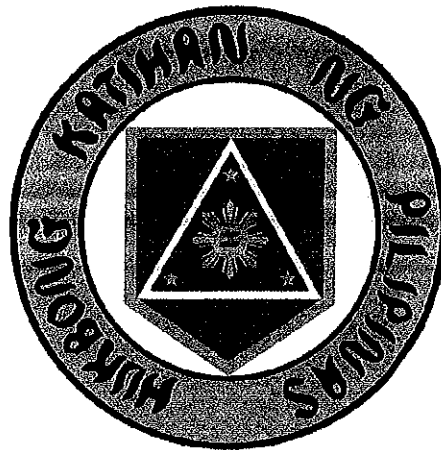


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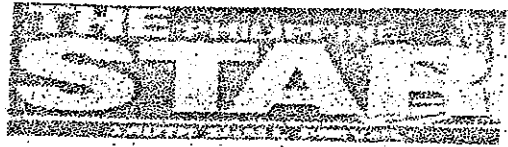
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**Sunday**

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# MWSS to comply with Rody order

*150 days to solve water crisis*

By CATHERINE TALAVERA

The head of the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) is reading between the lines of President Duterte's order to release 150 days worth of water from Angat Dam, noting that the President may have been misinformed on the water crisis.

In a radio interview yesterday, MWSS administrator Reynaldo Velasco said while the President may have been ill-advised on the issue, he understands the message being conveyed.

"What is important is to solve the problem," Velasco said in English and Filipino.

Velasco said he has informed Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea about the misinfor-

mation sent to the President.

"I will comply with the wish of the President not based on the terms that he used, but I can see what he wants. He doesn't want people to line up in the streets waiting for water," Velasco said.

Velasco added that he hoped to come up with an action plan by tomorrow.

"We will comply with the marching orders of (President

Duterte) to solve the water shortage in 150 days and the MWSS together with its concessionaires - Manila Water, Maynilad and Bulacan Bulk Water - will do its best to meet his expectations," the MWSS said in a statement.

In line with the President's order, the MWSS said it has added two centimeters (cm) to

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## MWSS From Page 1

the 46 cm released daily from the Angat-Ipo-La Mesa water systems, which can only accommodate 4,000 million liters daily (MLD), with the approval of the Natural Water Resources Board (NWRB).

"The present problem could have been averted had Manila Water's 100 MLD Cardona Treatment Plant been operational since October," the MWSS said.

In the previous months, Manila Water had been sourcing its deficit water from La Mesa Dam but due to the lack of rains caused by El Niño, La Mesa was depleted.

The MWSS board of trustees said it held a special meeting last Thursday, where short-term and long-term measures to solve the water shortage in the East Zone were discussed.

Among the possible solutions discussed were the activation of 101 deep wells, which can supply 101 MLD to consumers, and the sharing of Maynilad of 50 MLD through cross-border sharing, including

the deployment of water trucks to affected areas that will service or benefit 50,000 households in Quezon City, Parañaque and Taguig.

The MWSS said the NWRB has approved the request to reactivate the deep wells and Manila Water has started energizing and activating the said wells.

East Zone concessionaire Manila Water noted that its 20-hour water interruptions would not last throughout the summer as it is starting to see the effects of the rotational water supply scheme it implemented since Thursday.

"Levels of various reservoirs have started to increase and water supply, though still at low pressure in some areas, is slowly being distributed to severely affected barangays," the company said in a statement Friday.

Manila Water said pressure is expected to improve in the coming days as the reservoirs are refilled to enable water to reach highly elevated areas.

"These operational adjustments are a temporary measure that Manila Water is undertaking to balance water supply distribution in its concession area," the company said.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) expressed optimism that the situation in Metro Manila will improve in the coming weeks.

DENR Undersecretary Benny Antiporda said the DENR has coordinated with the NWRB, Maynilad and Manila Water with regard to its water treatment plant in Cardona, Rizal to help areas in Metro Manila experiencing water shortage.

Antiporda said Manila Water will provide a total additional water supply of 180 MLD by April.

"Within next week or two, service will improve."

Antiporda said in English and Filipino, noting that (Manila Water's) Cardona water treatment facility is expected to yield 22 MLD by the end of March before reaching a capacity yield of 50 MLD by April.

He said the three agencies

met at the MWSS office in Quezon City Thursday where Maynilad committed to allocate 20 MLD to Manila Water by the end of March and increasing it to 50 MLD by April.

On the part of the NWRB, Antiporda said the agency projects an additional allocation of 30 MLD by April with the reactivation of deep wells.

The MWSS will be responsible for operating the deep wells, Antiporda added.

He said the NWRB also expects another 50 MLD to be sourced from the deep wells after April, generating a total of 80 MLD.

### Critical level

Meanwhile, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) yesterday said the water level in La Mesa remained critical.

As of 6 a.m. yesterday, the water level in the dam was at 68.70 meters, below the critical level of 69 meters.

PAGASA noted that there was a reduction of 0.02 meters from the 68.72 meters recorded Friday morning.

The Dam Water Level Update of PAGASA also showed that the current level is 11.45 meters below the normal level of 80.15 meters.

Hospitals with standby wells can draw their water needs from the water facilities, the National Disaster Risk and Reduction Management (NDRRMC) said.

"In case there is a need to augment the water supply, hospitals with standby deep wells will be the priority," said NDRRMC executive officer and Office of Civil Defense administrator Ricardo Jalad.

Jalad cited last Wednesday's report from the Department of Health (DOH) that at least five government hospitals in Metro Manila have been affected by the water crisis.

The five hospitals include Rizal Medical Center in Pasig City, National Center for Mental Health in Mandaluyong City, National Kidney Institute and Transplant Institute, Philippine Children's Medical Center and the Quirino Memorial Medical Center, all in Quezon City.

The prevailing El Niño spell has affected 23 areas in Region

4-B as well as Regions 9 and 10 with damages to agriculture including high-value crops.

As this developed, the DOH has assured the public that the water being rationed to its hospitals are tested.

According to Health Secretary Francisco Duque III, all affected DOH hospitals are under instruction to test their water supply coming from several sources to prevent outbreaks of diseases like diarrhea and gastroenteritis.

"Our hospitals have capabilities to test water so they are doing it now. Even if the water is coming from a corporation, which is supposed to treat and test them... handling may cause contamination," Duque told reporters.

Duque also urged persons who are affected by the water shortage to make sure that their drinking water is safe.

"It is important to ensure the quality of your drinking water through simple, inexpensive steps... to treat and safely store water in your homes to avoid falling ill," he said. — With Rhodina Villanueva, Jaime Laude, Sheila Crisostomo

# PH EXITS ICC: FRESH BLOW TO DRUG WAR VICTIMS' KIN

STORY BY KRIXIA SUBINGSUBING AND MELVIN GASCON

**The country's withdrawal from the International Criminal Court gives the families of the victims of the war on drugs another reason to grieve as they seek justice for their loved ones. It also raises the specter of more human rights violations and impunity in the brutal antinarcotics campaign.**

A10

FROM A1

By Krixia Subingsubing  
and Melvin Gascon  
@Team\_Inquirer

Normita Lopez has been mourning the killing of her son for almost two years now and hopes it won't take forever to get justice for his death in the government's brutal war on drugs.

Djastin Lopez, the second of her eight children, was one of the thousands gunned down by the police in what authorities now routinely call justified killing in a case of "nanlaban" (fought back) during a so-called drug buy-bust operation.

The weakly 23-year-old epileptic, who made a living by delivering scrap metal and wood to a junkyard, was killed by policemen on May 18, 2017, on the railway tracks of the poverty-stricken Hermosa neighborhood in Tondo, Manila.

## 'Slaughtered like animals'

When her murder and planting of evidence complaint against the officers involved continued to languish in the Office of the Ombudsman, Lopez joined the relatives of seven other drug war victims in filing a case accusing President Duterte of crimes against humanity in the International Criminal Court (ICC).

"When I sought out help after Djastin's death, I realized we were so many," she said. "So many of us had loved ones slaughtered like animals. So many of us are still grieving."

Now, she and the others may have more reason to grieve after the Philippines' membership

state forces to continue violating human rights in the belief that there was one less international body that could hold them to account for their actions.

"The most scary offshoot of the Philippines' withdrawal from the ICC will be the worsening of extrajudicial killings, 'tokhang' and harassment of the administration's critics, as well

in the ICC is bound to be terminated on Sunday—March 17—one year after the Duterte administration withdrew from the Rome Statute that created the international court.

Human rights lawyer Neri Colmenares on Saturday said the climate of impunity could worsen as Manila's withdrawal from the ICC may further embolden

as the ordinary citizens," the Bayan Muna chair and senatorial candidate said.

Nicholas Bequelin, regional director for East and Southeast Asia and the Pacific of Amnesty International, however, said such withdrawal should not stop the ICC from holding liable those responsible for the killings in the drug war.

#### International support

"Filipinos bravely challenging the 'war on drugs' or seeking justice for their loved ones need international support to help them end this climate of fear, violence and impunity," Bequelin said in a statement.

Mr. Duterte pulled the country out of the ICC after its prose-

cutor announced last year the start of a "preliminary examination" of the charge of crimes against humanity filed against the President, including the first one submitted by lawyer Jude Sabio, whose case covers alleged extrajudicial killings since 2016.

Lopez, the grieving mother, held Mr. Duterte personally responsible for the deaths of her son and the others.

"All of these deaths are his fault," she said. "The police may have pulled the trigger, but he was the one who killed the men of this country of which he is the father."

Lopez joined dozens of widows and orphans of victims of extrajudicial killings at Christ the King Seminary on Friday to call anew for justice for the

thousands of deaths in Mr. Duterte's antidrug campaign.

That gathering, however, seemed only to amplify her sense of loss.

#### Accountability

"This fight [for justice] may be the death of me," Lopez said, adding that she would do "whatever it takes for [the President] to be held accountable for his crimes."

Most of the families are under the auspices of activist-priests like Fr. Robert Reyes and Fr. Flavie Villanueva. Others are under the care of human and legal rights groups like the National Union of Peoples' Lawyers (NUPL) and the Free Legal Assistance Group (Flag). **A11**

#### FROM A10

NUPL filed the second ICC complaint against Mr. Duterte in behalf of Lopez's group.

The complaint included details of how her son was killed on May 18, 2017, when officers caught up with him on the rail tracks and shot him five times at close range despite him raising his hands in surrender and begging for mercy.

"They told me he was still alive when I came running to the crime scene. He moved to the sound of me screaming his name, as if to say, 'Ma, I'm still here,'" she said.

Seven months since they filed the complaint, Lopez remains optimistic that justice will prevail. "I'm willing to wait. While Duterte is here, the deaths won't stop."

According to NUPL lawyer Kristina Conti, Article 127 of the Rome Statute states that criminal investigations that began before a country's withdrawal took effect could still continue.

"The difference of course is that it would be harder because there's no more incentive for the Philippines to cooperate," Conti said. "But the ICC could still find [Mr. Duterte] guilty of the charges."

It's still within their jurisdiction."

Bequelin said the ICC had "ways and means" to investigate, "even if the Philippines will not cooperate with it."

He urged the United Nations Human Rights Council to launch "an independent, international investigation into the human rights situation in the Philippines, including the thousands of extrajudicial killings

still being committed."

Jacqueline Ann de Guia, spokesperson for the Commission on Human Rights, sees the withdrawal from ICC as a reversal of the country's commitment to its international treaty obligations and a "step back from the gains" it had achieved in promoting justice and human rights.

She said the government should reconsider its with-

drawal from the Rome Statute "as a stronger sign of its dedication to the rule of law and human rights."

"In the end, it is the Filipino people who [are] bound to lose when they no longer have the recourse in times when local justice systems fail in protecting them. It is then that impunity wins as a consequence of withdrawal," De Guia said. INQ



# Manila, Hanoi renew call for SCS Code of Conduct

BY DEMPSEY REYES

**T**HE Philippines and Vietnam have renewed their call for a fast adoption of a Code of Conduct (CoC) in the South China Sea (West Philippine Sea), according to Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana.

Lorenzana went to Hanoi on Monday for bilateral talks with Vietnam's Defense Minister Ngo Xuan Lich.

He disclosed on Friday that he and Lich discussed how Manila and Hanoi could navigate a long-standing dispute in the South China Sea involving not only the

Philippines and Vietnam but also China, Malaysia, Taiwan and Brunei Darussalam.

Hanoi has been known for its stance over the South China Sea, always calling out Beijing for its alleged militarization of reefs and islands in the contested sea.

"[We discussed] how to navigate

the issue in the face of Chinese increased activity. We both agreed that the CoC should be pursued and concluded in the fastest time possible," Lorenzana told reporters.

He said he did not have an agreement with Lich "on anything," but only agreed to deal with their own "peculiar circumstances" amid China's moves in the disputed waters.

The Philippine government has apparently been taking the South China Sea row lightly, with President Rodrigo Duterte and his spokesman downplaying the activities of Beijing there by saying that Manila cannot afford to fight

such a big and powerful country like China.

The Philippine military, at the same time, has been referring queries concerning the South China Sea dispute to the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Lorenzana and Lich's meeting was held amid reports that Chinese ships have been prohibiting Filipino fishing vessels from going near sandbars of Pag-asa (Thitu) Island in the South China Sea.

The government and the Philippine military had denied the reports, saying they have even been encouraging fishermen to go near the sandbars.

A2

## 'GLASS HALF FULL': PALACE DOWNPLAYS US REPORT NOTING EJKS, MEDIA THREATS

By Christine O. Avendaño  
@10avendanoINQ

Malacañang on Saturday lauded the "objectivity and balance" of the global human rights report of the US Department of State for 2018, even as it downplayed continued reports of extrajudicial killings (EJKs), rights abuses and threats against media.

"The level of objectivity and balance of the 44-page US state department's [report] reflects

the US government's appreciation of the Duterte administration's governance agenda anchored on fighting corruption, criminality and illegal drugs," presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo said.

The Palace said it preferred "to see the glass half full and focus on the positive aspects of the report" as the political opposition and President Duterte's detractors would certainly dwell on the negative ob-

servations in the report.

"We urge the public to read the report in its entirety so that they may not be deceived by intended negative and false commentaries," Panelo said.

### Never sponsored

"While the report also cites the usual criticisms against the administration, we reiterate that the [Duterte administration has] never sponsored any form of violation of human rights nor

will [it] tolerate them," he said.

Panelo said the report assessed developments in the government's antidrug campaign and opined that it was "respectful of the government's deeper challenges."

He noted that the report cited the conviction of three policemen tagged in the killing of Kian delos Santos and that 1,274,148 individuals had surrendered for drug rehabilitation.

"The report acknowledges

the government's efforts to promote speedy disposition of inmate cases, including the use of plea bargaining," he said.

The US state department report was "also sympathetic to the government's challenges in the peace process" and recognized the rights violations by Muslim separatists, communist insurgents and terrorist groups, including the use of child soldiers by communist insurgents, Panelo added.

The peaceful barangay elections last year was also mentioned in the report.

"If only for these positive observations, and there are more, we find the 2018 report by the US state department relevant," Panelo said.

"We note that there may be isolated accounts of abuse on the part of [our] law enforcers. We continue to address them and hold the transgressors accountable," Panelo said. INQ

# Palace to narcolist critics: Nonsense

**By Christine O. Avendaño,  
Leila B. Salaverria  
and Delfin T. Mallari Jr.  
@Team\_Inquirer**

Malacañang on Saturday dismissed as "pure nonsense" claims that President Duterte may have committed an impeachable offense by releasing a so-called narcolist of 46 politicians with only 58 days to the May 13 elections.

"It has no legal and factual basis. In other words, it's pure nonsense," presidential spokesperson and chief legal counsel Salvador Panelo said.

## Charged

Panelo scoffed particularly at Akbayan Rep. Tomasito Villarin for delving into "an issue

of unfamiliar terrain to a non-lawyer like him."

For the "legal education" of Villarin and other critics, Panelo stressed that politicians in the narcolist had already been charged at the Ombudsman.

"The release of their names is nothing more than a release of the names of criminal suspects. Such act cannot be considered a legal transgression, and even [less] so, an impeachable offense," Panelo said.

## Due process

Besides, Panelo said, due process would provide the narcopoliticians the opportunity to clear their names.

Sen. Aquilino Pimentel III agreed and said politicians on the list should really clear their

names because the public has long been talking about their suspected drug connections.

The list included 10 members of the Partido Demokratiko Pilipino-Lakas ng Bayan (PDP-Laban), the party under which Mr. Duterte was elected President, and eight of them are running in the May elections, said Pimentel, who is also PDP-Laban president.

## Incomplete

But for Communist Party of the Philippines founder Jose Maria Sison, the list released by Mr. Duterte was incomplete.

Sison, in an e-mail from Utrecht, said the list did not name big-time drug lords like Peter Lim, a cosponsor of Mr.

Duterte at a wedding.

Sison said the communist movement would punish government officials, politicians and individuals proven to be involved in drug trafficking.

## Harder to catch

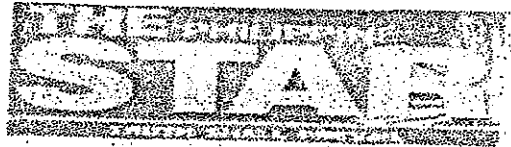
"It is a policy of the people's democratic government and New People's Army (NPA) to capture, try and punish drug lords and their cohorts," Sison said.

But he said "drug lords are harder to catch and are heavily protected so the NPA rarely has the chance to capture them."

"The guards of drug lords are not just private armies but also policemen," Sison added.

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### **Reds kill Negros farmer**

**BACOLOD CITY** - New People's Army (NPA) rebels killed a farmer in Cuthungan City, Negros Oriental on Thursday.

Johnny Albino, 35, was shot several meters away from his house in Sitio Tuko, Barangay Trinidad. Lt. Col. Randy Pagunuran, 94th Infantry Battalion commander, said.

In a statement, JB Regalado of the NPA's Leonardo Panaligan Command admitted that their group was behind the killing, saying Albino served as an informant for the military.

Regalado also linked Albino to the Synchronized Enhanced Managing of Police Operations, which he claimed to have resulted in the killing of six civilians and arrest of more than 50 others.

**- Gilbert Bayoran**

## Palace highlights positive side of PH human rights report

By ARGYLL B. GEDUCOS

Malacañang chose to look at the positive side of the United States (US) State Department's human rights report on the Philippines, although it flagged extrajudicial killings or EJKs as the chief human rights concern in the country.

In a statement, Presidential Spokesman Salvador Panelo said the level of objectivity and balance of the 44-page US State Department's 2018 Human Rights Report on the Philippines reflects the US government's appreciation of the Duterte administration's governance agenda, which is anchored on fighting corruption, criminality, and illegal drugs.

"While the political opposition and detractors of the President, including some of those in the mainstream media, would dwell on what they consider as negative observations and milk the same for their political purposes, we prefer to see the glass half full and focus on the positive aspects of the report," he said Saturday morning.

"We urge the public to read the report in its entirety that they may not be deceived by intended negative and false commentaries," he added.

The said report stated that "extrajudicial killings have been the chief human rights concern in the country for many years and, after a sharp rise with the onset of the anti-drug campaign in 2016, they contin-

ued in the reporting year, albeit at a lower level."

Citing government data from July, 2016 to July, 2018, a total of 105,658 anti-drug operations have been conducted, causing the deaths of 4,854 civilians and 87 members of security forces.

While the report cited the usual criticisms against the administration, Panelo said President Duterte and his government have neither sponsored any form of human rights violation nor will they tolerate them.

"The observance of the freedom of expression in this country is such that fabricated portrayals on the war on drugs find print and aired repeatedly reaching the outside world, some [parts] of which recklessly and responsibly believe them without the benefit of validation," he said.

"We note that there may be isolated accounts of abuse on the part of its law enforcers. We continue to address them and hold the transgressors accountable," he added.

### Respectful assessment

Despite the comment on EJKs, Panelo welcomed the report as it also mentioned the developments in the Duterte Administration's anti-drug campaign.

"Its assessment is respectful of the government's deeper challenges, e.g. deaths of many law enforcement officers during operations, even as accountability of those from the same ranks is guaranteed through investigations of any ac-

tions taken outside the rule of law," he said.

"The report points out that government civilian control over its law enforcers is exercised, citing a statement from the President that while the anti-drug campaign is far from over with its 'relentless and chilling' effect, all police who are corrupt are hunted down and jailed," he added.

The Palace official also noted how the report recognized the sentencing of three police officials involved in the killing of Kian de los Santos, and that it noted that 1,274,148 individuals have surrendered for drug rehabilitation and clearance while the unprecedented war against illegal drugs and criminality has resulted in more detainees.

The report acknowledged the government's efforts to promote speedy disposition of inmate cases, including the use of plea bargaining.

The US State Department report is also sympathetic to the government's challenges in the peace process.

"It specifically cited that Muslim separatists, communist insurgents, and terrorist groups continue to attack government security forces and civilians, causing displacement of civilians and resulting in the deaths of security force members and civilians," Panelo said.

It also mentioned how insurgents caused the death of 14 civilians whom they used as human shields

upon being cornered by the military. The report likewise took note of "terrorist organizations engaged in kidnappings for ransom bombings of civilian targets, beheadings, and the use of child soldiers in combat or auxiliary roles."

The report also extolled the Philippine armed forces' rescue of 15 of these child soldiers from the New People's Army (NPA).

The NPA, along with the ISIS, Abu Sayyaf Group, Maute Group, Ansar al-Khilafah, the BIFF and other extremist groups, are identified as the perpetrators behind the killing of civilians on mere suspicion of being military and police informers.

Panelo also hailed the report's touching on the milestones in addressing concerns of vulnerable groups.

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"The report talks about the government's use of its 16 rehabilitation centers around the country to assist around 1,650 children in conflict with the law, as well as its mobilization of youth centers managed by local governments to provide protection, care, training and rehabilitation for these children," he said.

Similarly, the report cites the free, fair and well-organized conduct of the local elections for barangay and youth officials in May last year.

"If only for these positive observations, and there are more, we find the 2018 report by the US State Department relevant," he said.

## EU probes Red money

By Kathleen Mae Bulquerin

The European Union (EU) has committed to start investigation into funds allegedly being funneled to the terrorist group Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA) and it is awaiting documents from the government to back the charges on communist financing.

"The EU stands ready to receive precise information that would enable it to further evaluate and verify the allegations," the EU delegation in Manila said in a statement.

Last month, a Philippine delegation engaged several officials from the EU and Belgian government to request them to stop the flow of funds to non-government organizations (NGO) that grant financial assistance to CPP-NPA front organizations.

Government data showed front organizations receive funds from the Belgian government and some European countries for supposed pro-poor programs which the government claims to be mere covers for the financing of rebel operations.

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Documents obtained by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) revealed that the Belgian government has released its first tranche of more than 621,000 euros (P36,863,840) out of the 15-million euros (P885,600,000) grant to some NGO for the 2017 to 2021 program. This year, some 1.3 million euros (P76,752,000) is expected for release.

### EU vows action

Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. on 14 March also informed the United Nations (UN) of EU-based NGO funding of communist front organizations in the Philippines.

**Should the allegations be established, the EU will immediately take full legal action.**

The EU delegation underscored that the bloc continues to consider both the CPP and the NPA as terrorists, which means "no assets can be held in EU by these organizations."

While the allegations have yet to be verified, it vowed to respond immediately once the illegalities have been proven.

"Should the allegations be established, the EU will immediately take full legal action," it said.

As early as January, the EU has conducted an audit of funds that have allegedly reached the communist groups after a request sent by the government.

Following its audit, the EU confirmed it received a Philippine delegation in February "to better understand the precise content on the allegations."

Undersecretary Joel Egco, executive director of the Presidential Task Force on Media Security, who was part of the Philippine delegation to Europe, said EU was "receptive" when it received the information and has vowed to look into the matter "seriously."

"They promised to look into it because it is unacceptable that their funds are going to the front organizations of the CPP-NPA which they declared as a terrorist organization," he had said in an earlier interview.

Both the CPP and its armed wing, NPA, have been on the EU's list of terrorist organizations since 2006.

**The CPP and its armed wing, NPA, have been on the EU's list of terrorist organizations since 2006.**

AFP deputy chief of staff for civil military operations, Brig. Gen. Antonio Parlade, said the government would soon file a formal complaint before the EU once it has gathered more evidence.

Parlade, in particular, called human rights group Karapatan a red front citing evidence it has amassed.

### Strong proof

"We have a lot and Karapatan is worried about all these truth coming out now. AFP, not a credible institution? Then refute the very high trust rating

of AFP in all surveys except CPP's (Communist Party of the Philippines)," Parlade said.

"Karapatan has perfected the art of lies and deception after 24 years of existence. I never said I don't have evidence to show they are communist front organizations," Parlade added.

He also called the group's selectiveness when it comes to helping people.

"Where were you when the NPA have been killing the IP (indigenous peoples) in Mindanao, until now? Where is Karapatan when non-participating civilians were killed by NPA?" Parlade said.

Parlade also asked where Karapatan was when ACT and Bayan Muna reportedly trafficked children in Davao last year.

#### **Fabricated claims**

"Karapatan is afraid of becoming irrelevant because the AFP has not committed any rights violation for the past five years or more. Even in the past, many of the violations and civilian killings attributed to AFP were in fact committed by the NPA, disguised as soldiers in uniform, as admitted openly by former rebel Father Balweg," he said.

**It is unacceptable that its funds are going to the front organizations of the CPP-NPA which they declared as a terrorist organization.**

Karapatan, he said, has to fabricate reports of human rights violations by the AFP so that the UN and EU may continue to collect donations from European countries.

Parlade added Palabay is worried about the government's success in unmasking the truth about the communist front organizations, which were tagged by CPP founder Jose Maria "Joma" Sison himself in all its revolutionary websites, Joma's verbal pronouncements and CPP publications.

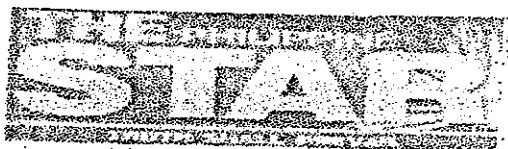
#### **Non-refoulement**

"You have to consistently paint any administration as oppressive and tyrant, even by fabricating lies like the 27,000 EJK (extrajudicial killings) from PRRD's (President Rodrigo R. Duterte) drug war, because with a professional AFP now, the EU Courts would soon send Joma back to the Philippines to spend the rest of his life in jail for his crimes against humanity (80,000 killed after 50 years of CPP-NPA-NDF atrocities without Karapatan blinking) because there is no more danger of state persecution," he said.

He added that Joma can no longer invoke "non-refoulement" in the courts and this is what Palabay and Karapatan fear.

Non-refoulement is a principle of customary international law prohibiting the expulsion, deportation, return or extradition of an alien to his state of origin or another state where there is a risk that his life or freedom would be threatened for discriminatory reasons. This law is often regarded as one of the most important principles of refugee and immigration law.





## Maute leader not among dead in Lanao Sur clash?

The military has expressed doubts that Owayda Marohombsar, alias Abu Dar, the self-proclaimed leader of the Maute group, is among the militants killed in a clash with soldiers in Lanao del Sur on Friday.

Col. Romeo Brawner, commander of the 103rd Infantry Brigade, said visual and actual examinations conducted on the body of the supposed terrorist leader showed some discrepancies, particularly in his physical features.

Soldiers recovered the remains of two of the four slain terrorists, one of which is that of Abu Dar, according to military informants.

Brawner said DNA samples were taken for confirmation.

"For now we cannot definitely say it was Abu Dar. The best way to confirm is to wait for the DNA result," Brawner said.

The military said four soldiers were also killed in the firefights in Sitio Tagum, Barangay Dinaig, Tubaran.

"Whether we got him (Abu Dar) or not, we are maintaining the tempo of our combat operations. For now, there's no engagement, but our troops are continuously pursuing them," Brawner said.

"We will continue to hunt them to the last man even if it means we will be spending most of our time and our birthdays in the mountains," he added.

- Jaime Laude

## DNA test to determine if slain terrorist was Abu Dar

**ZAMBOANGA CITY:** Security commanders have asked the military for a DNA examination on one of six pro-Islamic State terrorists believed to be the emir of the IS in the Philippines killed in a massive campaign in Mindanao.

Col. Romeo Brawner, commander of the 103rd Infantry Brigade, over the weekend said informants of the Philippine Army have claimed that Owaydah Marohombsar alias Abu Dar was one of those killed by soldiers in Tubaran town in Lanao del Sur province on Thursday.

"According to our three informants, one of the slain terrorists was Abu Dar.

★ Terrorist A2

## ■ TERRORIST FROM A1

# DNA test to determine if slain

We already requested the higher headquarters for the DNA test to confirm his neutralization," he added.

Abu Dar, a former commander of the Abu Sayyaf Group, had been tagged as behind many terror attacks against civilian and military targets in the Muslim autonomous region.

But little information is available on the jihadist leader, whose group laid siege to Marawi City in 2017 that left hundreds of people dead and wounded, and forced fellow Muslims to flee their homes.

Lt. Col. Edgar Allan Villanueva, commander of the 49th Infantry Battalion, said Abu Dar was with

a group of armed fighters from Dawlah Islamiya and Maute group numbering about 20 when they clashed with government troops.

He said three militants were slain in the clash.

"During the encounter, Abu Dar was with about 20 of his comrades and we were also able to neutralize three of his cohorts," Villanueva said, adding that they recovered one automatic rifle, a pistol, two grenades and ammunition.

Another group of Army soldiers from the 55th Infantry Battalion also battled Abu Dar's forces in Pagayawan town and killed two bandits who were later identified by their *nom de guerre* as Abu Tahir and Abu Jihad.

The military said six soldiers also perished in the fierce battles and others wounded.

It was not immediately known whether the wounded were the same as those reported by the military as missing in action.

Lt. Gen. Arnel dela Vega, the regional military commander, said more soldiers were sent to Lanao del Sur to destroy the remaining terrorists, but he did not say how many more are fighting the troops.

"Additional troops were deployed to pursue the fleeing terrorists and to ensure the safety and security of the local populace in the area. We also ask for prayers from all peace-loving people of the

country for the eternal repose of our heroes and for our wounded soldiers. Your prayers are the most powerful tool for them and for the safety of all those who are still pursuing the enemies," dela Vega added.

"We will not stop until we neutralize the remaining terrorists and we dedicate this fight to our fallen comrades. Our soldiers are out there hunting for them ready to fight and die to attain peace in our communities," he said.

Sporadic fighting has been going on since March 11 in neighboring Maguindanao province where the 6th Infantry Division claimed to have killed 20 militants from the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters and among them was a Singaporean terrorist, Muhammad Ali Bin Abd Al Rahman or Muawiya, a

notorious jihadist belonging to the Indonesian Jemaah Islamiya and had been a bomb trainer for the Abu Sayyaf group.

It said as many as 20 militants under Abu Turaife were slain in the assaults in Shariff Saydona town.

The reports were based on intelligence information, but Army commanders claimed to have seen or recovered body parts of those killed in an area targeted by military bombardments.

Over 100 militants were being pursued by security forces in the province, a stronghold of the rebel group Moro Islamic Liberation Front that signed an interim peace deal with Manila in 2014.

The clashes also killed one soldier and wounded at least seven more.

The military's Joint Task Force Central said air, artillery and

ground operation were continuing not only in Shariff Saydona, but also in the towns of Datu Salibo, Mamasapano and Shariff Aguak where the group of pro-IS militant commander Salahudin Hassan was scattered.

It was unclear whether the United States or its Special Forces units deployed in southern Mindanao provided combat or technical support to Filipino troops in battling the militants.

US forces are still helping train local military forces in fighting terrorism and were instrumental in supplying intelligence to Filipino troops during the Marawi siege.

The terrorist groups have been fighting for the establishment of a caliphate in the restive South that is now called the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

**AL JACINTO**

## 3 more BIFF gunmen slain in Maguindanao

**SHARIFF AGUAK, Maguindanao:** Philippine Army troops of the 6th Infantry Division (6ID) recovered more powerful improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in two enclaves of pro-Islamic State terrorists belonging to the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) after a series of clashes in Maguindanao.

Maj. Arvin Encinas, spokesman for the 6ID, said on Saturday that three more followers of Abu Toraife, leader of the most radical BIFF faction, were killed in the ensuing gunfights.

Army snipers killed Uyao Badruddin, Igasan Kamid and Gulam Madsid, in an encounter in Barangay Inaladan in Shariff Saidona Mustapha town in the second district of Maguindanao.

Encinas said units of the 6ID have been running after BIFF forces in Shariff Saidona Mustapha and nearby towns since March 9, after bandits killed four off-duty soldiers in a series of attacks in Maguindanao and in Cotabato City early on.

Local officials confirmed the death of 16 BIFF members in a

series of encounters since last week with pursuing personnel of the 1st Mechanized and the 40th Infantry Battalions and the elite 61st Division Reconnaissance Company of the 6ID.

Major Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, 6ID commander, said their continuing hunt for BIFF bandits in towns along the Liguasan Marsh was aimed at neutralizing Abu Toraife's group.

Toraife, a bomb-maker whose real name is Abdulmalik Esmael, was blamed for the deadly bombings in Central Mindanao in the past three years.

Local officials and Islamic religious leaders said there were at least four foreigners tagging along with Toraife — Saab Sha'arbatri, who has Middle Eastern features; Zaruum Sumaharti, an Indonesian; and a Malaysian named Ornar Kenzih.

Information has spread around since Monday purporting that a fifth foreigner, Muahwia, a Malaysian, was killed in military airstrikes that destroyed his hideout in Shariff Saidona Mustapha.

JULMUNIR I. JANNARAL

# Syrian missionary shot dead in North Cotabato

BY JULMUNIR I. JANNARAL

**C**OTABATO CITY: On the same day that an Australian gunman shot dead 49 Muslims just after performing their Friday congregational prayer inside a mosque in Christchurch in New Zealand, a Syrian cleric preaching in a predominantly Muslim *barangay* (village) in Carmen town in North Cotabato was also gunned down by an unidentified suspect.

Carmen municipal police identified the fatality as Sheik Wasif, whose Maguindanaon spouse,

Tayaan Ambag, was wounded in the attack.

Wasif, a Muslim missionary

from Syria, handled Islamic theology subjects in a local Madrasah (religious school) in Barangay Manarapan, Carmen.

Supt. Aldrin Gonzalez, spokesman for the Police Regional Office-12 (PRO-12), on Saturday said initial reports from investigators indicated that a gun-wielding man barged into Wasif's house in Barangay Nasapian on Friday and opened fire, killing him instantly.

Wasif's wife Tayaan was brought to a hospital by responding police officers and *barangay* officials.

The neighboring villages of Nasapian and Manarapan in

Carmen became part of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao after local residents voted in favor of the inclusion of their villages in BARMM's proposed core territory in a plebiscite last February 6.

The newly established BARMM is a product of 22 years of peace talks between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

Gonzalez said their regional director, Chief Supt. Eliseo Rasco, of PRO-12 had ordered the North Cotabato provincial police to dispatch intelligence agents to Carmen to help the local police investigate the incident. 17

## ENGKUWENTRO SA ABU SAYYAF 2 sundalo sugatan, 500 lumikas

**ZAMBOANGA CITY** - Sugatan ang dalawang miyembro ng Philippine Marines at tinatayang aabot sa 500 residente ang lumikas nang bombahin ng militar ang Abu Sayyaf Group, na bumihag sa dalawang Malaysian sa isang isla sa Banguingui, Sulu.

Nakilala ang dalawang nasugatan na sina Corporal Syrus Valenzuela at Private Jude Louiss Nabalan.

Sa report ng militar, nagsimula ang military operations sa Sitio Kabahayan, Barangay Bakkan, Banguingui laban sa grupo ni ASG sub-leader Salip Mura, nitong

Biyernes, dakong 6:40 ng gabi.

Paliwanag ng militar, pinaulanan nila ng mortar ang pinagtaguan ng mga bandido habang tinatangka ng mga sundalo na sagipin ang mga dalawang kidnap victim.

Binabantayan na rin ng tropa ng pamahalaan ang isla upang hindi na makatakas at makahingi ng suporta ang mga bandido sa iba pang grupo ng mga ito sa Sulu.

Naniniwala rin ang militar na maraming bandido ang nasugatan o napatay sa bakkakan.

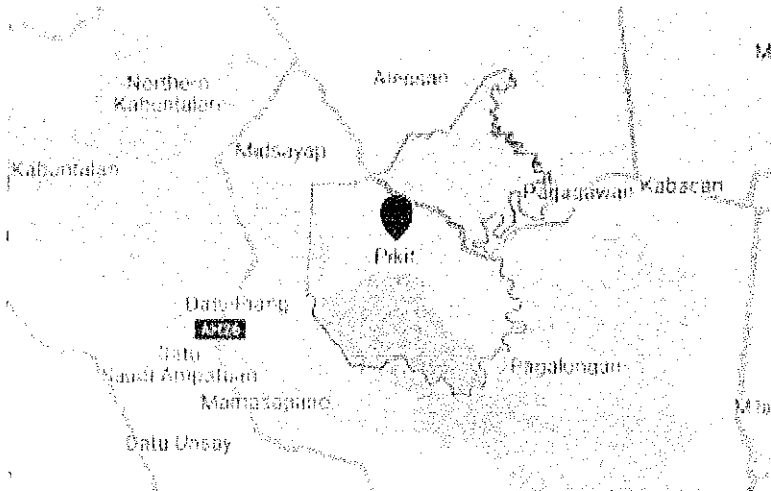
**Nonoy E. Lacson**

**ONLINE NEWS**  
**17 MARCH 2019**

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

## Militiamen survive grenade attack in NoCot

By Edwin Fernandez March 16, 2019, 5:27 pm



Google map of Pikit, North Cotabato

**KIDAPAWAN CITY** -- Two paramilitary troopers stationed in the conflict-ridden village of Pikit, North Cotabato survived a grenade attack on Friday night, police said.

**"They were lucky the grenade did not explode," Police Capt. Mautin Pangandigan, Pikit town police chief said, referring to the grenade attack against the militiamen whom he declined to identify for security reasons.**

Pangandigan, in a phone interview, said an unidentified man on board a motorbike sped by the detachment of the Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU) in Barangay Inug-og, Pikit at 6:45 p.m.

The man then tossed the grenade inside the detachment where the two paramilitary troopers were on duty.

"They (militiamen) thought they were stoned but upon verification, they discovered a live grenade right inside the detachment," Pangandigan said.

**Army bomb disposal experts safely defused the grenade barely half an hour later.**

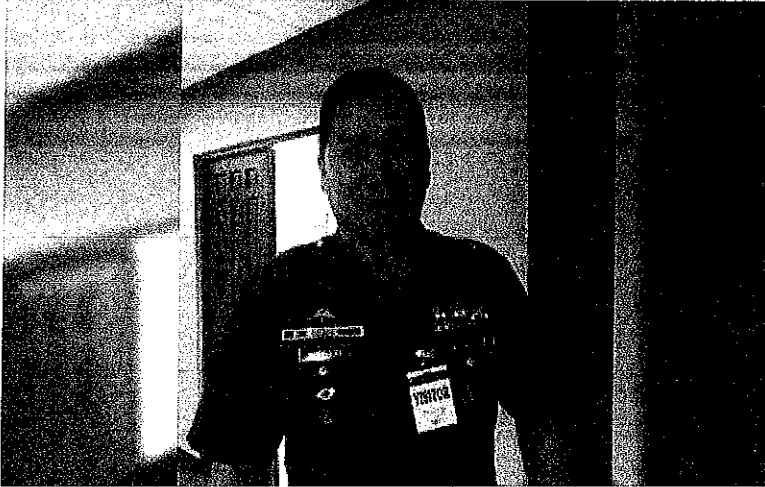
No one has claimed responsibility over the grenade-throwing incident but the militiamen suspected the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) could be behind it.

The BIFF, in several occurrences, has harassed CAFGU detachments in the area over the past few months. (PNA)

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

## **much evidence vs. Karapatan as CPP-front org'n: AFP official**

By Priam Nepomuceno March 16, 2019, 2:46 pm



AFP Deputy Chief-of-Staff for Civil-Military Operations, Brig. Gen. Antonio Parlade Jr. (PNA file photo)

**MANILA** – A ranking official of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has called Karapatan's claims as lies when it alleged that the military does not have any evidence to show that the group is a front organization of the communist movement.

"We have a lot and Karapatan is worried about all these truth coming out now. AFP, not a credible institution? Then refute the very high trust rating of AFP in all surveys except CPP's (Communist Party of the Philippines)," AFP Deputy Chief-of-Staff for Civil-Military Operations, Brig. Gen. Antonio Parlade Jr., said in a press statement on Saturday.

Parlade was reacting to the allegations of Karapatan secretary general, Cristina Palabay, who said that he has consistently been "red-tagging" them and other militant groups despite alleged lack of evidence.

### **Selective protection**

Parlade belittled Karapatan's claims that it is a protector of human rights (HR) in the country. "Where were you when the NPAs (New People's Army) have been killing the IPs (indigenous peoples) in Mindanao, until now? Where is Karapatan when non-participating civilians were killed by NPAs? Karapatan is a kind of organization that is very selective in dealing with human rights (HR). Selective in a sense that it only uses human rights to defend its NPA allies," he said.

Parlade also asked where Karapatan was when ACT and Bayan Muna reportedly trafficked children in Davao last year.

### **Fabrication**

"Karapatan is afraid of becoming irrelevant because the AFP has not committed any HR violation for the past five years or more. Even in the past, many of the HR violations and civilian killings attributed to AFP were in fact committed by the NPAs, disguised as soldiers in uniform, as admitted openly by former rebel Father Balweg," he said.

Karapatan, he said, has to fabricate reports of human rights violations by the AFP so that the United Nations (UN) and European Union (EU) may continue to collect donations from European countries.



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Parlade added that Palabay is worried about the government's success in unmasking the truth about the communist front organizations, which were tagged by Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) founder Jose Maria "Joma" Sison himself in all its revolutionary websites, Joma's verbal pronouncements, and CPP publications.

"Please check the links and websites (ILPS website, Philippine Revolution Web Central, NDF International) and see for yourselves who identified Karapatan and Ibon as CPP front organizations or part of the International League of Peoples Struggles' (ILPS) network of organizations, with 'Joma' as chairperson," he said.

He noted that Article 8 Paragraph 2 of UN General Assembly Resolution 47/133, or the "Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances" of 1992, clearly states that for Joma to continue to stay in Utrecht, even against the wishes of the Dutch government, "all relevant considerations including, where applicable, the existence in the State concerned (Philippines) of a consistent pattern of gross, flagrant or mass violations of human rights" shall be taken into account.

### **Non-refoulement no more**

"You have to consistently paint any administration as oppressive and tyrant, even by fabricating lies like the 27,000 EJKs (extra judicial killings) from PRRD's (President Rodrigo R. Duterte) drug war, because with a professional AFP now, the EU Courts would soon send Joma back to the Philippines to spend the rest of his life in jail for his crimes against humanity (80,000 killed after 50 years of CPP-NPA-NDF atrocities without Karapatan blinking) because there is no more danger of state persecution," he said.

He added that Joma can no longer invoke "non-refoulement" in the courts and this is what Palabay and Karapatan fear," he said.

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He added that with the Duterte administration adhering to human rights, "EU and Belgian funding of non-government organizations for the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines (RMP), Ibon, Karapatan and all other CPP-front organizations using human rights as cover, will dry up.

"That's the hardest truth, Miss Palabay. I challenge you to prove your case over a nationwide TV, one on one. I will present to you trucks of evidences and you better be prepared to refute them all. Any time, po," Parlade said.

The CPP-NPA is listed as a terrorist organization by the United States government and the European Union (EU). **(PNA)**

<https://www.philstar.com/>

## **Maute leader, 3 followers slain in Lanao Sur clash**

Roel Pareño, Jaime Laude (The Philippine Star) - March 16, 2019 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — The self-proclaimed leader of the Maute group, Owayda Benito Marohomsar, alias Abu Dar, was reported killed along with his three followers in heavy fighting with Army soldiers in Lanao del Sur yesterday.

However, Col. Romeo Brawner, commander of the Marawi City-based 103rd Brigade, said it needs further confirmation, including DNA testing, to confirm that one of the bodies recovered was that of Abu Dar.

"Three highly credible informants who were with us in the encounter identified one of the bodies as that of Abu Dar and not Commander Zacaria, the sub-leader of the terror group, but we need further validation," Brawner said.

Government security forces have been hunting down Abu Dar and his group since they escaped from the main battle area in Marawi.

A reward of P6 million was offered for information leading to the arrest of Abu Dar, who was reported critically wounded in a series of fighting earlier this year.

Abu Dar assumed the leadership of the Maute group following the killing of Abu Sayyaf Commander Isnilon Hapilon, who was designated leader of the Islamic State in Southeast Asia, and the Maute brothers in the fighting in Marawi.

### **4 soldiers killed**

Brawner said four soldiers were also killed while the two others were wounded in yesterday's encounter.

Soldiers of the 49th Infantry Battalion encountered the terrorist group while conducting combat operations in Sitio Tagum, Barangay Dinaig, Tubaran town at around 5 p.m.

Three soldiers had been earlier reported missing, but were later located by Army search teams.

One of the soldiers died before help came. His two colleagues, who were also wounded, were evacuated to a hospital for treatment.

Col. Gerry Besana, spokesman for the Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom), said the body of one of the slain militants, two caliber 5.56 rifles, a caliber .45 pistol, hand and rifle grenades, various types of ammunition and a bandoleer were recovered during clearing operations.

Four other Maute militants and four other soldiers were killed in gunfights since Monday.

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One of the slain militants was identified as Abu Tahir, the alleged henchman of slain terrorist Zulkipli bin Hir, alias Marwan, who was killed in a military operation in Mamasapano, Maguindano in 2015.

As yesterday afternoon, military operations against the remnants of the Maute group are ongoing.

"Tuloy-tuloy pa ang operations, pero konti na lang mga ito dahil madami na ang nalagas sa kanila since January," Brawner said.

"We are advancing to the enemy target... hitting and inflicting heavy casualties on Maute fighters," Lt. Gen. Arnel dela Vega, Westmincom chief, said.

Dela Vega said the death of Army troopers serves as a motivation to "continue the fight against spoilers of peace and progress in Mindanao."

Read more at <https://www.philstar.com/nation/2019/03/16/1901815/maute-leader-3-followers-slain-lanao-sur-clash#SLISZe7dWwmzQ5WVy.99>