



# The ARMY JOURNAL

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## THE ARMY JOURNAL

The Army Journal is an academic journal published biannually by Headquarters, Philippine Army with the Army Governance and Strategy Management Office (AGSMO) as the office of primary responsibility. It serves as a tool to publish original research or related literature on subjects relevant to the PA or the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). It also makes such information available to other scholars and researchers. Furthermore, the journal contributes to the advancement and extent of knowledge in the PA or the AFP in particular and the Philippine society in general.

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**COMMANDING GENERAL  
PHILIPPINE ARMY**  
Fort Andres Bonifacio, Metro Manila

**Message**

The Philippine Army's vital role as an essential member of the workforce is even more emphasized with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite such odds, the Army's resolve and core purpose remains the same – that is to serve the people and secure the land.

In this special edition of the *Army Journal*, we recognize the noble efforts of our soldiers and fellow frontliners whose duty to the flag and the country goes beyond the Service. This issue also features the inspiring stories of success of our personnel amidst these trying times.

Likewise, this publication features the Philippine Army's innovations in pursuit of constant transformation and commitment to promote and practice the Army's hallmark of good governance, transparency, and accountability in the affairs of the organization.

As we continue to deal with the challenges of times, we will capacitate our forces to find, fix, and finish the enemy and exploit gains; intensify stakeholder engagements; sustain good governance; and uplift the morale and welfare of the personnel in order for the Philippine Army to triumph over battles and win the peace.

To all the Officers, Enlisted Personnel, and the Civilian Human Resource of the Philippine Army, thank you for your passion and dedication in service to the Filipino people and our beloved country.

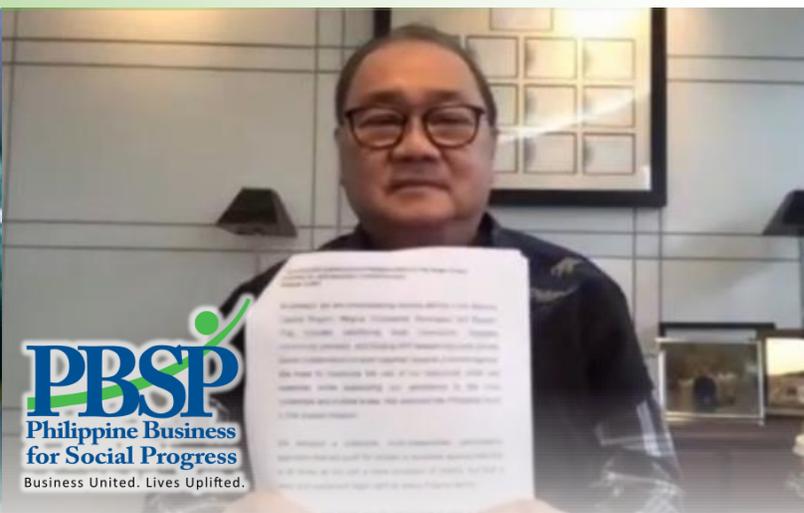
*Tiyak na marami tayong nagawa sa nagdaang taon dahil masaya tayong lahat. Kaya naman ipagpatuloy lang natin ang pagserbisyo sa ating bayan. At sa pagsagawa ng ating mga tungkulin, tandaan natin na ang taong masaya ay maraming nagagawa!*

*Maligayang Pasko at Manigong Bagong Taon sa ating lahat!*

*Mabuhay ang Philippine Army!*

  
**CIRILITO E SOBEJANA**  
Lieutenant General PA





*LTGEN CIRILITO E. SOBEJANA, PA and MR MANUEL V. PANGILINAN holding the signed Memorandum of Understanding*

## Responding to the Plight of our Starving Filipino Brethren

- Mr. Gil Ezekiel J. Senanin, CivHR, AGSMO

Food is a basic necessity from which human beings live and thrive. It is primarily a basic need essential for nutrition, health and wellbeing. It directly affect one's execution of duties and responsibilities, performance of tasks, and fulfillment of one's desires. However, food supply is a limited resource and given with the current situation of the pandemic, food scarcity escalates to unprecedented measures. Hunger and malnutrition grow even worse particularly to those whose capacity to avail food and other basic commodities are crippled as a result of economic downturn. We are indeed living in difficult times. What are we to expect for the coming years? Do we just sit back and let nature heal itself so that sooner or later everything will revert back to normal? Have our hopes and aspirations come to a halt, then? Fortunately, initiatives and proactive movements are present, though incapable of completely eradicating the pandemic, these sought to alleviate the suffering, give aid to those who are in need, and to help those who are embittered by food scarcity.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Philippine Army and Armed Forces of the Philippines (PA-AFP) represented by Lt. Gen. Cirilito A. Sobejana and the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP), represented by its Chairman,

Mr. Manuel V. Pangilinan, is an excellent initiative to combat hunger, malnutrition, and issues on food security in the country. It acknowledges a joint effort of both government and private enterprises which seeks not profit but toils for the betterment and welfare of the society. Accordingly, both parties are at the forefront of making a great change by working intelligently with perseverance in seeking the best ways of alleviating food scarcity and in finding great solutions to combat the urgent and serious problems of food supply. This partnership, formalized through the MOU, shall serve as a instrument in building our nation. Nonetheless, it also serves as an example worthy of imitation and inspiration for other organizations, both government and private sectors alike, with the intention and desire to help our fellow Filipinos in times of peace and crisis. Rightly asked, how will it help the AFP and PBSP as organizations in joint collaboration? How will they expand our social horizon?

Parties involved, namely the PA-AFP and PBSP, would leave a mark in our country's history. AFP alone will be acknowledged in its efforts and capabilities not just in defending our territorial integrity and the Constitution but also in helping our fellow Filipinos in delivering the service that they need in terms of food security. Indeed, this service will help our fellow Filipinos and at the same time it will also aid in creating a genuine transformation within the Army. Moreover, the Army will gain its reputation and will be recognized with national pride despite being marred with inadequacies and unconsolidated opinions. Filipinos will trust the



PBSP Executive Director, Mr. Reynaldo Antonio D. Laguda with CGPA during the Courtesy Call last 09 November 2020.

Army in a greater degree. PBSP, on the other hand, will be recognized in its initiative as a private enterprise attuned with the recurring problems of our country. It becomes a model in the awareness of the social consciousness of our times. PBSP serves as an instrument for the promotion of charity works so that other private enterprises may follow suit in collaboration with one another with the intention of promoting charity and the common good. Business mindedness is discarded, private agendas and selfish motives are cast aside. Its focus is the common good. AFP will have a mutual relationship and understanding with PBSP and vice versa. Hence, for future generations to come, it is of great plausibility that both parties will again collaborate for a common purpose. Peoples will see in the AFP and PBSP a chance for national growth and a resounding hope for a better future.

The MOU may have underscored its tasks but it is limited in its scope. It is delimited because its task is primarily in terms of food security. Nonetheless, a majority of our peoples will benefit from it both from the urban and rural areas. Moreover, peoples will model themselves with the examples set by AFP and PBSP. They can form organizations for charity works and in turn can also be living examples for others. Being inspired by them, peoples will have an awareness of their social environment. Being enamored by them, peoples will deny their life's comforts and will live at the service of their brethren. Peoples will feel that they are taken care of and are assured of it.

Surprisingly, our nation is abundant in food and is rich in natural resources. But why do we have a large portion of our population who goes hungry and even become malnourished? How come that we have a scarcity of food when our nation itself is rich in natural resources? Someone can easily think that the joint efforts of AFP and PBSP are to produce crops and food supply for food distribution. However, this is easier said than done. Food supplies may be abundant but it requires tenuous efforts like planning, logistics and coordinated plans so that producers will benefit nonetheless. Food supply is concentrated in our country. Hence, MOU laid out its considerations on technical working teams for better implementation and proper distribution of food supplies. The AFP and PBSP came out with strict measures and coordinated efforts to promote charity works through the alleviation of hunger and food scarcity. Their solution is national in coverage and it is multi-sectoral. They are to ensure that most will benefit from MOU.

The MOU will greatly contribute to the long-term vision for the Philippines entitled *Ambisyon Natin 2040*. This long-term vision has a prospect of giving a stable and comfortable lifestyle among our Filipino brethren and accordingly MOU is one of the instruments for the fulfilment of such a prospect. MOU is a great leap in establishing a *Matatag, Maginhawa, at Panatag na Buhay* as envisioned by *Ambisyon Natin 2040*. MOU creates and lays the foundations for making the endeavors of *Ambisyon Natin 2040* not as an ambition per se but as a reality enjoyed by our Filipino brethren. Through food security and stability, MOU contributes to the wholeness of *Ambisyon Natin 2040*. It is also through the joint efforts that will make *Ambisyon Natin 2040* a reality. Filipinos will feel secured not just with the prospects of *Ambisyon Natin 2040* but also with the joint efforts of AFP and PBSP as well. They will trust the Government and the Business sectors to a greater level. Lastly, the MOU as it pursues its aims and goals should not be treated as a letter of contract but should be seen in the light of the spirit of charity, service, and love. *Ambisyon Natin 2040* is attainable through these core values which make it a reality. 

# Towards a World-Class Army: A Case Study on Philippine Army Transformation Amidst Combating Unconventional Threats

- Ms. Alexandra Beatriz A Agulto

War has always been the default battleground of the military. This is a conventional threat for the military and anchors all the strategy and program structure of the armed forces. This usually covers the states, citizens, organizations, and stakeholders to military threat (Bedeski, 1992). However, national security is not only conventionally threatened. As the world globalized, unconventional threats also pose challenges to the forefronts of the state's security. Said threats are usually in the form of pandemic, financial crisis, and disasters. These are usually unpredictable and beyond the control of either government or military forces (Bedeski, 1992).

During the last quarter of 2019, a disease previously unbeknownst to the global population began its initial proliferation. It spread rapidly which cause infection among thousands of people in its point of origin (WHO, 2020). Novel Coronavirus, most commonly known as COVID-19, spread rapidly in different parts of the world and the Philippines has recorded numerous cases of said disease (WHO, 2020). Since the disease is fatal, it posed national threat in the country. After conducting nationwide lockdown, the country's economy was affected. Decline in general mental well-being as well as economic implications, such as loss of livelihood and downturn of businesses, were severely felt. Most of all, the health and welfare of the Filipinos are on the line. Conduct of nationwide lockdown means that the military has to exert effort in combating this invisible enemy. Without any prior knowledge and cure, military forces accepted the challenge to secure the nation (BBC News, 2020). The community lockdown implicated the high demand for the service of military forces in maintaining peace and stabilizing the situation in the different parts of the country. In response, Philippine Army deployed troops

to support the security in the implementation of the lockdown (Gotingca, 2020).

Before the onset of the unconventional threat in the form of COVID-19, the armed forces, primarily the Philippine Army, is undergoing an organizational transformation with a goal of becoming a world-class Army by the year 2028. In the pursuit to modernize the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), a law was passed which became known as the Armed Forces of the Philippines Modernization Act which aims to modernize its major services such as the Philippine Army, the Philippine Airforce and Philippine Navy. The Act will help in the enhancement and development of the major services to invest in machineries and equipment that will strengthen and expand the operations of the major services. The law first entered into force in 1995 during the administration of President Fidel V. Ramos in accordance to develop a self-reliant and strategic armed forces (Congress of the Philippines, 2012).

The Act states that the AFP must develop and enhance the following areas: Force Restructuring and Organizational Development, Capability, Material and Technology Development, Human Resource Development, and Doctrines and Development. Likewise, acquisition of machineries and equipment that will enhance the operations of the major services is included and funded in the Act (Congress of the Philippines, 2012). The modernization program is a 15-year plan. In 2012, amendment of the Act was signed by President Benigno Aquino III. The amendment of the act is composed of three horizons. The first phase began in 2013 and ended in 2017, while the second phase started in 2018 and will end in 2022. The last phase will commence in 2023 and will conclude in 2028 (Castro, 2018).

To complement the timeline indicated in the law that mandates the modernization of the PA, the Army Transformation Roadmap (ATR) was launched in 2010. This is an 18-year journey toward achieving a world-class army. The road map is a timeline that specifies the attainment of the PA within the specific period. The ATR also anchors the programs and projects of the organization (Palladium, 2018).

The challenges posed by COVID-19 affects the transformation of the Philippine Army towards a world class-army. According to CPT RAMIUS DIZON (2020) of the Office of the Army Chief Surgeon, COVID-19 pandemic must be directly addressed because its presence and consequences pose a challenge not only in the Philippine Army but to the country. Also, guidelines are important to address

and stabilize situations during this kind of threat. He also stated that it is important for the Philippine Army to recognize this challenge to become adept in addressing future threats that can pose greater harm in the country.

Henceforth, it can be observed that the unconventional threat specifically COVID-19 contributed to the planning and programming of the Philippine Army in addressing threats of this nature and vying towards becoming a world-class Army. The programs established by the Philippine Army in addressing these unconventional and unfamiliar challenges enhanced the capability of the military in adapting to the changes brought by the said form of threat.

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### ***Ms. Alexandra Beatriz A Agulto***

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## Finance Center on the Move Amidst the New Normal

- CPT KAREN N PADAYAO (FS) PA, Finance Center, Philippine Army

Stemming from the onset and continuous spread of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, a “New Normal” condition was established in the absence of any existing viable treatment or vaccine against the disease. The grave danger posed by COVID-19 has driven the Philippine Army (PA) to adopt strict mitigation measures and other health-related protocols which have considerably disrupted and altered established processes, conventions, and standard operating procedures.

The Finance Center, Philippine Army (FCPA) is the sole unit of the Philippine Army that caters to the financial services of all uniformed men and women and Civilian Human Resource of the PA including the Citizen Armed Force Geographic Unit (CAFGU) through its

Finance Service Field Offices (FSFOs) which are strategically deployed nationwide where financial service support to subordinate units are needed most. With these, the “new normal” conditions didn’t hamper the Center in fulfilling its mandate and pursuing its vision. Along with the Army Transformation Roadmap journey in transcending the culture of good governance and genuine transformation, FCPA aligned and crafted its strategy map with a vision of being a “world-class Finance Center that is a source of pride for the Philippine Army by 2028”.

FCPA is committed to quality and efficient service for its stakeholders. Thus, we also value the International Organization for Standardization's ISO 9001:2008 Certification which we have achieved in

2015. Along this line, the Finance Center deemed it important to continue the gains of being an ISO 9001:2015 certified organization. The ISO standard displays congruence with the Army Transformation Roadmap which sees a vision of becoming a world-class Army that is a source of national pride by 2028.

Finance Center, Philippine Army aims not only to comply with the standard but also to add value to the organization and start on the path of continual improvement. The paramount goal of the Center is to have an effective and robust Quality Management System (QMS) with numerous potential benefits. Having once trodden the path of excellence by being conferred with an ISO 9001:2008 Certificate through the assistance of the NEO AMCA Innovative Solutions Corporation and with the International Certifying Body (Global) as the auditing body, which carved the name of FCPA as the first Army Major Unit to be ISO Certified in the annals of Army history as per issued Certificate of Registration Number QAC/R63/0152 dated August 3, 2015. The FCPA would not rest on these laurels and would want to continue its drive towards excellence.

ISO 9001:2015 newest version is an international standard dedicated to QMS with risk-based thinking and management. Hence, the standard will be used by FCPA to demonstrate its ability to consistently provide products and services that meet customer and regulatory requirements and to demonstrate its commitment to continuously improve the organization. The ISO 9001 will guide the Center as it outlines a framework for improving quality systems and understanding the language of its customers to provide the best products and services that will consistently meet customers' requirements and expectations as well as other relevant interested parties in the most efficient manner possible. The FCPA QMS is the aggregate of all processes, resources, assets, and cultural values that support the goal of customer satisfaction and organizational efficiency stated in our Army Transformation Roadmap

Scorecard to accomplish our mission.

Along with the Army Transformation Roadmap journey in transcending the culture of good governance and genuine transformation, FCPA also deemed it important to embrace continual improvement guided by the ISO standard. This undertaking was explicitly supported by the Army Governance and Strategy Management Office (AGSMO). The Center started its ISO journey on July 14, 2020 by holding a soft-launching event for ISO9001:2015 Road to Certification. A symbolic contract signing was done during the event between FCPA and NEO AMCA, represented by the Director COL SEIGFRED C TUBALADO (INF) PA MNSA, and NEO AMCA's Secretary, Attorney Agustin D Aldea. This was followed by an ISO Awareness Training as a start of the orientation for both designated FCPA ISO Champions and all FCPA personnel.

Whether to maintain QMS after a successful audit and maintaining it throughout certification, FCPA believes that there is a need to ensure that competence and awareness are at the forefront of all personnel when it comes to ISO 9001. There is no prescribed way on how to achieve this, but here at the Finance Center, we begin our journey with the implementation of a training session for ISO Awareness attended by all personnel. The first FCPA ISO Awareness Training was done on July 14, 2020 to introduce and equip all FCPA personnel on the ISO 9001 standards, its clauses, and the essence of the quality management systems to FCPA. All personnel were required to undertake this introduction to have all personnel fully immerse themselves in the ISO 9001 journey of FCPA.

As an initial salvo with the ISO standards and to benchmark the level with which FCPA is currently standing, the 5S Audit (Sort, Set in order, Shine, Standardize, and Sustain) was conducted on July 21, 2020 by the Neo Amca Team in and around the

perimeter of the Finance Center including all its Offices and Branches in the FCPA buildings. 5S is a widely used concept for getting things so that it assesses how well an organization is organized – to go along with your QMS standards.

In addition, risk-based thinking has always been part of ISO 9001, but the 2015 standard has made this approach more explicit. While ISO 9001:2015 sometimes seems to present “risk” as the opposite of “opportunity,” it provides a more nuanced concept of risk as it applies to Finance Center. The Risk and Opportunities Seminar was undertaken and conducted on 02-03 September 2020 for all ISO Champions thru video conferencing. The current situation did not hamper the Center’s application for ISO certification thus opted to hold meetings, consultations, and online training. This approach taught the champions that opportunities arise from favorable situations intended to achieve a positive result, such as developing a new system or enhancing an old service for our customers. Such opportunities can also carry risks associated with change. ISO 9001:2015 therefore defines risk not as the probability of loss or damage, but as “the effect of uncertainty.” Wherein risk carries a possibility of loss, but also the possibility of opportunity, the Finance Center is exploring such as the unit’s awareness of the circumstances in which these risks may arise and implement a more effective QMS that facilitates positive results and mitigates negative ones.

In the same month, the full force of the requirements of ISO QMS was felt by all ISO Champions as all work processes of all offices and branches were reviewed and job descriptions were scrutinized to come up with the exact and appropriate procedure that the office offers such as its frontline services and turn them into documented QMS that meets the statutory and regulatory requirement. The procedure adds more

specifics to processes such as responsibilities, specific tools used, methods applied, and measurements for monitoring. A well-documented and emplaced QMS has proven over the years that it leads organizations such as the Finance Center to better operations, improved performance, and improved customer satisfaction ratings. Given that knowing the objectives, expectations, and requirements of the standard are the fundamental starting point of making all personnel aware of these ISO elements. The FCPA leadership puts a premium on the importance of providing guidance and knowledge to all personnel requiring the Procedures Consultation to carry-on for an extended period from September 15 to 29 to ensure that the workforce is educated and focused on important aspects of their Office processes and come up with an effective and efficient QMS as required by the 9001 standards.

In addition, all procedures, work instructions, risk and opportunities register of all 10 offices and branches, Support Division and Supply Section, including document control, internal quality audit, and the quality manual were documented and finalized according to ISO 9001:2015 standards. To ensure that all documentation complies with the specifications, all outputs were presented and thoroughly scrutinized on a three-day plenary conference together with the top management headed by Director, FCPA from 8 to 10 October 2020. On October 21 to 23, a handful of ISO Champions underwent a three-day Internal Quality Auditor’s Training to capacitate the personnel to become internal quality auditors. The training ensures that there are competent personnel that will push for continual improvement for an organization since it allows its trained internal auditors the opportunity to constantly monitor and review the efficiency of the organization’s processes.





It highlights the important role of the FCPA's IQA by helping the organization to continuously verify the conformance of the organization's processes and compliance with the ISO 9001:2015 standard. The auditors in training were oriented with the audit requirement of both the ISO 9001 and the guidelines of an auditing management system based on ISO 19011:2018.

As a part of their practical exam, the auditors in training conducted their very first practice audit with the newly ISO 9001:2015 Certified Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Logistics, G4 in their Office at the Philippine Army Headquarters. After undergoing the training, exams, and practical audit, 19 successful auditors were appointed as the new IQAs of Finance Center, Philippine Army. This group of 19 auditors will, later on, help the Finance Center to evaluate and check its compliances to the QMS and the Center's overall readiness to undergo the Stage 1 audit.

FCPA seeks to be at par with the Army's transformation and elevate its skills, services, systems and processes along the road of transformation, hence, seeks to up its game by aligning itself in the internationally accepted standards, hence the 1st Management Review of the Center was conducted on November 6. To integrate and create a uniform implementation of both the Quality Management Systems under ISO 9001 and the existing FCPA ATR Scorecard, the first Management Review hosted and incorporated the third quarter ATR Strategy Review as well as the September Programs Review of the Center. This type of consolidation, monitoring, and evaluation

tool will make it sustainable to conduct a Management Review for the Finance Center while keeping the Center on track with its road to Institutionalization. Thru the vision of the Finance Center's leadership, which requires a management review process that periodically reviews the Quality Management System to ensure its continuing suitability, adequacy, and effectiveness while addressing the possible need for changes to quality policy, objectives, targets, and other elements of the QMS, the Finance Center is on the way to journey of ISO 9001.

As the Army's frontline service provider in the financial operations and financial support, it maintains enterprise-supervision on financial matters that include Army's disbursing and remittance operations, managing the Army network of military uniformed and civilian personnel pay and allowances service, systematically organizing the historical and current Army financial records while providing oversight banking assistance to the Army's Government Servicing Banks. FCPA believes that there can be no continual improvement without competence and awareness for all finance personnel --- hence, another ISO 9001 Awareness Training was conducted to refresh the knowledge of all FCPA personnel before its Stage 1 Certification Audit.

An ISO Awareness Reboot was conducted for all personnel on November 17, 2020 to improve their familiarity with ISO 9001 QMS and invigorate their knowledge that was imparted throughout the four-month long journey of all Finance Center personnel.



Lastly, one of the main clauses of ISO 9001 is focused on continuous improvement. For FCPA, this is an important aspect that clings to the heart of the Finance Center since it assures us that we put premium on customers' primary benefit by receiving products/services that meet their requirement and that we deliver consistent performance to all clientele. In return, internally, for FCPA, the organization will soon profit from increased job satisfaction, improved personnel morale, and enhanced operational results by increased efficiency while minimizing misuse and waste of resources.

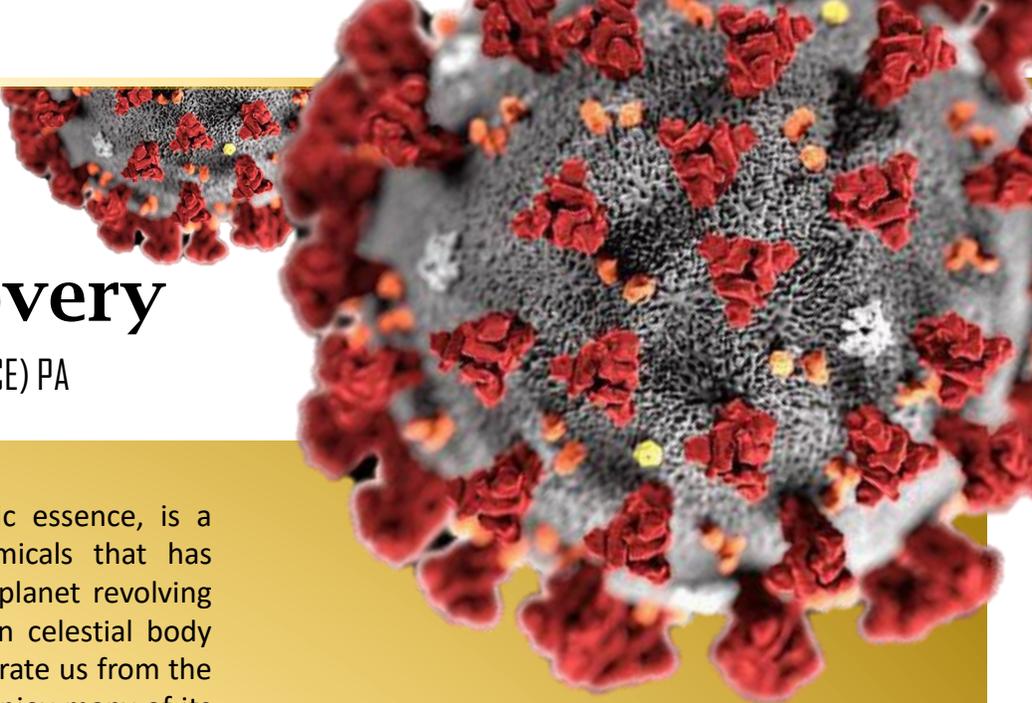
Onward to our destiny, on November 20, FCPA opened its doors to its long-time auditor, Certification Partner Global (CPG) for the Stage 1 Audit to review the organization's QMS and assess its readiness. After a whole day document audit, the Center successfully passed and moved to Stage 2 Audit. On November 27, the FCPA underwent the final step of Certification

Audit to verify the effectiveness of its QMS and its compliance with the ISO 9001 standards. Before the day ended, the Finance Center had once again aligned itself with other internationally recognized and trusted organizations by being declared ISO 9001:2015 Certified, the first Philippine Army Major Unit to have successfully passed both 2008 and 2015 versions of the ISO 9001 Quality Management Systems.

FCPA, together with the rest of the Philippine Army, and the rest of the country and the world, is faced with an unseen foe that has unexpectedly imperiled and continues to endanger the lives of many. As we grapple with ways to simultaneously protect our well-being while accomplishing our tasks and missions, we must be more than ready to adopt necessary changes while continuing our vision of excellence and commitment as we move forward towards a "world-class Army that is a source of national pride by 2028". 

**CPT KAREN N PADAYAO O-16004 (FS) PA**

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# Dead on Recovery

- LTC MICHAEL N ASUNCION GSC (CE) PA

The earth, in the most basic essence, is a combination of elements and chemicals that has made living conducive. As the third planet revolving around the sun, it is the only known celestial body that can provide us with life and separate us from the vacuum and within which we freely enjoy many of its great splendor and gifts.

Living has become a routine and leisure was often taken for granted. This freedom, however, was impeded by the unforeseen threat that swept across the globe. Today, the days of uninhibited, mundane, and whimsical interaction, remains to be a distant and nostalgic experience. In spite of this pandemic, the country remains to be in constant guard against the changing security and territorial issues.

Contemporary threats and challenges and uncertain security environment that Filipino people are facing are brought about by the presence of the Communist Party of the Philippines, New People's Army, National Democratic Front, Abu Sayyaf Group, and the looming West Philippine Sea dispute. With regards to the territorial dispute, six nations, including the Philippines, have conflicting maritime claims on South China Sea (GMA News, 2016). Moreover, the boundaries of the Exclusive Economic Zones of the "West Philippine Sea" includes Luzon Sea, Kalayaan Group of Islands in Palawan, and the Panatag Shoal (called internationally as Scarborough Shoal and Huangyan Island by China), are also contested and claimed by other Southeast Asian countries. To add on top of these issues a global pandemic, COVID-19, made its way to the archipelago, resulting to the widespread cases and threat of contracting the virus.

These issues on national security are still fresh our recollection. An example of such is the Siege of Marawi that happened on May 23, 2017 when a pro-

Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) group called Maute organized an attack of the city. The siege was triggered when the military tried to arrest a top ISIL leader that led to a five-month-long "Battle of Marawi" resulting to the displacement of 360,000 people in Marawi and surrounding areas. The Marawi siege prompted the hostile zones of the city into burning infrastructures and thousands of deaths, only leaving the streets with the aftermath of a heavy onslaught (Betteridge-Moes, 2017). After years of trying to recover the government's control within the perimeters, another alarming death toll has taken this city by surprise, the coronavirus pandemic.

With these undertakings and to control the catastrophic situations that beset the country, President Rodrigo Roa Duterte's policy order relative to "Institutionalizing the Whole-of-Nation Approach in Attaining Inclusive and Sustainable Peace, Creating a National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict, and Directing the Adoption of a National Peace Framework," enforces for the institutionalization of the Whole-of-Nation Approach as a government policy for the attainment of inclusive and sustainable peace, creation of the national task force to end local communist armed conflict to ensure efficient and effective implementation (Executive Order 70, s. 2018). Much of it is the creation also of the Inter-Agency Task Force whose mandate is to implement collaborative and unified efforts in addressing the prevailing health issues. The Department of Health (DOH) has instituted

the Interagency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID), the agency in-charge for the overall management of COVID-19 preparedness and response. It has likewise created the DOH Emergency Operation Center (DOH EOC) for COVID-19, a command center in-charge of consolidating updates and information as COVID-19 health event evolves.

Just recently, another disaster brought extreme damage to 1.6 million Filipinos who were affected. As reported by CNN (2020), “Typhoon Vamco, referred to as Ulysses in the Philippines, hit the country on November 12, 2020. It is equivalent in force to a Category 2 hurricane, according to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA). Furthermore, Vamco is the fifth storm already to impact the Philippines in just over three weeks.” As the Philippine Red Cross chairman adds, “These non-stop storms are slamming our communities during a deadly pandemic, making this one of the most complicated disaster responses ever.”

To further explain, DOH said in its official site that it is “closely monitoring the individuals who manifest the signs of respiratory infection and had a history of travel to China or other countries with confirmed COVID-19 cases, and is coordinating with World Health Organization and China Center for Disease Control for updates.” It mentioned also that it is strictly monitoring the repatriates from Wuhan, China and the M/V Diamond Princess in Japan, and continues to conduct contact tracing of positive cases in the Philippines to ascertain that the spread of the virus locally is put to a halt. In terms of communicating developments to the public, the Department holds press briefings thrice a week to ensure the government’s transparency and accountability. DOH also enhanced its coronavirus laboratory testing capacity, hospital preparedness, rapid response, and its risk communication and information dissemination. Personal Protective Equipment is made available at the Bureau of Quarantine, Centers for Health Development, and DOH Hospitals. Finally, the Bureau of Quarantine is working with airlines and airport authorities to strengthen border surveillance, while the

Epidemiology Bureau is heightening its community surveillance. These are the drastic measures the agency is doing in order to mitigate the spread and damage of corona virus (DOH, 2020).”

No one is really invincible. Even the most courageous men in the field and in the battle, must take the safety protocols for the imperceptible enemies by all means. Coming recently from paving the ways for the recovery of the damage brought by the Marawi siege three years ago, health is then again compromised due to COVID-19. On the other hand, just when we are on the verge of recovering from COVID-19, death is also on the way due to the continuous unpredictable conflict in Marawi. Dead on Recovery. Nowhere to run. Nowhere to hide. Recuperating seems too impossible for the broken hearted, wounded, and troubled. These may be some of the experiences of the innocent civilians, internally displaced civilians (IDP’s), soldiers on duty, and people who are torn at the midst of these “COVID-19 pandemic and Marawi Siege” happening. However, let us look at the history how the military stood above it all.

The first ever severe pandemic in the recent history is the Spanish flu. The 1918-1919 Influenza Pandemic arrived in three waves over the course of one year. As the article of NCIRD (2018) emphasizes “It is estimated that about 500 million people or one-third of the world’s population became infected with this virus.” A study cited also in this article indicated that the National Academy of Sciences concluded that the prevention from further widespread was because of “non-pharmaceutical intervention, which in layman’s terms includes social distancing, isolation, and quarantine.”

Another death-dealing case was the Ebola Outbreak on 2014-2015, which has an average case fatality rate of around 50% (WHO, 2020); and has an FDA-approved vaccine only on December 2019 (CDC, 2020). Aside from these, the world has endured three pandemics in the last century since the Spanish flu: the Asian flu (H2N2), 1957-1958; Hong Kong flu (H3N2) 1968-1970; and swine flu (H1N1) 2009 to 2010 (NCIRD, 2018). Now, the infamous COVID-19 virus.

Taking into considerations the lessons that were already learned in the aforementioned pandemics, preparations have been taken into the new normal. In collaboration with the Department of Health Office, the AFP is one of the driving forces that aids in the support of humanitarian resources during disasters. Disasters that cause devastating impacts the mental, physical, and emotional well-being of the affected persons. Some of these are floods, landslides, and typhoons. Even if the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has proven to be susceptible to physical compromise because of the virus, but then again, they have also show beyond doubt the tactical efforts for the recovery of the nation from the health hazards and the imminent dangers, amongst others. The daily toil of frontliners and soldiers starts with the weight of the armor and equipment that they don such as the Battle Dress Uniforms (BDU's) coupled with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE's) in checkpoints to protect both civilian and uniformed personnel from contracting the disease. Regardless of the weather condition, rain or shine, the battle still continues. Aside from that, the barracks aren't the place anymore to house soldiers, quarantine facilities are now also full of recovering and isolated soldiers, coming from duties in the front lines in order to ensure the safety of their colleagues. Yet the battle still continues. These past times have been challenging already when facing barrage of challenges, even so, it must have been more challenging when the virus begun. They are the unsung heroes of our present times. The front liners before even the pandemic and up until now. They are not only present in the hostile regions; they are also found in the quarantine control points and other emergency response call.

The Task Group Response Operations of AFP working in cooperation with the Department of Health are continuously performing critical tasks such as: 1) to identify, screen, and assist suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patients; 2) to provide necessary treatment; 3) to implement preventive measures; 4) to implement community quarantine regulations; 5) to maintain peace and order; 6) to provide emergency relief to affected population; and, 7) to undertake disposal of cadavers (NDRRMC, 2020).

Much attention was allotted to the physical countermeasures for the coronavirus, but less has

been given to the mental health issues and concerns.

One emerging issue amidst the pandemic is the social stigma and discrimination against the military sector and other front liners. Whereas, United Nations (UN) released a policy brief as mentioned in an article of World Bank (2020) that some reasons causing and implicating stress are: fear of contagion/dying, concern for health of family members, forced isolation due to quarantines, unemployment, and widespread financial distress. In addition, misinformation about prevention, non-stop exposure to pandemic-related news, and deep uncertainty about the future are further stressors that, collectively, could lead to a long-term global upsurge in mental health problems. This warning given by the UN entails the essence of empathizing with our frontliners. Despite the assurance of a public service and support for the stringent measures taking place all over the country to ensure the safety of everyone, these social stigmas are still existent. Amid the rising count of coronavirus cases and mounting fears of infection, armies are caught in the middle, facing discrimination. The coronavirus is stretching an already burdened security system and has only revealed the risks and working conditions in the military sector. Protecting the mental well-being of the frontliners during their response should be advocated, to ensure that we will have a better capacity to fulfill their roles (WHO, 2020).



When expected to enact the limitations of rights of others for non-pharmaceutical intervention, like social distancing and quarantine, implementors on the actual setting are needed. This is where the roles of the implementors are emphasized. Law and order also upholds the other sectors of the society. Through a systematic and smooth mechanisms, health workers can perform their duties well. It all interconnects with other channels, particularly when one system and management is working efficiently. Hence, the men and women in army suits are more than capable of war-fighting but are also essential in facing the coronavirus-related confrontations and armed conflict.

For the past years, the AFP was also plagued with controversies and unfounded issues such as allegations of corruption, military adventurism, human right abuses, and revolving policy affecting its leadership. These have highlighted the systemic problems which have long beset the military institution and these have placed to the fore the need to come up with a sustainable solution to these allegations. Fortunately, with the Army Transformation Roadmap journey that started way back in 2010, Army personnel were able emphasize the transformative change within the Army and its stride towards good governance and performance excellence. The primary purpose of the ATR is to transform the Army into a better, more dynamic, more responsive, more capable, and more professional Army committed to its mandate of serving the people and securing the land. Moreover, this ATR program will serve as a reference and guide for the strategic priorities of the Army, thereby, enforcing continuity of programs and policies so that the interest of the PA would neither be sacrificed nor relegated into the background in favor of the narrower, personality-driven, and short-term interests.

With this strategic program, Army personnel were able to transform towards a professional Army that pictures out expertise and responsibility. Regular trainings and technical education were programmed to realize this vision. Each soldier carries the belief that they are not working for the sake of personal advancement but they are patriotic

members of the society who place duty above all else.

In fact, the Armed Forces has been established to address external threats and internal conflicts. Under conditions of good security sector governance, the Armed Forces personnel perform their legitimate constitutional roles with efficiency and accountability within a framework of democratic civilian control, rule of law, and respect for human rights. But due to the pandemic caused by the COVID-19, the men and women in uniform were further exposed to new experience from another context of battle.

By adapting to the current situation, the organization has become more resilient and aware on the importance of strengthening one's health to prevent contagion spreading specially across the populace. The Army Transformation Roadmap programs is seen to have the biggest contributor in winning the battle against COVID-19, these unconventional threats shall not hamper our transformation journey until its completion.



Overall, this paper reviews the challenges and experiences encountered by the frontliners and on this regard, the Armed Forces of the Philippines. From the different standpoints of the sectors of the society, it must have been devastating for them to face discriminations, social stigma, and disregard of their efforts and lives sacrificed for the general welfare of the society. As shown in numerous studies, COVID-19 has redefined and is continuously transforming the work and security environment where the Army plays a significant role in.

The importance of strengthening human resources for frontline care providers require measures to reduce stigma. These include members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, health workers, and other front liners. One way of reducing their burnout, is by exercising the constructive approach in supporting them by following the non-pharmaceutical interventions, which were proven to be effective in the Influenza pandemic.

In the gradual process of recovery from Marawi siege and coronavirus pandemic, may we always bear in thoughts the factors that could hasten or slow down the process. Altogether, we are on the way of recovery to allow second chances in life.



#### LTC MICHAEL N ASUNCION O-133467 (CE) PA

For twenty-five (25) years and two (2) months of active military service, LTC ASUNCION was designated to several significant positions, to cite a few: as Ex-o of 6RCDG, ARESCOM; Director of 605<sup>th</sup> CDC in Bacolod City; SDO of 53EBDe; Ex-O of 28IB, 10ID, PA; Chief DREO, 10ID, PA; Commanding Officer 10PED; AC of S for Education and Training, G8, 52EBDE; Chief MFO, ARESCOM; and Commandant of various Army ROTC units in Negros Occidental.

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## 55EBde Shifts Gears in Full Capacity Versus COVID-19

- SSG Celso M Bantolo, 55th Engineer Brigade

When the Department of Health (DOH) reported the first coronavirus disease (COVID-19) local transmission case confirmed in March 2020, people all over the country were taken aback. Together with the government, the whole country immediately acted on minimal health measures to prevent the disease from spreading.

Knowing the mortality threats that this virus could cause, BGEN NESTOR I ABANDO AFP, Commander of the 55<sup>th</sup> Engineer Brigade, Philippine Army immediately deployed line battalions under this brigade and directly implemented measures of contesting the predicament of COVID-19 in its area of responsibility.

Various activities were launched that aimed to ease individual hopes for decreasing the cases affected by the virus. In support to the brigade's overall mission during this crisis, the 551<sup>st</sup> Engineer Battalion, 553<sup>rd</sup> Engineer Battalion, 554<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion, 500 Combat Engineer Battalion, Engineer Support Company, and Headquarters and Headquarters Company, with their respective Disaster Response Task Unit (DRTU), conducted information drive and symposium with knowledgeable speakers, tied knots with media practitioners, installed loudspeaker operations, and distributed leaflets.

For additional protection, the troops made improvised face shields, received medical supplies and Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs), set-up quarantine control points, conducted checkpoint operations, and mobile patrols. The brigade also extended its services by providing transportation, human resource, and security assistance during the distribution of relief goods.

To shield brigade personnel and residents within the camp periphery from the pandemic, the brigade deemed it necessary to take an action plan on camp rules and regulations for the people to observe to mitigate the spread of the virus.

The brigade conducted its strict implementation of 'one entrance, one exit' policy, and physical distancing. Wearing of facemasks is also required for every personnel in the office, as well as once on field duty. However, minimal physical contact is allowed, handshakes were prohibited. Sanitizers and alcohols were given for free in every office as supplied by the medical dispensary. The medical personnel daily checked the health of the troops using a thermal scanner to monitor their body temperature and spray hand sanitizers to disinfect. Preventive measures were taken for everyone's safety, even during the distribution of leaflets around camp premises.

Troops showed their genuine concern to the people who were entering the camp premises by spraying liquid chemicals solution of chlorine, Iodophor, and alcohol compounds using the gate as one-way entrance and exit quarantine control points. When it comes to bringing its best efforts, 55EBde upgraded its prevention and decontamination to gain the upper hand against this invisible enemy.

Due to the increasing rate of infection and risk of illness transmission, the whole of the Armed Forces of the Philippines remained in the frontline of hampering these threats. Soldiers were tasked to accompany health workers in manning checkpoints to monitor people who were possibly being affected by the virus. As frontliners, the troops were exposed and had a high risk of being infected by the virus. Considering the risk that the situation poses, the brigade commander mandated that the troops must also be safeguarded to protect themselves from the possible transmission while performing their duties.

The unit received medical supplies such as Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) and health supplements for essential personnel from the GMA Kapuso Foundation and Philippine Red Cross. Together with Ms. Michelle Emmie Vanguardia and Mr. Hubert Quijano of the Philippine Red Cross-Iligan City Branch, the unit conducted an information drive on COVID 19 at 55Ebde Headquarters.

In addition to this, BGEN ABANDO, together with 1st District Engineering Office, Department of Public Works and Highways, Lanao del Norte, headed by District Engineer Soray'yah Ibrahim, witnessed the installation of one unit decontamination tent with complete accessories at the entrance gate of the brigade to further their efforts to contain the spread of the virus.

When the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) was declared, red alert status was issued by the higher Headquarters resulting to the cancellation of leaves and rest and recreation passes of uniformed



*55EBde one-way entrance quarantine control points*

personnel. The command then took action to maintain the morale of the troops. These efforts include BGEN ABANDO's frequent visitations with essential personnel and communication with line unit commanders to ensure the physical and mental well-being of the personnel and other stakeholders.

"Staying at home to save lives" is one of the campaigns promoted during the COVID-19 pandemic. This implied limitations with daily activities as well as restricted entry and exit in the camps. The unit officers and enlisted personnel plotted their own "survival garden" where different kinds of vegetables now thrive. These gardening activities go beyond sustainability efforts, but also allowed the troops to be physically and mentally active while making the most out of their quarantine time to be productive. Understanding the effects that the virus would cause to the operations of the brigade, troops were also encouraged to have their daily physical activities and advocated for the intake of nutritious food and vitamins to boost their immune system.

The three month-long implementation of ECQ throughout the country directly affected the way of not only the citizens but also of the personnel residing inside the camp.

Thus, the brigade exerted efforts by reaching out a helping hand to ease the anxiety and worries felt by the people within the area while facing the scarcity of basic necessities due to the pandemic. To generate funds for the relief operations dubbed as *"TULONG MULA SA INYONG MGA SUNDALO, MULA SA AMING PUSO PARA SA MGA KABABAYANG PILIPINO"*, the Officers and Enlisted Personnel of the Brigade voluntarily shared a portion of their meal allowance that provided for 2,000 food packs to prioritize needy people in the Brigade's area of responsibility. Each food pack contains five kilos of rice, five cans of sardines, five packs of noodles, six sachets of coffee, and one third kilo of sugar. Said relief aid was distributed to 2,000 family recipients to help ease the difficulties that they were experiencing. Further, sixty-five (65) relief operations were mobilized wherein 67,758 relief goods were distributed in the municipalities of Lanao del Sur, Lanao del Norte, and barangays of Marawi City. The unit distributed 345 boxes of dressed chicken to the pedicab, tricycle, and 'habal-habal' drivers who depend only on their day to day earnings. The following barangays received relief assistance: Saray, Santiago, Hinaplanon, Upper Hinaplanon, Kiwalan, Acmac, San Roque, Santa Felomina, Bagong Silang, San Miguel, and Brgy. Tubod of Iligan City on 29 April 2020. To add, the troops hauled/distributed 47,014 food packs, 44,257 sacks of rice, and 345 boxes or 3,450 pieces of dressed chicken to Iligan City.

With the collaborative efforts of the brigade among its internal and external stakeholders, the unit was able to conduct an 84 series of Public Address System (PAS) installations, 11 mobile loudspeaker operations, and 202 series of Quarantine Control Point Operations. The unit produced personalized handmade face shields to be used by frontliners at Camp Climaco Pintoy and crafted 827 pieces of face shields and 350 pieces of face masks that were distributed for the protection of the troops and other partner frontliners.

The brigade provided transportation assistance carrying the donation of PB Boxes Creative Advertising from Laguindingan Airport to Iligan City with 14 aerosols/protective boxes made of acrylic for healthcare workers that can be used during intubation/OR/ER, a necessary tool to prevent medical personnel from contracting Coronavirus (COVID-19). These protective boxes were distributed by the Adventist Medical Center, Iligan City to other hospitals such as Adventist Medical Center Iligan (AMCI), Iligan City Quarantine Treatment Facility (ICQTF), Doctor Uy Hospital (DUH), Gregorio T. Lluch Memorial Hospital (GTLMH), Iligan Medical Center Hospital (IMCH), Mercy Community Hospital (MCH), Northern Mindanao Medical Center (NMMC), Kapatagan District Hospital (KDH) and Lanao Provincial Hospital (LPH). The 55th Engineer Brigade extends its support to minimize further spread of COVID-19 and to protect essential personnel from this disease. The unit will continue to provide services for the people and to the community by providing transportation, manpower, and security assistance during the distribution of food packs in partnership with the Provincial Government of Lanao del Norte and 2nd Mechanized Infantry Brigade.



*55<sup>th</sup> Engineer Brigade distributes medical supplies and health supplements received from the GMA KAPUSO Foundation and Philippine National Red Cross*

Three barangays (Brgy. Maria Cristina, Brgy. Nangka, and Brgy. Matampay) were given food packs with a total of 11,084 households. With the observance of proper social distancing and wearing face masks, the distribution was organized properly with the help of our troops. The brigade continuously extended assistance for manpower, security, and transportation support in partnership with LGUs and LGAs of Iligan City and Balo-i, Lanao del Norte among the Brigade's area of operation since the start of COVID-19 pandemic up to this date.

Relatedly, COL IRINEO F SEBASTIAN GSC (CE) PA, Disaster Response Task Units Commander, 55E, PA, and MAJ ALFIE CABAEL (CE) PA, 55EBde, Civil-Military Operations Officer, visited and coordinated the recent relief operations of the Municipal Inter-Agency Task Force COVID-19 Incident Command Center at Balo-i Municipal Hall. Likewise, the unit provided human resource and vehicle assistance to transport 8,600 sets (25,800 boxes) of grocery starter kits of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) from the Soda Enterprises Warehouse in Iligan City to the NFA Warehouse in Marawi City. These boxes are set to be handed-over to Marawi's internally displaced persons (IDP) for its continuous support in providing livelihood to them.

In terms of securing the peace and health protocol compliance, the unit conducted checkpoint operations at Brgy Saduk, and Brgy East Basak, Malutlut, Brgy. Mapandi, Brgy. Papandayan, Brgy. Kapantaran, Marawi City. Mobile patrols operated in the vicinity of Marawi City. A cumulative of 1,101 checkpoint operations were strategically established in barangays of Marawi City, Balo-i, Lanao del Norte and Iligan City. Foot march was set in the area for security purposes during COVID-19 at Brgy. Maria Cristina, Balo-i Lanao del Norte to maintain peace and order during the Enhanced Community Quarantine. Security assistance was also provided for the city government of Iligan, Lanao del Norte and Lanao del Sur during the

Department of Social Welfare and Development's (DSWD) Social Amelioration Program (SAP) pay-out received by 20,429 beneficiaries.

On 09 April 2020, COL IRINEO F SEBASTIAN GSC (CE) PA, Deputy Brigade Commander, together with the Disaster Response Task Group (DRTG) Commander, visited the different quarantine control points within the area of responsibility to check and ensure the safety and morale of the troops.

One of the brigade's turning-point for lucid communications was the coordination with the Philippine Information Agency (PIA). This was initiated by PIA manager, ARD Apipa Bagumbaran, during a courtesy call to Brigade Commander of 55<sup>th</sup> Engineer Brigade. This partnership aims to boost news production for mass and media consumption. So far, the engagement progressed from simple activities to outright production of quality stories, social cards, audio bytes, feature videos, and news broadcasted nationwide through the platforms of Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO) including radio (PBS Radyo Pilipinas), national and local television (PTV, PNA, and PTV Davao) and social media (Facebook, Viber, etc.) which were actively shared in the Brigade's Facebook page. The relationship of the Brigade and PIA drew encouragement from the troops to further do quality work for the public to highlight the unit's efforts, as well as strengthen the army's link to private media outlets and disseminate timely, relevant, and accurate information every time is an endeavor is pushed by the Brigade.

On 22 April 2020, BGEN ABANDO, together with Battalion Commanders of 551st Engineer Battalion, 553rd Engineer Battalion, and Brigade Operations Officer paid a visit to Hon. Majul Usman Gandamra, Mayor of Marawi City, to discuss matters regarding updates on COVID-19 operation, distribution of relief goods, and possible assistance on their infrastructure projects.



With this development, the unit's DRTU Team is relentless in accomplishing its mission by actively engaging with different stakeholders, and efficiently utilizing its available resources to sustain operations in combating the COVID-19 pandemic. Likewise, the Brigade will remain steadfast in its efforts and initiatives by continuously giving food packs to the marginalized people within our area of operation.

As members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, our priority is to secure the land and to give our utmost services to the people. Sworn to serve the people and secure the land, the uniformed personnel dedicated life and service for our countrymen. To this end, soldiers are not only trained to combat physical and territorial threats. Beyond fighting and defending with tanks and guns we are, first and foremost, public servants. By showing solidarity in maintaining peace and order in the areas of responsibility and ensuring the safety of the health workers, the unit was able to fulfill its duty as a vital player in this fight against COVID-19.

Indeed, more than washing of hands and social distancing, COVID-19 taught many lessons to the people. It also calls on the importance of health for the continuous thrive of our country's economy. Though dubbed as 'Marawi Builders', the 55th Engineer Brigade is always prepared in shifting gears to serve the people and secure the land from any form of calamity or crisis. More than being the Army's engineers, the unit's goes above and beyond their duty by building the pavement towards the country's safe and progressive future. 

55Ebde provides one Team Security Force to augment PNP Checkpoints to support LGU of Lanao del Norte.



Manpower and transportation assistance Iligan City from NSC to Barangays on 28 April 2020.



Brigade-wide distribution of relief goods for the residents within the unit's area of responsibility. The relief packs were provided through voluntary financial contribution of officers and unit personnel.



## Under the Scope: International Humanitarian Law (IHL), Human Rights (HR), and Rule of Law (ROL) Through the Lens of a Filipino Soldier

- Ms. Louise Antonette T Sandoval, CivHR, AGSMO

In the past 123 years of service of the Philippine Army, long has been the its toil against threats to national peace and security. The past few decades were profusely marred with a multitude of combat against insurgency and extremism influenced and brought about by international threats of terrorism.

The Philippine Army, as one of the three major services of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, carries the constitutional and lawful mandate of being in the forefront of operations to sustain lasting peace conducive to sustainable progress and development. To this end, countless lives of Filipino soldiers were dedicated for the citizen and country.

In 2013, Zamboanga experienced a fierce confrontation between the Army and a group of insurgents from the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). Known as the Zamboanga Siege, the combat had lasted for three weeks, resulting to casualties, injuries, and indiscriminate damage to infrastructure. The longest siege in PA history transpired a mere three years ago and was instigated by militant groups allied with international extremist organizations. The aftermath of the Marawi Siege is riddled with fatalities and damage to the life and properties of the citizens of the city. This year, the people of Jolo were met with twin suicide bombings that cost the lives of at least eight security personnel and six civilians while wounding many more. Towards the second quarter of the year, the Army shifted its focus on different kind of

enemy, on that poses immense threat to health of the people and indiscriminately affects anyone.

To date, the Army's role in safeguarding the nation and its citizens is constantly expanding to accommodate the needs of the changing security environment and to adapt to transpiring unconventional threats.

In performance of this duty and by the nature of operations, the Philippine Army's history is stained by accusations and allegations of violating laws protecting a human's life, dignity, and basic rights. A decade ago, the Army Transformation Roadmap was first conceptualized with a specific set of change agenda that aims to change the public perception as well as to highlight the Army's expanding role of the Army. This change agenda carries over to the systems and processes, unit capability, as well as to the individual perception of the Army. Through the ATR, the PA aspired to transform the not only the poor public perception but also its approach and operation by becoming an ethical, competent, and professional Army that is deserving of our countrymen's pride.

Further, Executive Order 70 that espouses the Whole of the Nation Approach, is intended to harness a more socially inclusive and less combatant method of putting an end to insurgency. This approach aims to nip the social ails that is harnessed by insurgent groups to exploit communities. With inclusive and collaborative

approach with local and national government agencies and institutions, the Army's role has moved beyond its traditional military approach to a more socially sensitive and inclusive approach to end local insurgency.

By persistently fostering transformation through good governance, the Philippine Army is striving towards achieving and maintaining a brand of honor, patriotism, and duty. The gains of these efforts are seen from the increasingly progressing public perception as reflected by the continuing uptrend in nationwide trust and satisfaction rating.

In an effort to sustain and build on these gains as well as to ensure that the Filipino soldier is sensitive and unassociated to issues and allegations relating to offences on human rights violations, the Philippine Army, under the leadership of Lieutenant General Cirilito E. Sobejana, advocated for the creation of a Legal and Diplomatic Relations Committee (LDRC) under its Multi-Sector Advisory Board (PA MSAB). The MSAB is the Army's advocates, partners, and accountability partners in ensuring that good governance under the Army Transformation Roadmap is deeply embedded and implemented in the organization's processes and operations.

During the conduct of the fourth and last quarterly meeting of the Board, MSAB Chairperson and Philippine Economic Zone Authority Director General Charito Plaza recommended and approved the proposal of the Governance Committee of inviting more experts and professionals in the field of law as members of the

new committee. These individuals shall carry out the roles and function of providing legal advice and policy recommendation to the Army to ensure its compliance to the International Humanitarian Law (IHL), Human Rights (HR), and Rule of Law (ROL). The mandate of the committee aims to support the Army's efforts in contributing to building a just and humane society. The prospective members of the committee include the 14<sup>th</sup> Court Administrator of the Supreme Court, Attorney Jose Midas P. Marquez, and the Assistant Solicitor General, Attorney Peñafrancia Carpio-Devesa. The Board aims to further engage luminaries from the Commission on Human Rights, among others, to ensure the comprehensive composition of the committee.

With the creation of the Legal and Diplomatic Relations Committee, every Filipino soldier is ensured and expected to harness efforts to recognize the sanctity of life, place the rights and freedom of every human with supreme appreciation, and to alleviate the suffering of individuals even in the event of war and conflict. As no one is above and beyond the rule of law, the Philippine Army must be in the fore of exemplifying accountability to the constitution and law. As the sworn protectors of the Filipino people and their land, the Philippine Army must share the responsibility of advocating for human rights to be the nation's beacon of hope and builders of peace. 

*Governance Committee Meeting with Chiefs of Army Human Rights Office, Office of the International Military Affairs, and Deputy of the Army Judge Advocate last 17 November 2020.*





## The Army Transformation Roadmap, A Celebration of Change

• Strategic Communication Branch, AGSMO

Time, as described, is a construct construed by the human mind and it is simply a measure of inevitable change. Its vital meaning and purpose lies on how we direct and configure change to shape our goals and mold our future.

As the Army takes another stride towards the Army Transformation Roadmap (ATR) Basecamp 2022 of becoming a modern and respected Army in Asia, the organization is well into the midst of innovations that are currently put into place by the ATR. When the Army first took the steps to revolutionize systems and processes to better serve the populace, the culmination of the 18 year-long plan seemed to be way beyond the horizon.

A decade has passed since then and the endpoint is well within sight. The path towards this vision is built on the skill, talent, time, effort and dedication of every man and woman of the Philippine Army who have embedded the values of transparency and accountability within themselves and, as a whole, to the entirety of the organization. This road, however, could not be possibly be traversed alone, the Army and its stakeholders, bridged through the Philippine Army Multi-Sector Advisory Board is one in mind and vision to help the organization to become a world-class Army that is a source of national pride.

As a result, the accolades and gains that we have achieved over the passing years is a true testament to the inexhaustible commitment of each Army unit, office, personnel and partners to good governance and genuine transformation. With the global recognition and world-class quality of service locked in mind, we have attained milestones and recognitions from local institutions to international commendations that put us well within the ranks of standard bearers of performance and excellence.

To date, the Army has gone beyond being mentees to becoming mentors and coaches to organizations that have recognized our caliber of excellence and have aspired to walk within the path that we have built on. Nevertheless, the constant nature of change is apparent in this organization, as the innovations further build on our gains are constantly availed through capacity building opportunities, collaborative research, training programs and social aid, the Army, through ATR, sustains the hunger for knowledge and change to institutionalize interminable development and results. With the ATR, the Army is steadfast in the attainment of its goal and has remained true to its mandate despite the ever-evolving security environment. Despite the pandemic, the Philippine Army is unrelenting in the development of best practices in the provision of nationalistic service.

These successes, however, are not accentuated to merely put on airs. These efforts were solely for the purpose of providing the Filipino people with service that they deserve. In the fervent desire to propagate our vision and spark clarity, understanding, and support from our citizenry, the Army is in the forefront of advocating for genuine organizational reform through the Army Transformation Roadmap. With this in mind, the PA MSAB Strategic Communication Committee Chairperson, Mr. Robinhood Padilla, and Governance Committee Chairperson, Honorable Senator Emmanuel Pacquiao and their committee members initiated the ATR Video-making contest. The project aims to shed light on the Army Transformation Roadmap, its goals, gains, and successes to garner the

The first theme, “Paving the way to becoming a world-class, the Philippine Army’s Transformation Roadmap” tells the story of the ATR in varying perspectives of Army units and the public. “Performing while Transforming: Adapting to Changing Times with ATR Goes Online” highlights the newest thrust of the Army Governance and Strategy Management Office (AGSMO), the office primarily responsible in managing strategies of the Army under the ATR. To cope with the health protocols enforced during the quarantine, the office sustained its performance and the implementation of the ATR throughout the Army by launching ATR Goes Online, thereby, migrating services to the digital platform. This innovation was then cascaded through the units, enabling the Army to continue with the path towards



*Final round of deliberation with PA MSAB Strategic Communication Committee Members*

support of both the Army’s external and internal stakeholders as well as to gauge the public’s reception on the implementation of our transformative actions.

The contest encouraged the participation of Philippine Army Major Units and Offices as well as the citizens from all over the archipelago. Further, this activity aims to engage these stakeholders through the online platform and educate them on the current thrusts and advancement of the organization. Through the three-to-five minute audio-visual presentations, the PA MSAB purposively emphasized four salient themes relating to the ATR.

2028. The third theme, “ATR Within: Championing Good Governance and Genuine Organizational Change” puts a premium to the results of our transformation journey. Lastly, “ATR Under the Public Eye” is a theme that carries the objective of highlighting the feedback from our primary customers to the level and quality of service and the impact that the Army and its units have effected to the populace.

Out of the 46 entries from various units, offices, and stakeholders, ten (10) entries were chosen after undergoing four (4) rigorous rounds of deliberation with panels of judges composed of senior rank officials and

PA MSAB Strategic Communication Committee Members.

For the first theme, the second runner up is the Engineer Support Company, 51<sup>st</sup> Engineer Brigade, first runner up is the 525<sup>th</sup> Engineer Combat Battalion, 51<sup>st</sup> Engineer Brigade, and the Champion is the Civil-Military Operations Regiment.

The second runner up of the second theme, is the 525<sup>th</sup> Engineer Construction Battalion, 53<sup>rd</sup> Engineer Brigade while the first runner up is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry “Jungle Fighter” Division. The champion for this theme is the Civil-Military Operations Regiment.

For the third theme “ATR Within: Championing Good Governance and Genuine Organizational Change”, only the Civil-Military Operations Regiment satisfied the technical requirements and remained after the strict deliberations, making them the sole winner and champion for the theme.

Lastly, for the theme “ATR Under the Public Eye”, the second runner up was seized by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division while the 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry “Stormtroopers” Division took the 1<sup>st</sup> runner up award. The hailed champion for the last category is still the Civil-Military Operations Regiment.

The official announcement and awarding of winners were conducted during the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter PA

MSAB Regular Meeting and was witnessed by the Board Chairpersons and members, winners, participants, and ATR social media followers through teleconference and livestream.

The generous awards for both the unit and the video creators were the product of the benevolence of the Army’s advisers, advocates and accountability partners, namely, MSAB Strategic Communication Chairperson Mr. Robinhood Padilla, and his Vice Chairperson, Congressman Rozzano Rufino “Ruffy” Biazon, and Governance Committee Member Honorable Zajid “Dong” Mangudatu. The prizes and awards were bestowed by the Commanding General, Lt. Gen. Cirilito E. Sobejana and PA MSAB Chairperson, Philippine Economic Zone Authority Director General, Charito B. Plaza. The awarding ceremony as well as the video entries of the finalists are available for viewing through the Philippine Army Transformation Roadmap Facebook Page, facebook.com/atr2028.

As stakeholders of the Philippine Army, we should be in the frontline of advocating its purpose, goals, and successes in order to inculcate and communicate its message and gain the hearts and minds of the Filipino people. After all, the Army Transformation Roadmap, in the words of Commanding General, Lt. Gen Cirilito E. Sobejana, is the Bible and guide of the Army towards the accomplishment of its mission. 

*CGPA and MSAB Chairperson award prizes to winners of the ATR AVP Contest*





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