wounded, but who knows if those who will die or be wounded are your relatives and friends and many supporters," he said in an interview with ANC's Early Edition.

Experts voiced concern on Monday over the impact the attack would have on a decades-long push for peace that culminated last week in voters approving expanded Muslim self-rule in the south.

"This is a big challenge for the Bangsamoro government," said Rommel Ban-laoi, chairman of the Philippine Institute for Peace, Violence and Terrorism Research. **AFP**

GMA leads investment mission to Saudi Arabia for Mindanao

By Maricel V. Cruz

SPEAKER Gloria Macapagal Arroyo will lead an investment mission to Saudi Arabia to look for business opportunities for Mindanao as she was scheduled to leave the country Monday.

Arroyo will be accompanied by Mindanao Reps. Maanyag B. Papandayan Jr., Macmod D. Mending Jr., Amihilda J. Sangcopan, Bai Sandra A. Sema, Ruby M. Sahali and Shernee A. Tan in the investment mission.

Arroyo was originally invited by her Saudi counterpart, Dr. Abdullah

Bin Mohammed Bin Ibharim Al Sheik, President of the Majlis Al Shura or the Consultative Assembly of Saudi Arabia, to the KSA for an official visit.

With the passage of the Bangsamoro Organic Law, she saw it as a good opportunity for an investment mission to enable the representatives from Mindanao to look for investors for their region.

In an earlier interview, Arroyo said the representatives from Mindanao were now keen on inviting investors to Mindanao in the light of the passage of the BOL.

"The Bangsamoro congressmen are now eager to go to the next step--try to get investments. So that having the

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

During her visit, she will meet with Dr. Abdullah in Riyadh. She will also meet with the Council of Saudi Arabia Chamber of Commerce in Riyadh together with the Mindanao representatives to explore business opportunities in Mindanao.

Speaker Arroyo with the help of Philippine Ambassador to Saudi Arabia has also arranged a meeting for the representatives from Mindanao with the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce in Jeddah.

15-anyos BIFF warrior sumuko

Sumuko sa militar ang isang 15-anyos na binatilyong mandirigma ng Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters o BIFF, ayon sa militar kahapon.

Ang BIFF child warrior na kinilala lamang sa alyas na "Tiger" ay dali umanong tauhan ni Kumander Mayo Gan-

tong Bansil.

Sumuko ang binatilyo sa 33rd Infantry Battalion ng Phil Army na pinamumunuan ni Lt. Col. Harold Cabunoc.

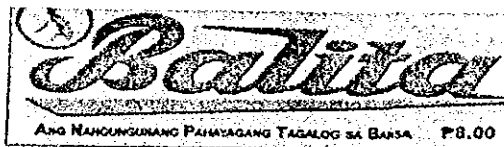
Ayon kay Tiger, napagagod na siya sa umano'y walang kabuluhan pakikipaglaban at pagtatago.

Aniya, nais niyang magbagong buhay; makapag-aral at makasama ang pamilya sa tulong ng pamahalaan.

Kasabay ng kanyang pagsuko, isinuko rin ni Tiger ang dalang rocket-propelled grenade (RPG).

Umaasa naman si 6th ID commanding general, Major General Cirilito Sobejana na marami pang mga batang mandirigma ng BIFF na mamumulat ang isipan at magbabalik-loob sa pamahalaan upang magkaroon ng direksyon ang kanilang buhay. (Roderick Bo-ñez, Joy Santos) 9.

29 January 2019



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Child warrior ng BIFF, sumuko

Sumuko sa militar ang isang binatilyo na umano'y child warrior ng Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) sa Magulindanao.

Nakilala ang suspek na si alyas "Tigre", 15 anyos, tauhan ni Kumander Mayo Gantong Bansil, ng BIFF.

Sumuko si Tigre sa mga tauhan ng 33rd Infantry Battalion ng Philippine Army, na pinamumunuan ni Lt. Col. Harold Cabunoc, bitbit ang kanyang armas.

Fer Taboy

Jolo bombing a big slap on peacekeeping efforts in Mindanao

The bombings that left scores of people dead and more than 100 wounded happened despite the tight security imposed by government forces in Jolo, Sulu.

It is disappointing that terrorists succeeded in carrying out this "mass casualty attack" despite the heightened alert status in the area following the plebiscite on the Bangsamoro Organic Law. Martial law is also in effect in Mindanao.

It is still not known how one of the bombs was smuggled inside the Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Investigators say they are now reviewing footage of the incident taken by closed-circuit TV cameras although it is likely that the Ajang-ajang subgroup of the Abu Sayyaf is responsible.

When I interviewed him on my radio program over dzIQ 990AM, Col. Gerry Besana, Westmincom spokesperson, said the suspects joined the crowd of worshippers to get inside the church on Sunday morning. He denied the IS claim that the attack was carried out by "suicide bombers with explosive belts."

On the other hand, professor Rommel Banlaoi, a security expert, said that while he would not discount the possibility that what happened was a suicide bombing, it would be better to wait for the results of the investigation.

At last, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) and 5,700 Metro Manila barangays will begin cleaning Manila Bay every week.



SHARP EDGES
JAKE J. MADERAZO

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has also started issuing cease and desist orders (CDOs) against establishments without wastewater treatment facilities.

Initially, Aristocrat Restaurant on Roxas Boulevard, Gloria Maris in the Cultural Center of

Philippines complex and The Esplanade (San Miguel by the Bay) received the orders from the DENR and Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA).

Out of 285 establishments inspected by the government, only 59 have sewage treatment plants while 120 do not have the necessary facilities. I was told that notices of violations were issued to SM Development Corp.-Sea Residences, Lola Taba Lolo Pato restaurant and Aliw Inn, among others.

I am heartened by the efforts of the DENR, LLDA and DILG to really clean up Manila Bay.

Just make sure that there will be no sacred cows.

Close the errant establishments even if their owners are powerful or influential.

Now is the time!

Politicians love to expound on the "extreme poverty" of many Filipinos, but no one talks about the other side or the "extreme wealth" of a few.

Forbes Magazine featured the top 10 Filipino billionaires in 2018—from the topnotcher, the recently deceased Tatang Henry Sy, to Andrew Tan—who have a collective wealth of \$51 billion. Worldwide, the wealth of super rich people grows by 20 to 30 percent every year while that of poor people goes down by 11 percent.

Extreme wealth was the reason Microsoft's Bill Gates gave away \$65 billion to charity.

Leading investor Warren Buffett also donated \$30.8 billion while Facebook's Mark

Zuckerberg pledged to donate half of his earnings every year.

India imposes a surcharge tax of 15 percent on its citizens with extreme wealth. In the United States, New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez wants a 60-percent wealth tax imposed on American billionaires.

I am proposing a 20-percent annual tax on the extreme wealth of our taipans to directly support "extremely poor" Filipinos.

This would mean a total of \$5.2 billion or P270.4 billion every year. Imagine the many things we can do with this amount from our generous Filipino billionaires. INQ A-9

For comments and suggestions, please e-mail jakejm2005@yahoo.com.

Mass murderers

The attack, aimed at a soft target, was meant to inflict

EDITORIAL

maximum damage. As the Sunday morning mass got underway at the Roman Catholic cathedral in Sulu's capital Jolo, a blast tore through the church. As pandemonium erupted and security forces rushed to the church, another explosion hit a military outpost just outside the Our Lady of Mount Carmel cathedral.

Police counted 20 dead and 100 others wounded as of yesterday. Many of the wounded remain in critical condition. Authorities have reportedly taken into custody the brother of an Abu Sayyaf sub-leader slain by the military. There have been about 10 armed attacks on the church since 2000, but last Sunday's twin bombings exacted the most grievous toll.

The attack shows how fragile the peace process is in Mindanao. Several threat groups are being eyed in the attack, which was staged with the entire Mindanao under martial law, and just days after Sulu voted in a

plebiscite to reject the Bangsamoro Organic Law. Sulu is a

part of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, but its rejection of the BOL indicates it is opting out of the proposed BARMM that will replace the ARMM.

Continuing extremist violence in the ARMM has been cited as one of the reasons for its supposed failure and the need to create a new autonomous region. The attack on the cathedral shows the persistent challenges in achieving enduring peace in Mindanao.

It will need a lot of heavy lifting to achieve aspirations for peace in the troubled region. While the government moves to bring development to whatever autonomous region emerges, residents in the affected areas must work together with state agencies, civic groups and other stakeholders including foreign governments to confront armed violence. The coordinated effort can be applied in finding the mass murderers behind the attack on the Jolo cathedral.

FIRST PERSON

ALEX MAGNO

Signature

We are still in the early stages of the investigation into the murderous bombing at the Jolo Cathedral. But one detail, already known, jumps out at us.

Police investigators have determined that the bombs planted to kill parishioners as they worship and then soldiers as they responded to the first attack were different from all previous terrorist devices. In police lingo, the unique characteristics of improvised explosive devices compose a "signature." Each bomb maker has a "signature," identifiable from the chemicals used and the mechanics of the device.

There are few people with the skills, and the guts, to put together improvised explosive devices. This is a very dangerous craft. From the evidence so far gathered, it appears there is a new bomb maker in town — very likely a foreign fighter assigned to wreak havoc in the Southern Philippines.

Recall the mission undertaken by the ill-fated SAF 44 in Mamasapano was to arrest or kill a notorious Indonesian bomb maker. Because of his skills, that bomb maker ranked high up the hierarchy of wanted terrorists. The mission was accomplished but tragedy awaited the brave commandoes as they withdrew from the area.

The use of two bombs exploding after a brief interval to hit responding soldiers requires some degree of sophistication. Military intelligence attributes this brutal attack to an armed group affiliated with the Abu Sayyaf. But there is now growing belief the bomb maker that made this possible is an "import."

The ISIS, through its Amaq News Agency, immediately claimed responsibility for the Jolo carnage. But this terrorist group has made so many false claims in the past that its most recent claim can only be taken with a grain of salt.

The claim, however, cannot be dismissed outright.

Amaq describes the attack as happening in the ISIS' "East Asia Province." In previous usage, the term has been used to describe the Islamic arc stretching from Southern Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and Southern Philippines.

Still obsessed with establishing a "caliphate" covering all Muslim countries, the ISIS has now focused its attention to this "province." Having lost much ground in Iraq and Syria, this brutal terrorist group has been anxious to open a new front in Southeast Asia.

Western Mindanao appears to be the weakest link in the region's anti-terrorist effort. Here, various armed groups proliferate. There are battle-scarred insurgents ready to embrace the ISIS flag in exchange for material and human support. There is a network of supply lines and jungle camps where radical fac-



tions, concealed within the folds of larger and older political movements available for the ISIS to build a sustainable base.

The more ISIS forces are battered in the Middle East, the more they will aspire to open new battlegrounds. Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia are the leading candidates for building bases from which brutal terrorist activity could be mounted.

The ISIS may be dismissed as an ideological malignancy. But it remains a functioning terrorist force with enough determined fighters and significant financial resources.

Radical Islamic militants in Southeast Asia are hard-pressed for resources to continue their unseemly struggles. The promise of ISIS financial and technical support must be seen as heaven-sent.

The partial occupation of Marawi City is said to be a project inspired by ISIS agents operating in Southeast Asia. There were reports of foreign fighters joining the ultimately doomed effort.

Had the radical militants managed to hold on to Marawi City, the ISIS would no doubt have proclaimed this the seat of their "East Asia Province." The fight to recover control of Marawi City, undertaken at great cost in lives and property, had a significant international dimension.

The capture of Marawi fits right into the ISIS puzzle. It is the only city in all of Southeast Asia vulnerable to occupation by a militant force. From there, the ISIS must have hoped to establish another Raqqa in this part of the world.

Jolo has been locked down by the PNP. The entire national police force has been put on heightened alert. These are the correct moves to undertake. Until the perpetrators of the attack on the cathedral, especially the person responsible for building the explosive used, are captured or killed, the entire nation will be thrown under the shadow of a terrorist threat.

Unlike previous incidents of kidnapping intended to raise funds by means of terror, the bombing signals a determined attempt to sow fear. Our security forces must respond to this threat more convincingly.

Remember the New Year's Day attack on a department store in Cotabato City. The perpetrators of this attack roam free.

It is possible to link the Cotabato attack to the broader effort to intimidate voters in that city to support the Bangsamoro Organic Law. In the case of the Jolo bombing, there does not seem to be a domestic inspiration for the act of terror. This does seem to be inspired by the geopolitics of international terrorism.

Last week, the remnants of the Maute militants under the command of an Abu Dar saw their base overrun by the Army. Military hot pursuit operations are on-going in Lanao del Sur.

With the MILF now trying to establish its credibility as a group capable of governing the new Bangsamoro entity, some order might be established in the Mindanao mainland. Only in the islands of Basilan and Sulu may terrorist groups try to gain some momentum in building up their forces.

Expect some escalation in terrorist activity in the outlying islands. The stray militant groups here need to win the confidence of ISIS.

EDITORIAL

Back-to-back bombings

After a day's silence, an extremist group has come forward to claim responsibility for the horrific twin bombings that ripped through the Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Jolo, Sulu, last Sunday. The US-based SITE Intelligence Group said that it had monitored a communiqué posted by the militant group Islamic State on a jihadist website claiming that two of its suicide bombers blew themselves up at the church. But that detail struck the Armed Forces as odd, even unconvincing for now; evidence and eyewitness accounts indicate no suicide bombers, only two pipe bombs that went off successively, one inside the church, the other from a motorcycle in the parking area near the church's main entrance.

The death toll as of Sunday evening had reached 20—five military personnel and 15 civilians killed—and a further 112 injured. Detonated in the middle of morning Mass, the bombs were clearly designed to inflict maximum carnage and terror.

That they happened barely a week after the conclusion of the first round of voting for the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) plebiscite leads to the inevitable suspicion that the incident was meant to throw off the rails the delicate political process still underway to grant greater autonomy to Muslim Mindanao. While the first round of voting has delivered a resounding 85-percent "Yes" vote for the establishment of a new Bangsamoro under the BOL, parts of Mindanao remain strongly opposed to such a move—Sulu among them. Sulu's residents rejected the law, voting 163,526 over 137,630 against it; however, because their province is already part of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) which voted as a bloc, it would, in the end, still be part of the expanded new Bangsamoro.

Sulu, other than being the haunt of the Abu Sayyaf and other extremist groups, is the lair of former ARMM governor Nur Misuari and his Moro National Liberation Front, the predecessor and historic rival of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). It was the MILF's decision to enter into dogged peace negotiations with the Philippine government that paved the way for the passage of the BOL, thus gaining for the rebel group preeminent status among Mindanao's power blocs to have first crack at establishing and running the new Bangsamoro. Sulu's rejection of the BOL must have caused some worry in Malacañang, because, in its wake, presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo had to offer the assurance that Misuari was "not really a threat," and that President Duterte was even keen on meeting the MNLF leader to talk about the BOL.

The Sulu blasts appear to be the second bombing incident aimed at undermining the BOL voting period; the first occurred some three weeks before the first voting day on Jan. 21, when a bomb exploded outside the South Seas Mall in Cotabato City on Dec. 31, New Year's Eve. Two people died in that incident, and more than 30 were wounded. No one has claimed credit for that bombing.

The dread and confusion over which group is responsible for these attacks may be serving a deliberate purpose—to heighten the sense of mistrust and suspicion among the Mindanao populace, as parts of the region take the first tentative steps toward charting a new political destiny away from the bitter conflict of the last five decades. Shadowy groups out there are dead set on waylaying any process that would make secessionism and rebellion irrelevant in Mindanao, and, from the attacks that have happened so far, the agenda is to foment more tension and distraction as the region prepares to complete the BOL ratification process with the second round of voting on Feb. 6.

If the Cotabato mall blast was meant to terrorize the general public, the Jolo bombings seem to have a more specific consequence in mind: sectarian strife—inciting greater antagonism and hostility between Christians and Muslims by attacking the Catholic cathedral in Sulu, where, as an anguished Fr. Romeo Saniel of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the Apostolic administrator of the Vicariate of Jolo, said, "most of those who died were our regular Mass-goers... here every Sunday attending the 8 a.m. Mass."

Mindanao's martial law has been extended twice, because Malacañang said the government needed more time to deal with terrorist groups that "continue to defy the government by perpetrating hostile activities." Two bombings have now happened back-to-back, and both apparently related to the watershed BOL vote; how is martial law working so far?

The random nature of terrorism

The bombing of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral in Jolo, Sulu, on Jan. 27, 2019, is an act of terror. Twenty people were killed and more than a hundred reported wounded in the twin blasts that have been linked to the Agang-Agang group, an affiliate of the Abu Sayyaf. The bombing came nearly a week after the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) was ratified in a plebiscite.

The Abu Sayyaf group, with links to al-Qaida, was organized by the former mujahedeen, Abdurajak Janjalani. Janjalani fought alongside Osama bin Laden against the Russians during the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The terrorist reportedly received \$6 million from Bin Laden to establish the Abu Sayyaf. The militant organization, which bombed the SuperFerry 14 passenger vessel in the Philippines in 2004, killing 116 people, follows the Wahhabi doctrine of Sunni Islam.

Bin Laden greatly inspired his disciples, who often described the experience with the terrorist "as a spiritual awakening." Peter Bergen said that the first encounters with Bin Laden by his followers were felt with a God-like reverence. Though born with enormous fortune, being the son of a rich Saudi contractor, Bin Laden gave up a life of luxury. He was viewed as "a charismatic man." The terrorist was not just the titular head of the al-Qaida organization, but was "the symbol for Jihad or Holy War against the enemies of Islam."

COMMENTARY

CHRISTOPHER RYAN MABOLOC

Extremist groups conduct their war as a struggle against what they claim is US hegemony in the world. Terrorist leaders persuade young recruits to wear suicide vests by presenting to them a picture of an unjust sociopolitical order in which US imperial interests undermine the rights of Muslims.

But terrorists have no ideology to speak of. Groups like the Islamic State only sow fear and intend to disrupt peaceful civilian life. As Nicholas Fotion put it, "terrorists who choose their victims in a random fashion cannot help but victimize people who are innocent of any political wrongdoing."

But terrorism is not a modern-day phenomenon. According to Alison Jaggar, "The word terrorism was introduced in late eighteenth century France when Robespierre initiated his Reign of Terror that was meant to deter all of his counter-revolutionary critics." In a span of one year, between 1793 and 1794, "thousands of French citizens were executed, mainly by the newly invented guillotine." Robespierre's Reign of Terror showed how the state could use its power to kill its enemies and coerce the civilian population into submission.

There would be many other similar instances in history. The "Balangiga bells,"

for instance, were a witness to the atrocities that transformed Samar into a "howling wilderness" during the US colonial regime in the Philippines. Terror was used by the Nazis against the Jews from 1933 until 1945. Meanwhile, the Allied Forces also engaged in terror raids, notably in Dresden and Berlin. While the dropping of the atom bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki had a justified military purpose, it is without doubt that part of the intent was to destroy an area with a massive civilian population. The huge number of casualties, in this sense, was deliberate, since it was meant to force Japan into complete surrender.

Walter Laqueur explained that the random killing of innocent civilians "is the essential trait of terrorism." Terrorists, he added, "assume that the slaughter of innocents would sow panic, give them publicity and help to destabilize the state and society." Terrorists engage in atrocious acts since they cannot win in any conventional warfare. The goal is clear—to cause harm and disorder.

To overcome terror, it is not only the state that must show its will and resolve. People must be united in the quest for progress and peace—two of the most important means that can defeat such type of evil. A7

Christopher Ryan Maboloc, PhD, is associate professor of philosophy at Ateneo de Davao University.

New bridging leaders

Retired Armed Forces chief of staff Lt. Gen. Carlito ("Charlie") Galvez, now presidential adviser on the peace process, was trained as a bridging leader—one who bridges societal divides, rather than highlights and deepens them. He was among the second cohort of fellows in the Bridging Leadership Fellows Program at the Asian Institute of Management's Team Energy Center for Bridging Leadership (Aimtec), back when he was still a lieutenant colonel. While doing fieldwork in Basilan years ago, I witnessed him apply such bridging leadership as then commander of the Army's 104th Brigade based on that island. He subsequently headed the AFP Western Mindanao Command, culminating his military career at the AFP's top post.

Before Galvez came Lt. Gen. Raymundo Ferrer, also former commander of the 104th Brigade and Westmincom chief, who was a Bridging Leadership Fellow from the program's pioneering cohort in 2005-2007. With him then were Dr. Danda Juanday, former head of the Bangsamoro Development Agency and now Cotabato City administrator. Also part of Cohort 1 was the late Mayor Sonia Lorenzo of San Isidro, Nueva Ecija, who distinguished herself as a model for good local governance. Mindanao NGO leader Ariel "Ayi" Hernandez of Balay Mindanaw was also a pioneering Bridging Leadership Fellow.

These men and women are all leaders I genuinely admire. Its very choice of fellows illustrates how the Bridging Leadership program in itself deliberately tries to bridge diverse and even conflicting segments of our society.

Last week, I was pleased and inspired to witness the culmination activity



NO FREE LUNCH

CIELITO F. HABITO

("recital") and graduation of some two dozen young people who make up the seventh batch of Bridging Leadership Fellows since the center started in the early 2000s. While the first five cohorts of fellows drew from people already in positions of leadership in various sectors of society, Aimtec has focused the last two cohorts on future bridging leaders. Thus, it has specifically targeted young people in the early part of their careers who show great potential to be among the successor generation of our country's movers and shakers.

As their "thesis" under the program, this new batch of fellows have embarked on "change projects" under the themes of adaptive agriculture; preventing violent extremism; cultural heritage; transformative education; water, sanitation and hygiene; sustainable livelihood; mental health awareness; preventing sexual harassment; and human security.

Barwin Belen's Urban Agriculture PH initiative aims to provide livelihood opportunities and address food insecurity by

equipping out-of-school youths in Makati City in urban farming. At the same time, his project helps improve solid waste management via recycling, and composting of organic waste that in turn feeds into the urban farming operation. Gabriel Eduardo's social venture Payag Kahirup focuses on the development of the IP women of the Sibato Bukidnon Tribal Community, through capacity-building and skills acquisition sessions, product development and tech-based marketing. Al-Noor Disalo and Jay-ar Mira have embarked on their Habi Habit initiative in partnership with young Meranao women to revive the culture and industry of weaving in Lubo Lininding in Lanao del Sur, thereby helping alleviate the poverty situation in the community.

Hya Bendaña made a passionate pitch for Hilab, Hilom, Halinhan (Rise, Recover, Reform), a project that will equip student governments (SGs) in various secondary and tertiary schools to prevent and respond to cases of sexual violence in their institutions. The project will help SGs provide frontline services that harassment victims can access for assistance and counseling. Mikee Maruhom, Harold Tomawis and Veds Kali are pursuing Project Redo to empower the youth of Matanog, Maguindanao, to help resolve *rido* (clan feuds), a major source of violence in Muslim Mindanao that will not go away with the recent ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law.

These and more initiatives these new bridging change agents are spearheading give me comfort that millennials are up to something that promises us a better society ahead.

AL
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Duterte's finest hour

If I become president, if Allah gives his blessing, before I die since I am old, I will leave to you all a Mindanao that is governed in peace," Rodrigo Duterte promised during his fateful presidential campaign in 2016.

Surely, it takes a whole village to raise a child, and generations of leaders to bring about reconciliation and peace. But if there is a single person who should be credited most for the largely successful plebiscite on the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), it's the Filipino President.

Make no mistake: The ratification of the BOL will not magically solve the conflict in Mindanao overnight. It will likely bring about new security and societal challenges we are still unprepared for.

Yet, for anyone with a beating heart for peace and an unprejudiced familiarity with the facts on the ground, the creation of the proposed Bangsamoro is a correct step in a journey of a thousand miles, which will surely be tortuous and full of unforeseen challenges.

Unlike any of his contemporaries and predecessors in the national government, the former mayor of Davao has invested both his heart and soul in solving the riddle of peace in his home island.

To be fair, former presidents, most especially Fidel Ramos and Benigno Aquino III, painstakingly spent years negotiating the parameters of peaceful coexistence with our Moro brothers and sisters. They should certainly be credited for their commendable efforts, which laid the foundation for just peace in Mindanao.

The Ramos administration successfully oversaw the definitive end of conflict between the national government and the Moro National Liberation Front. It also oversaw the creation of the Autonomous



HORIZONS

RICHARD HEYDARIAN

Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), a de facto pilot project of federalism that carries significant lessons for broader plans of decentralization in the Philippines.

Meanwhile, the Aquino administration achieved a similar feat vis-à-vis the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, the country's most powerful rebel group, through the historic Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro in 2012 and the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro in 2014, which ended a four-decade-long conflict.

What makes Mr. Duterte's case unique and exceptional, however, is his unparalleled sincerity when it comes to his vow to end "historical injustices" committed against the Muslim minority. To him, it's not just a question of national security and peace advocacy, but also a spiritual struggle and personal destiny.

I vividly recall Mr. Duterte's unforgettably electrifying *miting de avance*, where he shouted "Allahu Akbar." Up until that point, never in my life did I expect a major Filipino leader to chant Arabic words, and patiently and bravely explain to the mostly Christian audience that those sacred words to Muslims mean that "God is

great," that He is greater than anything imaginable to a secular mind.

What his critics often overlook is Mr. Duterte's ecumenical bent and his repeated calls for a dialogue among faiths. He has consistently gone the extra mile to underscore the shared monotheistic roots of both Christianity and Islam, which have a common prophetic parent in Abraham and believe in a single Creator, who they call by different names with varying theological nuances and rituals of worship.

Unbeknown to much of the world, the controversial Filipino President has become one of our greatest voices for inter-faith harmony. It's precisely this refreshingly cosmopolitan outlook, not to mention heartfelt yearning for peace, that explains why Mr. Duterte expended significant political capital to rally legislative support for the Bangsamoro project, which is supported by only a plurality of Filipinos.

To prevent the Bangsamoro from becoming an ARMM writ large, the Duterte administration pushed for sufficient fiscal and institutional support to facilitate the process of transition. After all, the ARMM's failures were largely a result of a profound governance deficit and institutional vacuum, which can be blamed on both local leaders as well as the national government.

Mr. Duterte has shown nothing short of an act of political courage, which has been often missing in today's cynical politics of opportunism and cowardly calibration.

As the latest terror attacks in Jolo poignantly demonstrate, the path ahead is far from smooth. Yet, what's clear is that the Philippines has finally taken a major step to end one of the world's most brutal, devastating and long-running conflicts.

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#MINDANAO

Bombs and naysayers cannot stop our growth



By JOHN TRIANG

AS this goes to press, 27 individuals were reportedly killed and more than a hundred wounded in a two stage bombing of the Jolo Cathedral. While I leave the details to the news reports, this is my own take:

Whoever chose to strike after the high number of voters chose to ratify the Bangsamoro Law in last week's plebiscite magnifies the fact that they who want to stop the BOL no longer carry majority sentiment in a desperate move to foment conflict with Christians.

The BOL vote lost by a small margin in Sulu, yet won over all, in practically all areas where the plebiscite was held. It received unprecedented support among all major armed groups.

It is clear that those seeking to perpetuate conflict are a small bandit-led minority those who want the violence to continue, and probably profit from it.

These perpetrators want to dampen peace efforts and the almost 50-year quest for long lasting peace and stability. They desire that everyone be bullied into prejudice and violence we have long worked to eradicate.

Thus, whoever expresses joy at the bombing needs to have their head checked. Whoever does not want to condemn such a grisly and cowardly deed while doing the same to promote a selfish and sick slavery

to prejudice.

That said, the two bombs cannot break our resolve to build the economy and lay the foundations for a more abundant, inclusive society.

Recent data has shown that our economic growth rate of 6.2% for 2018 has made our economic growth average 6.5% since 2016 better than many of our Asian peers. Data you can verify has also shown lower unemployment and underemployment for 2018, and recent SWS Surveys have shown that hunger has dropped.

Foreign direct investment has reached highs we have never seen before, hitting the 8.5-billion-dollar mark in October, 2018, and despite the Boracay closure this year, 7.1 million foreign tourists have arrived – an all-time high for a sector that contributes almost a fifth of our GDP.

The data slaps the face of naysayers who believe that this country will never grow, who warned of an economic deflation similar to Venezuela, it seems that we have shown our capability to keep growing at a pace that rivals our neighbors and beats expectations.

A more inclusive growth? Looks like it, yet more needs to be done by way of and connectivity to bring the growth to more areas, especially in the long-neglected south. Before this, 60% of our growth was concentrated in the areas around Metro Manila. Any growth cannot be sustained if the south is left behind.

Yet spend on infrastructure we

must to sustain it. Gone are the days of underspending on vital infrastructure. We are now at the necessary level of more than 5% of GDP in our infrastructure spending, a far cry from the subpar 2.5% of the previous administration that got many multilaterals worried.

Manufacturing and agriculture, though slower than 2017's growth (3.2% and .8% respectively, still show signs of expansion compared to the period before 2016 where agriculture actually contracted.

But the realities underneath the data matter most. The BOL's enactment is expected to bring a new era of peace that will boost the already strong confidence to unleash Mindanao's economic potential and encourage a new wave of investment.

This includes a new steel plant in Misamis Oriental, agricultural plantations in former rebel strongholds and a revitalized barter trade between the island and the traditional trading partners in Indonesia and Malaysia.

Likewise, the skylines of Mindanao's major cities are rising, along with traffic, prompting calls to fast-track mass transport systems to ferry residents within the cities.

A new sports complex years in the making has been launched with a FIFA approved 35,000-seat stadium, plus a 25,000 seat gym and aquatic center inside the UP Mindanao campus.

Despite martial law, Davao in particular received 2.4 million foreign and local visitors last year and welcomed

two new direct international flights.

Seeing these numbers and signs, we cannot help but feel inspired and strong to face the terrorists that want nothing but to again steal the promise of Mindanao.

They will fail.

We will grow.

For reactions: [facebook.com/johntriapag](https://www.facebook.com/johntriapag)

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Int'l community blasts Jolo bombings

The international community has condemned the twin bombings that killed at least 20 people and wounded scores of others in Jolo, Sulu.

Pope Francis branded it as a "terrorist attack" and is praying that God would convert the hearts of those who carried it out.

Francis, speaking at a hospice for AIDS sufferers on the last day of his trip here, expressed his "firm condemnation of this act of violence that causes more mourning in the Christian community. I pray for the dead and the injured. May the Lord, prince of peace, convert the hearts of the violent ones."

Filipino Catholic bishops also condemned the twin explosions.

"We condole with the families of the soldiers and civilians who were killed by the explosions," said Davao Archbishop and Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) president Romulo Valles, in a CBCP News post. The bishops urged the faithful to pray for the people of Sulu and Mindanao.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) joined the international community in condemning the attack.

"An attack on people attending Sunday services is a despicable act of cowardice," Trudeau said on his Twitter account.

He said Canada "strongly condemns" the bloody incident Jolo that took place when a mass was ongoing at around 8:30 a.m. on Sunday.

"My deepest condolences to all the families affected by this tragedy," Trudeau said.

For his part, OIC Secretary General Yousef Al-Othaimen expressed his "deep indignation" at the Sunday morning twin blasts, saying that the 57-nation body rejects all forms of violence, extremism and terrorism.

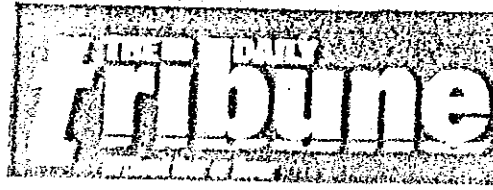
In Manila, United States Ambassador to the Philippines Sung Kim also condemned the Jolo incident, calling it a "senseless violence" even as he conveyed his government's readiness to do everything possible to assist the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

Hungary's ambassador to the United Nations Katalin Bogyay also conveyed her sympathy to the victims of the bombing in Jolo.

"Our condolences to the victims of bombing Jolo Roman Catholic cathedral in Philippine during Sunday Mass," Bogyay said in a tweet.

On Sunday, the United Nations and the European Union also sent its condolences and sympathy to the families of the victims as well as those who were affected by the bloody incident. (Reuters, Roy C. Mabasa, and Christina Hermoso)

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Rody's close encounter

“Rody said he knew something had gone horribly wrong based on the looks of the bumbling duo.

It was President Rody Duterte who provided the best window to the indecisive and incompetent yellow partnership of former President Noynoy Aquino and his alter ego Mar Roxas in action during moments of crisis.

The recent bombing of a cathedral during a Sunday Mass that killed at least 18 persons in Jolo, Sulu is being addressed resolutely which was far different during the Mamasapano carnage of 44 young police officers four years ago.

About four investigations - by the Senate, House, Department of Justice and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) - on the incident avoided an interview from Noynoy but who many consider as prime suspect as having called the shots in the botched Oplan Exodus.

Noynoy tried to play up the “success” in neutralizing Malaysian terrorist Zulkifli bin Hir alias Marwan to downplay the death of the Special Action Force (SAF) 44.

Rody recounted to relatives of the slain troopers in 2017 that he was among those in the contingent of Noynoy in Zamboanga on the day of the encounter between the SAF commandos and rebel groups from the MILF, Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters and other smaller Islamic armed groups.

Rody, apparently his statement directed at Noynoy, said “Remember that day, I was also in Zamboanga. You arrived there because there was a bombing the previous day or was it that day? But you knew of my presence. You requested Roxas to call the police, to contact me to go to Andrews Air Base. Then you requested me to be brought into the command conference.”

Rody said he knew something had gone horribly wrong based on the looks of the bumbling duo. “A general who was sitting beside me whispered ‘something horrible has happened,’” Rody said.

Rody, who was then Davao City Mayor, asked for a briefing from Noynoy and Roxas on what was really happening, but he was ignored.

He said Noynoy and Roxas were listless and paced the room endlessly, the picture of worry obvious on them.

“Every time that you went out of that room, I

could see in your faces - I cannot describe it. I don't want to insult you, but I could sense that something really, really bad happened," Rody recalled.

He said that Noynoy then turned to one of the military generals in the room and asked, "If you were there, what would you do?"

Rody remembers being "plussed off" with Noynoy during those hours of indecision, which was the exact time that the SAF troopers were being slaughtered.

The various investigations made on the incident remained inconclusive particularly on who were in actual command of Oplan Exodus.

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The real
purpose
of Noynoy
likely for
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Zamboanga
City was to
be available
when
Marwan is
presented
dead or alive
to him.

Noynoy's version was that the operation was between SAF commander Director Getulio Napeñas and the then suspended Philippine National Police (PNP) chief Alan Purisima and that he was getting piecemeal information from both.

Noynoy's storyline was that the entire uniformed command was in Zamboanga City to check on a bombing incident that happened a week before Oplan Exodus and Noynoy, his Cabinet and the rest of his contingent were informed of the incident "time on target" when the operation was already happening.

The real purpose of Noynoy likely for being in Zamboanga City was to be available when Marwan is presented dead or alive to him, which would be an international media event on the birthday of his mother, the late President Cory Aquino.

Rody also confirmed that Oplan Exodus was a CIA mission which jibes with the findings of American government involvement in some of the reports on the investigations, but which never identified the CIA.

Noynoy completely denied US involvement in the mission.

"Even before my term, the US has been with our operations. For my part, I communicated with Filipinos. It was the Filipinos who gave me reports and it were the Filipinos who conducted the mission. Even the asset who managed to get close with Marwan is an asset of our government," Aquino claimed.

Both the PNP-Board of Inquiry and the Senate reports on the incident, however, indicated at least six Americans were at the Oplan Exodus command center.

Noynoy claimed that his only fault during the operation was trusting Napeñas.

Rody's take, however, was that Noynoy was the President then and that he fed "the soldiers to the lion's den."

As for Roxas, he tried to wiggle out of the situation by claiming he was taken "out of the loop" in the mission, which is another incredible lie.

Rody personally witnessed the incompetence and callousness that should never be allowed again to be inflicted on the nation.

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Failed promise of peace

“The MILF appears to have gotten all it wants by having its own parliamentary government and territories under a Bangsamoro government.

Despite the plebiscite's "Yes" vote for the establishment of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), it was hardly surprising that the bombs went off in Jolo, Sulu aimed at a Catholic church with over 25 dead and scores injured. Jolo, Sulu is believed to be the stronghold of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), once led by Nur Misuari, as well as the Abu Sayyaf that has joined up with the Maute and foreign terrorists believed to be IS recruiters and bomb-making trainers.

Peace in Mindanao was hardly expected to bloom and will continue to be elusive, mainly because, as it has been pointed out too many times, the Moros are tribal and not one Muslim tribe in power can expect to subdue other Muslims, like the MNLF tribe and its armed members, as they believe they have been betrayed by the government since their peace pact with the Ramos government was not respected, despite having been granted the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao - an experiment that went wrong - just as the BARMM may end up the same way as the ARMM - and perhaps even worse, since independence is the (Moro Islamic Liberation Front) MILF's intent.

It should be recalled that when the pact was forged between the Ramos peace negotiators and Misuari's MNLF panel, a group in the MNLF cut itself off from Misuari and formed its own tribe, calling themselves the MILF. These rebels claimed that they oppose autonomy. The MILF, with their arms,



FRONTLINE
Ninez Cachó-Olivares

started their terrorist attacks and it even came to a point where government authorities had to seek permission from the MILF to enter its claimed territory.

The MILF, then led by Hashim Salamat, had taken over the government military camps, such as Camp Abubakar. But then came President Joseph Estrada

who decided to launch an all-out war against the MILF and, in fact, won the war against the rebel MILF, as even Salamat ran off to Malaysia.

After Estrada was ousted, his vice president Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo assumed the presidency and went into peace talks with the MILF. By the way, this group was part and parcel of the coup plotters against Estrada and many of whom went on a bombing spree in Manila and its environs, resulting in many injured or daed.

Arroyo had her own panel of negotiators whose agreements with the MILF, however, failed to pass constitutional muster. Peace continued to be elusive as the MILF wanted more, while the MNLF forces, displaced through politics, became rebels, believing that they were double-crossed by the Arroyo government.

Yet another rebel group stemmed out of the MILF - the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters that has joined up with the Abu Sayyaf.

The Aquino government also tried forging a peace pact with the MILF, but excluded the MNLF. A peace pact was agreed upon, which was similar to the failed peace pact of Arroyo and her team. Again, this failed to pass constitutional muster. Still, the

Aquino peace panel was careful not to displease the MILF, which is why then President Aquino did nothing by way of stopping the MILF leaders and their armed rebels from their massacre of the 44 Special Action Force members that were on a mission to capture or kill the international terrorist Marwan.

The MILF is a murderous Muslim tribe and appears to have gotten away too many times with all administrations, except the Estrada administration.

Even today, the MILF appears to have gotten all it wants by having its own parliamentary government and territories under a Bangsamoro government.

Almost everything in this deal was agreed upon between the government and the MILF, as the peace pact that was virtually written and approved by the MILF leaders had no representation from the MNLF.

“To this day, the government has not learned from past lessons, which is not to come up with a peace agreement without all Moro tribes as participants.

To this day, the government has not learned from past lessons, which is not to come up with a peace agreement without all Moro tribes as participants.

Where the peace pact with Misuari and his MNLF agreed to give up their arms and have their armed members integrated in the Philippine military for a constitutional autonomous government, the MILF fighters get to keep their guns and are expected to be loyal not to the country and the Philippine flag, but to their leaders, who refuse to dissolve their armed forces. In

effect, the MILF government will have its own private army, with this army getting their commands from the MILF prime minister, who, due to criticisms, is now named chief minister, which is no different from prime minister. And to think that there is now a powerful Moro autonomous region that operates under a parliamentary system even under a present presidential government with its own private army. Wow!

There is even a fantastic bonus for the MILF peace pact. Guess who the *ponente* and overall in charge of the MILF case?

One guess gets it right! It's Supreme Court Associate Justice Marvic Leonen - who acted as chief government negotiator in the Aquino peace panel with the MILF.

There is no word that Leonen has the *delicadeza* to recuse himself from the case.

But, do these yellows ever have *delicadeza*?

And there will still be no guarantee of peace in Mindanao!

Why I can't retire



TO THE
POINT
EMIL P.
JURADO

I HAVE often been asked by relatives and friends why, at the age of 91—I will be 92 this year—I have not retired. But what will I do if I retire?

I love what I am doing, pounding on my manual typewriter three times a week to meet my deadline. Secondly, if I retire, I will have nothing to do because I have no hobbies. I don't garden or tinker with anything. I will die of boredom. I will become a pest and a useless entity to my wife.

There are other reasons, of course, like money. My wife and I spend no

calling than a profession. We are often a forgotten breed unlike in other countries where journalists are members of cooperatives who also own the newspapers.

It's really tragic that despite the risks we take as messengers of the truth, this is the fate that awaits us. Some are killed or sued for libel.

As for me, retirement is not in my vocabulary. I will end up as a pest who will be cared for by my wife who is five years younger than I am, and by my daughter who was kind and blessed enough to take us in. She built for us our own part of the house and gave us our own household help. Thank God we don't yet need our own caregivers.

To me, life is just a journey where the road never ends.

Another reason I cannot retire is the fact that I co-founded the Standard with my good friend, the late Rod Reyes.

It was during the first weeks of February 1987 that the late Manda Elizalde, who was on self-exile during the martial law days, decided to come home. Manda called up Rod and said he would like to put up a newspaper upon his return. He mentioned me as being part of that publication.

I have been with the Standard since then, as a columnist and as first chairman of the editorial board. I am now its chairman emeritus.

I used to publish many exposes. For the record, I am the only journalist convicted twice by the Supreme Court. First, I exposed the unpromulgated Supreme Court decision dismissing the charge against then Defense Secretary Juan Ponce Enrile because the crime of rebellion with murder was an impossible crime. Rebellion already included murder.

Santa Banana, since I could not be

Ag Turn to A5

“What will I do if I stop writing?”

less than P50,000 a month for maintenance pills—I take a dozen of them every day, and so does my wife. Where will I get that kind of money if I don't work?

Actually I feel fortunate because my memory is still intact. Others my age are already on a wheelchair, or are afflicted with dementia.

This is why I admire former Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile who still wants to serve at the age of 94. He is my idol.

Another reason I cannot retire is that journalists like me have no pension and retirement plan. When journalists retire, they just fade away. Journalism is regarded more as a

Why...

From A4

charged with writing an exposé under the freedom of the press doctrine, the justices convicted me as a lawyer and an officer of the court. I was found in contempt. My case became a landmark decision and was made into a Bar question under legal ethics.

The other case of my conviction by the Supreme Court was when I exposed the fact that a high court justice was given a trip to Hong Kong by Chinese druglord and gambling lord Sy Pio Lato of Binondo, Manila. I have receipts to prove it. But the Supreme Court deemed it important to convict me to protect their own.

I have been invited to write for oth-

er newspapers, but I did not want to leave the **Standard**. I like its vision and the people I have been working with, more so now that the paper is owned by the sons of my good friend, the late Kokoy Romualdez.

I guess I will continue writing for the **Standard** until I write "30."

* * *

I share the pessimism of former Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile that there will be lasting peace in Mindanao with the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law creating the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao to replace ARMM.

Santa Banana, there are the IS-inspired rebel groups who want to put up their own caliphate in Mindanao. The recent bombing of a church in Jolo, for instance, is an example of

what terrorists are capable of doing. When and where they will strike next is anybody's guess.

I am pessimistic for many reasons. The BARMM is a creation of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, a breakaway group from the Moro National Liberation Front.

Sulu did not vote "yes" to join the BARMM. Its governor filed a petition before the Supreme Court challenging the BOL's constitutionality. That petition is now pending.

And then, there is the fact that Misuari's MNLF did not participate. This is why like Enrile, I am not convinced that the ratification of the BOL will usher in peace, order and development of Mindanao and Sulu.

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ONLINE NEWS

29 JANUARY 2019

www.pna.gov.ph

Security tightened in GenSan, other areas after Jolo blasts

GENERAL SANTOS CITY -- Government forces have stepped up intelligence and security operations here and in neighboring areas in the wake of the deadly bomb attacks on Sunday in Jolo, Sulu.

Brig. Gen. Roberto Ancan, commander of the Army's 1002nd Brigade, said Monday all their units are currently under heightened alert in Davao del Sur, Davao Occidental, North Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani, and South Cotabato.

"We beefed up our security checkpoints and assigned additional intelligence personnel to monitor possible movements of local terrorist groups," Ancan said.

Ancan said security measures have been in place but said they "heightened our operations even more" as a precautionary measure after the Jolo church bombings, which left 20 people dead and more than 100 others wounded.

He noted that Army troops remain on full deployment in strategic areas, with the prevailing martial law in the entire Mindanao.

In this city, the official said the Army-led Joint Task Force GenSan has assigned personnel to secure the city airport, Bulaong Terminal, Makar Port, and various government and private establishments.

The task force maintains checkpoints in the city's main entry and exit points, he said.

Ancan said elements of the 27th Infantry Battalion (IB) and the 73IB are also monitoring the coastal areas of Sarangani and other parts of Sultan Kudarat, South Cotabato, and Davao Occidental.

He said they have deployed troops under the 39IB to secure parts of North Cotabato and Davao del Sur.

"Our operations are closely coordinated with the Police Regional Office-12 (Soccsksargen) and other local law enforcement units," he said.

Ancan called on residents to be vigilant and immediately report to authorities any unattended baggage or packages, as well as movements of suspicious persons.

"Security should be everybody's concern. Rest assured that we will do our part to ensure and realize lasting peace and development in our area of responsibility," he added. **(PNA)**

www.pna.gov.ph

BIFF child warrior surrenders

By Noel Punzalan



CHILD WARRIOR SURRENDERS. A minor, identified only as 'Tigre' (right), hands over a rocket-propelled grenade launcher to Lt. Col. Harold Cabunoc (left), commander of the Army's 33rd Infantry Battalion, following his surrender on Saturday (Jan. 26) in Barangay Makainis, Gen. Salipada K. Pendatun, Maguindanao. *(Photo courtesy of 6th ID)*

CAMP SIONGCO, Maguindanao -- A 15-year-old member of the Islamic State-inspired Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) yielded to authorities after being "enlightened" about the government's program on rebels returning to the folds of the law.

The minor, identified only as "Tigre", remained hiding in the past two weeks despite the surrender of his relatives after years of eluding security forces who were sent to arrest them.

He said that the "lights coming from the solar lamp posts" convinced him to follow the path towards peace. The minor laid down his weapon late afternoon on Saturday.

"Bearing solar-powered flashlights and lamp posts, soldiers came to the village of my relatives to help them. I realized that they were not interested in killing us all," Tigre said in Maguindanaon dialect.

The surrender of Tigre happened an hour after soldiers of the Army's 33rd Infantry Battalion installed solar lights in Peditad village, a fishing village near the Liguasan Marsh.

Lt. Col. Harold Cabunoc, commander of the 33rd Infantry Battalion, personally received the rocket-propelled grenade launcher that was handed over by Tigre in Makainis village of Gen. Salipada K. Pendatun town in Maguindanao.

"You have made the right decision in laying down your weapon. There is no more reason to fight after the overwhelming victory of the Bangsamoro Organic Law 'yes' vote," Cabunoc told the child-warrior shortly after his surrender.

By 2028, a world-class Army that is a source of national pride.

Tigre belonged to the BIFF faction of Commander Mayo Gantong Bansil, whose group had been involved in atrocities against government troops in the area for the past five years.

"The influx of surrenderers reflect the high level of trust that we gained in Central Mindanao. With popular support, we will always prevail against any adversary," Cabunoc said.

Major Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, the Army's 6th Infantry Division commander, has directed subordinate commanders to sustain the gains on the ground.

"We must endeavor to reduce the armed groups through negotiations and focused military operations. This is our platform in turning the Liguasan Marsh from 'terrorism to tourism' and from a 'battlefield to an oilfield' area," Sobejana said.

The 33rd IB has facilitated the surrender of 37 BIFF members, 205 communist rebels and sympathizers, and 41 drug syndicate members over the past two years. **(PNA)**