

Army Vision: By 2028, a world-class Army that is a source of national pride



TEAM ARMY
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OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

NEWS CLIPPINGS

07 April 2017

Friday

Army Core Purpose: Serving the people. Securing the land.

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS • FEARLESS VIEWS

TODAY'S WEATHER FORECAST | APRIL 7, 2017 | FRIDAY

PHILIPPINE AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY (PAR)

SUNSHINE AREA

TAIL-END OF A COLD FRONT AFFECTING EASTERN SECTIONS OF VISAYAS AND MINDANAO (As of 5:00 PM - Apr. 6, 2017)

SUNRISE	SUNSET
5:48 AM	6:09 PM
MOONRISE	MOONSET
2:56 PM	2:56 AM
FIRST QUARTER	FULL MOON
APR 8 2:36 AM	APR 11 2:09 PM
LOW TIDE	HIGH TIDE
2:25 AM 0.07 Meter	7:07 PM 0.86 Meter

Partly cloudy to at times cloudy with rainshowers and/or thunderstorms

	APR 6	APR 7	APR 8	APR 9	APR 10	APR 11
METRO MANILA	24 - 34 °C	24 - 33 °C	19 - 29 °C	20 - 30 °C	24 - 31 °C	25 - 32 °C
TUGUEGARAO	23 - 33 °C	24 - 33 °C	26 - 32 °C	27 - 33 °C	24 - 31 °C	25 - 32 °C
LAOAG	24 - 32 °C	24 - 32 °C	27 - 32 °C	27 - 33 °C	25 - 33 °C	26 - 33 °C
BAGUIO	15 - 25 °C	15 - 26 °C	26 - 32 °C	27 - 33 °C	24 - 33 °C	24 - 32 °C
SBMA/CLARK	25 - 33 °C	25 - 33 °C	25 - 31 °C	25 - 30 °C		

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SAGOT KO, PADALA MO!

07 April 2017



Page: A1

Gov't, Reds agree on free land distribution

FROM A1

By **Karlos Manlupig**
@kmanlupigINQ

Government and communist rebel peace negotiators on Thursday ended four days of talks with an agreement that free distribution of land would be the guiding principle in the implementing agrarian reform in addition to an interim ceasefire accord.

A seven-page joint statement cited the two agreements as the major achievements of the fourth round of formal peace negotiations in the Netherlands.

Land reform is a component of the Comprehensive Agreement on Socioeconomic Reforms (Caser), which is considered by the communist-led National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) as part of the substantive agenda that deals with the root causes of the 48-year-old insurgency, one of the longest-running in the world.

Fifth round of talks

The negotiating panels scheduled the fifth round of talks for May 26-June 2.

Both sides agreed that the issue on territory and taxation, one of the main issues that had delayed the opening of the

Netherlands meeting as they were among preconditions to restart the talks set by President Duterte—would be discussed and resolved in the crafting of the Comprehensive Agreement on Political and Constitutional Reforms.

Federal republic

These discussions would be guided by the framework of the creation of the proposed Federal Republic of the Philippines, the statement said.

The Norwegian Special Envoy to the Philippine Peace Process, Elisabeth Slattum, noted that while there were differences between the two parties, their commitment to work together was commendable. Norway has been brokering the talks.

Slattum said the latest round of talks had been intense and challenging but the negotiators made "painful compromises" to meet their goals.

In Manila, Malacañang applauded the agreement on the interim ceasefire said it looked forward to the cessation of hostilities that it was expected to bring.

The interim joint ceasefire will take effect once both sides agree to the guidelines and ground rules, and will remain in place until a permanent ceasefire deal is hammered out to mark the end of hostilities.

"We hope this prevents further hostilities and unnecessary loss of lives on the ground," said presidential spokesperson Ernesto Abella.

Abella also said that despite what appears to be the plodding pace of the peace process, progress was being made by the negotiators.

"The peace process, while seemingly slow, highlights the maturing social and political sense of the Filipino. Together, let us build communities that are just and peaceful. This is what being an independent sovereign nation is all about," he said.

Makabayan

A Makabayan lawmaker also praised the latest achievement in the long-running peace negotiations, saying the agreement on the interim ceasefire signed on Wednesday had proven naysayers wrong regarding the goodwill between President Duterte's government and the NDFP in seeking a peaceful end to the 48-year-old communist insurgency.

"That breakthroughs and advances in the substantive agenda were reached by the panels, despite the grueling negotiations only showed the continuing trust, goodwill and good faith of both panels, as well as the members of their respective delegations," Rep. Car-

los Zarate said in a statement from the Netherlands where he observed the talks.

"These gains also proved wrong the doomsayers, particularly from the failed previous administrations, and the militarists and spoilers, in and out of the government, who were trying to derail the forward trajectory of the peace process," he said.

Zarate praised the "positive gesture" of the Communist Party of the Philippines to direct its armed wing, the New People's Army, to free a police officer and three soldiers the rebels are holding captive.

Vigilance

Zarate also welcomed the announcement by the government panel of the release of at least 23 more political prisoners.

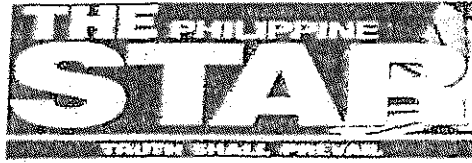
Another Makabayan lawmaker, however, cautioned against celebrating too soon.

"We should stay vigilant, especially as no ceasefire is yet in effect," Kabataan Rep. Sarah Elago said in a separate statement.

The youth party representative questioned the government panel's sincerity, noting how a phone call from the President had delayed the opening of the fourth round of talks.

—WITH A REPORT FROM LEILA SALAVERRIA INQ

07 April 2017



Page: 1

3 Sueno accusers also under probe

Rody: I was not misinformed

By EDITH REGALADO
and CHRISTINA MENDEZ

DAVAO CITY - The three Department of the Interior and Local Government undersecretaries who had accused former DILG secretary Ismael "Mike" Sueno of corruption and other abuses are reportedly being investigated themselves.

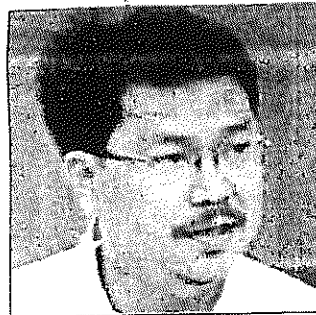
"Ang akala ng tatlo, nakalusot na sila. Iniimbestigahan din sila. Hindi naman sila malinis (The three think they are cleared. They are also being investigated. They are not clean)," a reliable source told The STAR yesterday.

President Duterte fired Sueno during a Cabinet meeting Monday night amid allegations of corruption and abuse of authority.

The three undersecretaries - John Castriciones for operations, Jesus Hinlo for public safety and Emilie Padilla for legislative liaison and special concerns - wrote Duterte a confidential memorandum providing details on the supposed "sins" of Sueno.

"We urgently pray to you, Mr. President, to please act with dispatch if you so decide to remove Mike Sueno from

Turn to Page 10



Hinlo



Castriciones



Padilla

3 Sueno From Page 1

his post, otherwise, he will create more harm against the DILG and cause injustice to the Filipino people by abusing his power and position,” Castriiones, Hinlo and Padilla said in their letter to the President.

Sources said, however, that the three are also under investigation by Malacañang.

The Chief Executive yesterday said he is bent on dismissing more government officials in his administration's fight against corruption.

“I will fire more. Mag-dismiss pa ako nang marami (I'll dismiss a lot more). I have dismissed about 92, karamihan sa LITFRB (Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board), LTO (Land Transportation Office). Pero kasi may mga anak na nga sila, nakita ko, may mga abugadong anak na doktora. Sabi ko (But these officials have children and I see that they are lawyers and doctors. I told them), go out quietly. Hindi na ako mag-eskandalo kasi out of respeto sa mga anak ninyo. Mapahiya eh (I won't create a scandal out of respect to their children. They'd be embarrassed),” the President told reporters in a press conference shortly after his visit to the Western Command in Palawan.

Sueno and the three undersecretaries are members of the

Mayor Rodrigo Roa Duterte National Executive Committee who were among those who pushed for Duterte to run for president in the May 9, 2016 polls.

Sueno himself was the first to ask Duterte last month to remove the three undersecretaries, which resulted in a rift between them.

Sueno also wrote the Chief Executive a letter detailing his sentiments and cited “irreconcilable differences” with his three subordinates.

In retaliation, the three sent Duterte that confidential memo shortly before he fired Sueno.

The former Cabinet secretary stressed that the three were pushing for Technical Education and Skills Development Authority director general Guiling Mamondiong as his replacement.

Sources said the rift between Sueno and the three undersecretaries was more of a “deal gone awry” without explaining further.

The President cited in particular Sueno's trip to Austria last January in connection with the purchase of fire trucks.

Sueno and Bureau of Fire Protection officer-in-charge Chief Supt. Bobby Baruelo, accompanied by other DILG

and BFP officials, visited the headquarters and factory of Rosenbauer International AG in Austria on Jan. 11-13.

Rosenbauer, the world's largest manufacturer of fire-fighting vehicles, is the contracted supplier of the DILG-BFP Capacity Building Program funded by the Austrian government through a mixed grant-loan package.

‘I know what I'm doing’

In a bid to show that he did not merely listen to unfounded accusations, Duterte yesterday maintained that he conducted a thorough review on the corruption charges against Sueno.

As a lawyer, Duterte said he did the proper verification of the reports concerning Sueno's decision to favor Rosenbauer to supply the firetrucks to the DILG, which has jurisdiction over the BFP.

“I could never be (a) misinformed abogado. Ako, misinformed ako? (Am I misinformed?) When I make a move, when I fire you, diyan mismo, alam ko ginagawa ko (I really know what I'm doing),” he said at the same press conference in Palawan.

Duterte said he had repeatedly warned his Cabinet members and those in the bureaucracy not to engage in corrupt activities.

“Sabi ko, the first whiff,

unang singaw lang, maski hindi totoo (even if it's not true), ba-bye tayo (it's goodbye),” he said, adding that there are still many smart and talented Filipinos who can help him implement reforms in government.

“Maraming kapalit sa gobyerno. Hindi tayo nagkulang ng talent, bright, pati honest with integrity (We have a lot of replacements in the government. We don't run out of talent, bright and honest with integrity),” the Chief Executive said.

Sueno had vehemently denied he was corrupt and that he had made himself rich under the Duterte presidency.

Hands off

Meanwhile, the Department of Finance (DOF) yesterday denied it had a hand in the supply contracts that involved the acquisition of 76 fire trucks and pursued by Sueno.

Finance assistant secretary and spokesperson Paola Alvarez quickly defended Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III, saying the Cabinet official simply honored the agreement of his predecessor, Cesar Purisima, with Unicredit Bank Austria AG.

“Dominguez had no recourse but to implement the loan agreement that was sealed by his predecessor, Cesar Purisima, with the Unicredit Bank Austria AG for Phase 2 of the

Capability Building Program of the Bureau of Fire Protection – an agency attached to the DILG – before President Duterte took over last year,” Alvarez said.

She added that the project's contracts were handled directly by Sueno, DILG head executive assistant Josephine Leysa and BFP OIC Baruelo.

“The loan agreement and supply contract are two separate and distinct things,” Alvarez said.

“Neither Secretary Dominguez nor the DOF had anything to do anymore with the supply contract that Sueno had approved on his watch, on the basis of the loan agreement that the DOF had authorized because it was already approved in the past by Malacañang, the Monetary Board, the DOJ (Department of Justice) and DBM (Department of Budget and Management),” she added.

Sueno said it was not he who signed the two loan agreements for the purchase of fire trucks.

He also said the two supply contracts for the project were given the go-signal by the DOF, DBM, DOJ, Office of the President, National Economic and Development Authority and the Investment Coordination Committee of the Cabinet.

Indispensable

Saying that nobody in his

Cabinet is indispensable, Duterte yesterday expressed no qualms over his decision to fire even his closest allies in his commitment to give Filipinos a respite from corruption during his term.

“I'll just fire everybody *Alam mo* there are 110 million Filipinos who are jobless, almost more than half of it, *hindi ako magtuis, isang Pilipinong gago* (I can't stand even one idiot Filipino)! *T**I** puahisin kita at maraming papalit sa iyo* (I will fire you and there are many who can replace you)!” Duterte said.

The President was referring to Undersecretary Halmen Valdez as the one he fired on Wednesday, following her decision to allow rice importation which he thought would be disadvantageous to local farmers.

Duterte said Valdez overstepped her authority when she signed papers which supposedly approved the rice importation.

He also took to task National Food Authority administrator Jayson Aquino and asked him to explain why he was bypassed about the importation.

Valdez supposedly signed the order when former president Benigno Aquino III should have been the signatory. – With Mary Grace Padin

07 April 2017



Pahina. 7

2 sundalo sa HPG chief's slay, arestado

TUGUEGARAO CITY, Cagayan - Dalawang intelligence officers ni 5th Army Division Commander Maj. Gen. Paul Atal ang inilagay sa kanyang kustodiya matapos matukoy sa pagpatay sa hepe ng Mt. Province Highway Patrol Group sa bayan ng Bontoc noong Linggo.

Ayon kay Mt. Province police director P/Senior Supt. Tello Ngis-o na positibong natukoy ang mga suspek na sina Corporal Gerson Lumines, 28, at Sgt. Elvis Ganisi, 39, sa CCTV camera footage na nakuha sa isang establi-

simiyento nang mapatay si P/Chief Insp. Benjamin Challoy sa harapan ng kanyang bahay.

Ang dalawang sundalo ay dinala na sa headquarters ng 5th Army Division sa bayan ng Gamu, Isabela habang ang ikatlong suspek na si Geser Lumines, 26, sinasabing AWOL ay pinaghahanap pa Lumalabas sa Imbesti-

gasyon na magkakasama sa inuman sa beerhouse ang mga sundalo nang magkrus ang landas ni Challoy na nagmula naman sa isang muman sa kanyang opisina.

Nag-ugat ang pagtatalo ng biktima at mga suspek nang kapwa sila nagsitahan sa mga dala nilang baril hanggang nauwi ito sa ratratan.

07 April 2017



Pahina. 6

NPA, nagyabang ng tagumpay

ZAMBONGA CITY — Ibinandera kahapon ng New People's Army ang kanilang tagumpay sa mga serye ng atake sa militar sa ibat-ibang bahaging Mindanao at kasabay nito ang anunsyo naman ng pamahalaan sa pagkakatagda ng isang interim ceasefire sa mga rebelde. Sinabi ni Rigoberto

Sanchez, ang spokesman NPA, na target umano ng kanilang atake ang 3 Army battalions – 28th, 60th at 72nd – sa Compostela Valley at Davao Oriental na kung saan ay 5 sundalo umano ang napaslang kamakailan lamang. Inakusahan rin ni Sanchez ang militar na nasa likod ng mga serye ng

pagpatay sa mga sibilyan na pinaghihinalaang supporter o sympathizers ng rebeldeng grupo. Sa kabilang dako, nilusob at pinasabugan ng hindi pa matukoy na pasabog ang Community Police Action Center ng Kiamba, Sarangani kahapon ng maging daling-araw. (Al Jacinto/Betchai Julian)

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21 NPA fighters in Cordillera surrender – Nolcom

From the Philippine Daily Inquirer (Apr 6): 21 NPA fighters in Cordillera surrender – Nolcom

Ten members of the New People's Army in Ifugao province yielded to the Philippine Army on April 3, bringing to 21 the number of communist rebels who have surrendered since March, the Armed Forces' Northern Luzon Command (Nolcom) reported on Thursday (April 6).

Jacinto Hambon, who uses the alias Vendo, led nine other rebels in surrendering to the 54th Infantry Battalion of the 5th Infantry Division in Barangay (village) Namal in Asipulo town, a report released by Lt. Col. Isagani Nato, head of Nolcom public information office, stated.

The militia group operated under the Ifugao Nona del Rosario Command.

Six NPA members from Kalinga and five rebels from Abra have laid down their arms since March 31, Nolcom said.

Nolcom did not provide details as to the current strength of the NPA in the Ilocos, Cagayan Valley, Cordillera and Central Luzon regions.

<http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/886978/21-npa-fighters-in-cordillera-surrender-nolcom>

Posted by Retired Analyst at 4:43 AM

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10 NPA Rebels Surrender in Ifugao

Reported by: **Lui Claudio** | [www.dwdd.com](#)

Camp Aquino, Tarlac City – Ten (10) members of the Milisyang Bayan (MB) of the New People's Army (NPA), led by its Commanding Officer (CO), Jacinto Hambon AKA VENDO, voluntarily surrendered to the 54th Infantry Battalion, 5th Infantry Division, Philippine Army in Brgy. Namal, Asipulo, Ifugao on April 3, 2017.

The said Milisyang Bayan (MB) members were under the Nona Del Rosario Command (NDRC) of the NPA operating in Asipulo, Ifugao. The other surrenderees were identified as Tito Antonio AKA TITO; Rudy Tindaan AKA RUDY; Kit-ilan Kitano AKA KITS; Gabriel Bacdayen AKA TALAKA; Alfredo Kindipan AKA ALFRED; Dennis Hindac AKA PALAYON; Victor Palangyew AKA VICTOR; William Natalec AKA WILLIAM; and Kidipan Humiwat AKA JUNIOR. They were accompanied by Asipulo Vice-Mayor Tomas Pullupul, PCI Leo D Guay, the Chief of Police of Asipulo Municipal Police Station, and Namal Brgy Chairman Grace Tayaban. After proper documentation, the rebel returnees signed and pledged an oath of allegiance to the Republic of the Philippines and denounce the unacceptable principles and practices of the CPP/NPA.

A total of 21 NPA surrenderees were now recorded in NOLCOM area just in a span of four (4) days from March 31 to April 3, wherein six (6) of them were from Kalinga, five (5) from Abra and ten (10) in Ifugao. Disintegration among the ranks of the Milisyang Bayan (MB) would mean a reduction in strength in the NPA armed struggle.

With these positive developments, NOLCOM Commander, LTGEN ROMEO T TANALGO manifested his gratitude for the support provided to the NOLCOM troopers by the LGUs, the PNP and the community by large. The collaborative efforts made by all stakeholders would finally lead the nation to a state of lasting peace and sustainable development.

www.dwdd.com

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'Rebels' kill gov't asset

From the Visayan Daily Star (Apr 6): 'Rebels' kill gov't asset

Amid proposals for local peace talks between the New People's Army and the government, suspected insurgents allegedly shot dead a supposed "intelligence" asset in Barangay Talalak, Sta. Catalina, Negros Oriental yesterday morning.

The victim was identified as Junney Cabugnason, about 40 years old, married and a resident of the place, the police said.

An initial police report said that Barangay Talalak chairperson Edmat Bigay recounted that at around 6 a.m. yesterday, while he was at the vicinity of the Avocado Elementary School in the barangay, he heard two gun shots and afterwards saw two persons fire several more shots into the air.

Bigay told police investigators that the unidentified men uttered in the vernacular that they were NPA members and once they were already outside the vicinity of the school, they shouted again in the dialect that they will be returning for more targets.

Cabugnason sustained one gunshot wound to his throat and another to the back of his head that caused his instantaneous death, the police report said.

Cabugnason was the janitor of the school and when the incident happened, he was collecting the items/materials that were used during the school's graduation exercises held Tuesday.

The suspects fled, leaving behind a note although the police report did not mention its contents.

Recovered from the crime scene were one empty shell of .45 caliber pistol and the note, the police report added.

Meanwhile, Lt. Col. Roderick Garcia, commander of the 79th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army based in Negros Oriental, said he still has to get additional information regarding the incident.

He said he learned the victim was killed for allegedly being a government asset/informant.

He lamented that, if it was the NPA that was responsible for the killing, it is "a pity" that civilians are being targeted.

Garcia had previously said that the NPA problem is now mostly concentrated in northern Negros although just a few of the insurgents are mobile and regularly visit the southern part of the province.

Negros Oriental was earlier declared a "conflict-manageable and development-ready" province by government authorities, with efforts now geared towards providing livelihood and development to formerly insurgency-affected areas, to uplift the lives of residents.

<http://www.visayandailystar.com/2017/April/06/negor1.htm>

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Duterte dons full army uniform for common-law wife

The Commander-in-Chief tries out the uniform given to him by the Philippine Army during their anniversary



COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF. President Rodrigo Duterte poses in full army uniform with common-law wife Honeylet Avanceña. Photo from Honeylet Avanceña's Facebook account

For his common-law wife Honeylet Avanceña, President Rodrigo Duterte showed up ready for battle as he tried on the Philippine Army uniform given to him as a token.

Avanceña's profile photo on Facebook shows her posing with Duterte who is in full battle dress attire, with the top of his camouflage uniform bearing his name and the title, Commander-in-Chief.

They appear to be in Bahay Pangarap, the President's residence when he is in Manila. The photo was likely taken after his official events on Tuesday, April 4.

It was only that afternoon when the uniform was given to him in a box by Philippine Army chief Lieutenant General Glorioso Miranda during the 120th founding anniversary of the Philippine Army where Duterte was the guest of honor.

Miranda also handed him a canteen cup. Both the uniform and cup are meant to be symbols of gratitude and appreciation from the army to the Chief Executive, who is Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

In the photo with Avanceña, Duterte has already made the uniform his own: like in the case of his barong and checkered tops, its sleeves have been rolled up.

Last December, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana also surprised reporters when he wore the new army uniform during Duterte's visit to Butig town in Lanao del Sur. – **Rappler.com**

www.rappler.com

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CEASEFIRE ORDER AWAITED

MILITARY TO CONTINUE OPERATIONS AGAINST NPA

By Cynthia D. Balana
@cynchdbINQ

The military will continue its operations against the New People's Army (NPA) despite the signing of an agreement between the government and communist rebels to forge a joint interim ceasefire unless ordered to stop by President Duterte, military commanders said on Thursday.

Maj. Gen. Benjamin Madrigal, commander of the Army's 4th Infantry Division, said only the President as Commander in Chief can declare a suspension of military operations (Somo).

"The declaration of Somo is a prerogative of the President. In the absence of such declaration, we continue in performing our mandate of protecting communities against terroristic attacks by the NPA such as burning of equipment and extortion activities," Madrigal said.

He noted that two civilian hostages in Davao Oriental had been released by the NPA even without a Somo.

"They can simply leave them to local officials without any fanfare," he said.

The military will conduct "focused military operations" only when there is a need to deal with "atrocities or armed violent attacks being perpetrated by the NPA against our troops and civilians," said Lt. Gen. Leonardo Guerrero, chief of the Eastern

Mindanao Command of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

Col. Edgard Arevalo, head of the AFP's public affairs office, said the military gives "primacy to the peace process" between the government and communist rebels.

However, government troops will continue their "focused, deliberate and surgical combat, intelligence and civil-military operations" while there is still no ceasefire agreement.

"We will pursue our mandate as protector of the people and the state by defeating any armed groups of any affiliation to uphold the law, maintain peace in the communities, and protect the lives of our people," he said.

Arevalo said the AFP was hoping that negotiators from both sides would soon finalize and approve the guidelines and ground rules that would lead to a ceasefire declaration.

Under the agreement signed by government and communist rebel negotiators in the Netherlands on Wednesday, the guidelines would cover the presence of armed groups in communities and the creation of buffer zones. They would also specify prohibited, hostile and provocative acts.

The agreement also calls for the formation of a joint ceasefire committee and a third-party monitor and other mechanisms to implement the truce, including the handling of complaints and alleged violations. INQ

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No ceasefire yet – Dureza

Palace, Armed Forces welcome interim joint truce deal

By ARGYLL CYRUS B. GEDUCOS and FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

Malacañang and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) yesterday welcomed the Agreement on an Interim Joint Ceasefire (AJIC) signed by the Philippine government (GRP) and the National Democratic Front (NDF) in Noordwijk, The Netherlands ▶5

No ceasefire yet – Dureza ◀1

last Wednesday.

Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Jesus Dureza clarified, however, that there is no ceasefire yet and that the AJIC is just an "agreement to work for a permanent ceasefire."

NDF Peace Panel Chairman Fidel Agcaoili aptly described the AJIC when he admitted that "it was an agreement to agree on the guidelines" that will lead to the full implementation of the ceasefire.

Other members of both peace panels confirmed that a "talk and fight" status will still prevail despite the signing of the AJIC.

Presidential spokesman Ernesto Abella said the AJIC will take effect once guidelines and ground rules are approved.

"This will immediately take effect as soon as the guidelines and ground rules are approved, and shall remain in effect until a permanent ceasefire is forged between the two panels," Abella said in a statement.

"We hope this prevents further hostilities and unnecessary loss of lives on the ground," he added.

The AJIC, signed by Dureza and founding Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) chairman Jose Maria Sison,

will also address the four conditions set by President Duterte. These include that the government will not recognize the rebels' territorial claims in the country, for the rebels to stop collecting revolutionary tax, stop hostile acts, and to release captured government security personnel.

AFP Public Affairs Office (PAO) chief Marine Colonel Edgard Arevalo said the signing Wednesday of the AJIC in Noordwijk is a big step in achieving lasting peace.

Arevalo, however, said that until there is no ceasefire declaration, there will also be no corresponding Suspension of Military Operations (SOMO) for the moment.

"While we give primacy to the peace process, we have to continue with our focused, deliberate, and surgical combat, intelligence and civil-military operations for the meantime," Arevalo said in a statement.

"We will pursue our mandate as protector of the people and the state by defeating any armed groups of any affiliation to uphold the law, maintain peace in the communities, and protect the lives of our people," he added.

Arevalo, in the same press statement,

said that the military is hopeful that the negotiators from both sides will soon be able to finalize and approve the guidelines and ground rules that will ultimately lead to the declaration of ceasefire.

Abella said the peace process, while seemingly slow, highlights the "maturing social and political sense" of Filipinos.

"Together, let us build communities that are just and peaceful. This is what being an independent sovereign nation is all about," he said.

SOMO

Meanwhile, the military rejected the NDF's call for a 10-day SOMO/SOPO (Suspension of Police Operations) in parts of Bukidnon, Agusan del Norte and Surigao del Norte for the release of four prisoners of war still being held by the New People's Army (NPA).

In an interview, Army 4th Infantry Division chief Major General Benjamin Madrigal said the declaration of SOMO is a prerogative of President Duterte.

"In the absence of such declaration, we continue in performing our mandate of protecting communities against terroristic attacks by the NPAs such as burning of equipment and extortion activities," Madrigal said.

"As it happened in Davao, they were able to release their hostages there without any SOMO/SOPO. They can simply

leave them to local officials without any fanfare,” he added.

For his part, AFP Eastern Mindanao Command (EastMinCom) Commander Lt. Gen. Leonardo Guerrero, also said that the declaration of SOMO is the prerogative of the president.

He said the NPAs released two captives in Davao Oriental without asking for a SOMO.

He added that they only conduct focused military operations if there is a need for them to address atrocities or armed violent attacks being perpetrated by the NPAs against troops and civilians.

The NDF on Wednesday reiterated and confirmed the February 19, 2017 statement of the CPP directing the concerned NPA units to expedite the release of the six captured prisoners of war (POWs) still in their custody as a “positive gesture” for the ongoing fourth round of the GRP-NDF peace talks.

In fact, pursuant to the said CPP directive, the process of release was immediately initiated.

The NDF said last March 25, two POWs – paramilitary members Rene Doller and Mark Nocus – captured in Lupon, Davao Oriental, on February 14, 2017 were already released by their NPA custodial force to the

members of the Third Party Facilitators and Independent Humanitarian Mission (TPFIHM) in Mati City, Davao Oriental.

It said the four remaining POWs – Pfc Edwin Salan, captured in Alegria, Surigao del Norte on January 29, Sgt. Solaiman Calucop captured in Columbio, Sultan Kudarat on February 2, PFC Samuel Garay, also captured in Columbio, Sultan Kudarat on February 2, and PO2 Jerome Natividad, captured in Talakag, Bukidnon on February 9 – would have also been released if not for the AFP operations.

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The Manila Times

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No suspension of military ops vs Reds yet – AFP

THE Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) said it would continue military operations even though the Philippine government and the National Democratic Front (NDF) have agreed to declare a joint interim ceasefire.

"We are pleased to learn that the document which shall pave the way to the ceasefire has been signed. Meantime, while there is no ceasefire declaration yet, there will be no corresponding suspension of military operations for the moment," said Col. Edgard Arevalo, chief of the AFP Public Affairs Office.

While the AFP recognizes the peace process, "we have to continue with our focused, deliberate and surgical combat, intelligence and civil-military operations for the meantime," he said.

The AFP, said Arevalo, was hopeful

➤ **Suspension A2**

■ SUSPENSION FROM A1

No suspension

negotiators from both sides would soon finalize and approve the guidelines and ground rules that would lead to the declaration of a joint ceasefire.

Responding to the NDF's call for a 10-day suspension of military and police operations in parts of Bukidnon, Agusan del Norte and Surigao del Norte for the release of four "prisoners of war," Maj. Gen. Benjamin Madrigal, commander of the Philippine Army's 4th Infantry Division said such declaration was the prerogative of the President.

In the absence of such declaration, the military will fulfill its mandate of protecting communities against "terrorist attacks" by the communist armed wing New People's Army (NPA) such as the burning of equipment and extortion activities, Madrigal said.

"As it happened in Davao [Oriental], they were able to release their hostages there without any [suspension of military and police operations]. They can simply leave them to local officials without any fanfare," added Madrigal.

Lt. Gen. Leonardo Guerrero, commander of the AFP's Eastern Mindanao Command for his part said: "We only conduct focused military operations if there is a need for us to address atrocities or armed violent attacks being perpetrated by the NPA against our troops and civilians."

He also noted that the communist rebels released two of their hostages in Davao Oriental

without asking for a suspension of military and police operations.

The agreement signed on Wednesday is an interim one to distinguish it from the "ultimate laying down of arms" once both sides reach a final peace agreement, said John Raña, director of the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, on Wednesday.

Palace welcomes deal

Malacañang on Thursday welcomed the agreement on an interim ceasefire between the government and the NDF during the fourth round of peace talks in the Netherlands.

Presidential spokesman Ernesto Abella was hopeful the joint interim ceasefire deal would "[prevent] further hostilities and unnecessary loss of lives on the ground."

"The peace process, while seemingly slow, highlights the maturing social and political sense of the Filipino," Abella said.

The signing was a turnaround from the suspension of talks last February when the government and communist panels lifted a unilateral ceasefire the two sides separately announced in August last year.

Under the interim agreement signed Wednesday, both panels will direct their respective committees to meet, discuss, formulate, and finalize the guidelines and the ground rules of the ceasefire.

The interim joint ceasefire will be effective until a permanent ceasefire deal is agreed upon as part of the final peace agreement between the two sides.

**FERNAN MARASIGAN AND
CATHERINE S. VALENTE**

07 April 2017

Malaya
The National Newspaper

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Military: NPA can free captives sans SOMO

BY VICTOR REYES
AND JOCELYN MONTEMAYOR

THE Armed Forces yesterday rejected a call of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines to suspend military operations in some areas in Mindanao

to pave the way for the release of three soldiers and a policeman abducted by its armed wing, the New People's Army.

"If they are really sincere in doing what they need to do as a

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MILITARY

form of goodwill ... They can just turn over these captives to third-party facilitators and NGOs," said Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla, AFP spokesman.

Padilla issued the statement as President Duterte said he would no longer have problems with the NPA after the government and communist negotiators signed an interim joint ceasefire agreement.

"There will be a cessation of hostilities again," he said, adding government peace negotiator Silvestre Bello III on Wednesday night updated him on the progress of peace talks in the Netherlands.

Peace Adviser Jesus Dureza said the interim joint ceasefire agreement is not yet affective, as guidelines, rules and mechanisms are still being discussed and will be finalized in May when peace talks resume.

The President said he stood firm in his four conditions to ensure the continuity of the peace negotiations. These are the signing of a bilateral ceasefire agreement; stop to the

NPA's collection of "revolutionary tax," and the conduct of extortion, extraction, arson and other illegal activities; end to any claim over barangay or any other land; and release of all the NPA's prisoners.

Padilla said a suspension of offensive military operations (SOMO) or suspension of offensive police operations (SOPO) is not needed if the communists really want to release their captives.

The NDFP, in a statement Wednesday, called for the declaration of a 10-day SOMO and SOPO in parts of Bukidnon, Agusan del Norte, and Surigao del Norte to pave the way for the release of Pfc. Edwin Salan, who was abducted in Surigao del Norte on January 29; Sgt. Solaiman Calucop and Pfc. Samuel Garay, both captured in Sultan Kudarat on February 2; and PO2 Jerome Natividad, who was kidnapped in Bukidnon on February 9.

"This (demand) is untenable. This is something that we should not observe, so we do not agree to it," said Padilla, adding that the military cannot suspend operations

because it has a mandate to protect the people.

Maj. Gen. Benjamin Madrigal, commander of the 4th Infantry Division, said the declaration of a SOMO is a "prerogative of the President."

"In the absence of such declaration, we continue performing our mandate of protecting communities against terroristic attacks by the NPAs such as burning of equipment and extortion activities," he said.

"As it happened in Davao, they were able to release their hostages there without any SOMO/SOPO. They can simply leave them to local officials without any fanfare," Madrigal also said.

Madrigal was referring to militiamen Rene Doller and Carl Mark Nucos who were released by NPA rebels last March 24 in Mati City, Davao Oriental after more than a month in captivity.

Col. Edgard Arevalo, chief of the AFP public affairs office, said offensive military operations against the NPA will have to continue while the ceasefire has not been declared.

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Du30: Occupy PH islands in South China Sea

FROM A1

By Redempto D. Anda
@demptoandaINQ

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY— President Duterte on Thursday said he had ordered troops to deploy to and fortify unoccupied South China Sea islands and reefs claimed by the Philippines, a move that could provoke rival claimants, including China.

Mr. Duterte also announced that he may visit Pagasa Island, internationally known as Thitu Island, and raise the Philippine flag there on Independence Day, June 12.

The Philippines marks its 119th year of independence from more than three centuries of Spanish rule on June 12.

Taking what is ours

"It looks like everybody is making a grab for the islands there, so we better live on those that are still vacant," Mr. Duterte told reporters during a visit to the headquarters of the Western Command of the Armed Forces of the Philippines in Puerto Princesa City, Palawan province, near the disputed Spratly archipelago.

China asserts sovereignty over almost all of the resource-rich South China Sea despite rival claims from the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia, Vietnam and Taiwan, and has rapidly built reefs into artificial islands capable of hosting military planes.

Mr. Duterte has previously sought to improve the Philippines' relations with China by adopting a nonconfrontational approach to their competing claims.

He has deferred assertion of an international tribunal's ruling in favor of the Philippines in a challenge to China's expansive claims in the South China Sea and made overtures to Beijing that have led to improvement in relations between the two countries.

But he appeared to alter his tone with his announcement on Thursday, saying it was

OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF

845-9555 Local: 5285, 5295

time to "erect structures there and raise the Philippine flag."

He made clear, however, that he was not diverting from his administration's stance of making "friends with everybody," including China.

He said the Philippines only sought to make sure it had a strong presence on the islands it occupied.

"We try to be friends with everybody, but we have to maintain our jurisdiction, at least [in] the areas that we control," Mr. Duterte said.

"I have ordered the armed forces to occupy all these islands and put up the Philippine flag [there]," he said.

"This coming Independence Day, I may go to Pagasa to raise the flag. We want to make a strong point that that is ours," he said.

Kalayaan Islands

Pagasa Island is the second-largest island in the Kalayaan group in the Spratlys occupied by the Philippines. It is located 480 kilometers west of Puerto Princesa City and is part of the municipality of Kalayaan.

Occupied by the Philippines since 1970, Pagasa is tightly protected by the military and the population is composed of soldiers and their families.

The island has a 1,300-meter airstrip and structures, including a municipal hall and an elementary school.

The military has requested funds to upgrade the runway on Pagasa and the living quarters of troops stationed there, but work on the improvements has been deferred in keeping with an agreement between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and China to maintain the status quo in the disputed South China Sea.

The agreement, however, did not stop China from building artificial islands on seven reefs in the Spratlys, including some claimed by the Philippines.

Philippine claims

Besides Pagasa Island, Philippines occupies Likas Island (West York Island), Parola Island (Northeast Cay), Lawak

Island (Nanshan), Kota (Loaita Island), Panata Island (Lankiam Cay), Rizal Reef (Commodore Reef), Balagtas Reef (Iring Reef) and Ayungin Shoal (Second Thomas Shoal).

In addition, the Philippines claims Panganiban Reef (Mischief Reef), Zamora Reef (Subi Reef), Kagitingan Reef (Fiery Cross Reef), Calderon Reef (Cuarteron Reef), Burgos Reef (Gaven Reef), Mabini Reef (Johnson South Reef) and McKennan Reef (Hughes Reef), all of which are also claimed by China and Vietnam.

China has transformed Kagitingan, Calderon, Burgos, Mabini, Panganiban, Zamora and McKennan into artificial islands, and built facilities on some that could be used for military purposes, including runways, aircraft hangars and radar shelters.

Last month, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said the military would strengthen its facilities in the Spratlys, building a new port, paving the airstrip on Pagasa and repairing other structures.

Mr. Duterte spoke about building fortifications on Ayungin Shoal, where the government grounded an old naval hospital ship, the BRP Sierra Madre, in 1999 to mark Philippine territory in the Spratlys.

A garrison of Marines holds the rusting ship, which Mr. Duterte indicated he wanted to transform into a battle-capable outpost.

"That's ours. I must build bunkers there," he said.

Philippine Ridge

Mr. Duterte said the development plan for the West Philippine Sea would include funding for securing the Philippines' ownership of Benham Rise, a resource-rich undersea landmass off the eastern coast of Luzon.

"I will spend for the fortification, including Benham Rise, which I will rename Philippine Ridge, because it is part of our continental shelf," he said.

—WITH REPORTS FROM AFP AND REUTERS INQ

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Duterte orders AFP to occupy Phil islands in SCS

By ALEXIS ROMERO

The Philippines is shoring up its presence in the West Philippine Sea with President Duterte ordering the military to occupy at least nine islands under the country's control to make a "strong point" as he announced plans to celebrate Independence Day on one of them.

"We tried to be friends with everybody but we have to maintain our jurisdiction now, at least the areas under our

control. And I have ordered the Armed Forces to occupy all – these so many islands, I think nine or 10 – build structures and place the Philippine flag," Duterte told reporters in Palawan yesterday.

"In the coming Independence Day, I might, I may go to Pag-asa Island to raise the flag there," he said.

"*Mukhang agawan kasi ito ng isla eh* (There seems to be a scramble for islands). And what's ours now at least *kunin na natin* (we should claim) and

make a strong point there that it is ours," he added.

The Philippines controls nine islets in the disputed Spratlys region, the largest of which is Pag-asa, an area under Palawan's fifth class town of Kalayaan. Other Philippine-occupied islets and land features in Spratlys are Ayungin Shoal, Lawak Island, Parola Island, Patag Island, Kota Island, Rizal Reef, Likas Island and Panata Island.

These areas are also being claimed by China, which claims to have historic rights over about 90 percent of the South China Sea, a busy sea lane through which about 80 percent of world trade passes. Malaysia, Vietnam, Brunei and Taiwan also have overlapping claims.

Last year, an arbitral tribunal based in The Hague ruled in favor of the Philippines and invalidated China's expansive claim. China said it does not recognize the ruling.

Duterte had said he was ready to temporarily set aside the arbitral ruling and focus

on improving ties with China.

The President, who has been accused of being too cozy with China, said the Philippines would assert its ownership over the areas it controls.

"We have to fortify. I must build bunkers there or houses and make provisions for habitation," Duterte said.

Duterte also vowed to support improvements and repairs of the runway on Pag-asa.

"The money is there. I don't know how the – the Army or the engineering battalion would do it. But that development there has my full support," he said.

Asked about his plans for the BRP *Sierra Madre*, the rusty ship that serves as outpost for a handful of Marines at Ayungin Shoal, Duterte said in jest that he would replace it with a cruise ship.

"I will replace it with a luxury liner. There will be waiters, food, swimming pool so that the soldiers stationed there would get fat," the President said.

Philippine Ridge

He also said the country's renewed effort to assert its sovereignty over its territories also covers Benham Rise, which he wants renamed Philippine Ridge.

"I will officially claim it as ours and rename it. Not Benham Rise... I would call it the 'Philippine Ridge'," he pointed out.

"It's like a ridge, the continental shelf is continuous down below. So might as well claim a ridge because it connects one ridge to another," he said.

On orders from Duterte, the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Office of the Executive Secretary are now studying the possibility of renaming Benham Rise, to strengthen the country's sovereign rights over the resource-rich under-sea plateau.

Duterte was earlier caught off guard when asked by media about the recent Chinese presence in the area. He said he does not see any problem with the Chinese exercising freedom of navigation in Benham Rise, apparently confusing it with the South China Sea.

Duterte, however, changed his tune after being briefed by the defense and foreign affairs departments on the country's rights over Benham.

The Philippine Coast Guard has started patrolling Benham Rise after three Chinese survey ships were spotted in the area from July to December last year. Duterte said earlier it was enough that Beijing had given assurance that it recognizes the Philippines' rights over Benham Rise.

Despite Duterte's clear order for the military to occupy islands under the country's control, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana clarified that what the President really wanted was better living conditions for soldiers deployed in the Kalayaan Island Group (KIG).

"We have nine islands in the KIG that are already in our possession since long ago, including Pag-asa. The President wants facilities built such as barracks for the men, water (desalination) and sewage disposal system, power generators (conventional and renewable), lighthouses and shelters for fishermen," Lorenzana said.

"Perhaps the President was referring to our already occupied areas," Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla, AFP spokesman, said.

Pag-asa, the second biggest island in the region next to Taiwan's Itu Aba, used to be a military garrison until the national government transformed it into a civilian community with 300 civilian residents, including children.

The island town is also next to a highly militarized Chinese artificial island built over Zamora (Subi) Reef.

The island has an elementary school, a police station, coast guard station, health center and a municipal building. However, the island's Rancudo Airfield remains unpaved.

The island also now has a cell site, a desalination plant as well as generator plant, on top of a solar power facility.

– With Cecille Suerte Felipe, Jaime Laude, Evelyn Macairan

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TROOPS SENT TO SOUTH CHINA SEA

By Efren Montano

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte has ordered the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to occupy all islands of the Philippines in the South China Sea to strengthen the country's claims to the area.

"We have to maintain our jurisdiction over South China Sea," Duterte told reporters in Palawan. Duterte said he has ordered the military to build structures and raise the Philippine flag on islands that belong to the country.

"I have ordered the Armed Forces to occupy all, lagyan ng structures at Philippine flag," he said. Duterte added that he plans to visit Pag-asa (Thitu) Island on Independence Day, June 12, to raise the Philippine flag there.

"Sa coming Independence Day natin, I might, I may go to Pag-asa island to raise the Philippine flag there," he said.

"Basta yung bakante na atin na tirhan na natin, mukhang agawan kasi ito ng isla eh," he added. Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana last month said the

President has ordered the repair of facilities on Pag-asa island.

"May kautusan ang presidente (Rodrigo Duterte), na sa Pag-asa Island, (dapat) pagandahin ang facilities. Priority project in the next months is the repair of our runway in Pag-asa, so we can go there anytime," said Lorenzana during the commemoration of the 41st anniversary of the Western Command.

Last year, The Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague invalidated China's claim and declared that Beijing had violated Manila's rights to fish and explore for resources in the disputed waters.

Justice Secretary Vitaliano Aguirre told reporters last month that Manila would file a complaint against Beijing's plan to install a radar station on Scarborough Shoal.

China five years ago started blockading the Scarborough Shoal (Panatag Shoal), a rocky outcrop within the Philippines' 200-mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ), and the United States has warned Beijing against carrying out the land reclamation work there.

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SURROUNDED BY REDS

**KADAMAY
A COMMUNIST
FRONT—TRILLANES**

**By Christine O. Avendaño
and Leila B. Salaverria
@Team_Inquirer**

An organized group of land grabbers that was granted free government housing intended for the police and the military is a front organization of communists, Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV said on Thursday.

Trillanes was referring to the well-organized Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap or Kadamay, whose members were given government housing projects in Pandi town and San Jose Del Monte City in Bulacan province by President Duterte last Tuesday.

The senator said Mr. Duterte was actually being surrounded by members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines whom he said were “dictating policies” in the government. He said the President was aware of it.

“The President is trying to balance things out because the armed forces would get mad,” Trillanes said at a news conference in the Senate.

The senator provided the Inquirer a list of 11 senior members of the CPP/New People’s Army/National Democratic Front who were part of the Duterte administration, including Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea and Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III, who happens to be chair of the government peace panel in peace talks with the NDF.

Trillanes said he got this list from military sources.

As per the list he provided, Medialdea was identified as a CPP full member while Bello, an “active national democrat.”

On the free government housing for Kadamay, Trillanes warned that the community may be used as a “sanctuary” or “safe haven” of communist rebels as he noted that Bulacan was just near Metro Manila.

Trillanes said he understood the need for the government to help the poor but the grant of free housing to this group might also set a bad precedent.

Meanwhile, the President told reporters in Palawan that while he has decided to give Kadamay members the government housing units they have occupied in Bulacan, they should not do the same thing again.

“They would not be able to do it again because the next time that I will build the houses for the police and the [soldiers], I will have five M60s and a bazooka guarding it,” he said.

He said he was just being patient with the Kadamay members because they were poor. INQ

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MANILA BULLETIN

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AFP accepts Duterte's decision on housing takeover by Kadamay

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD and CHITO A. CHAVEZ

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) said yesterday that its men and women accept the decision of the President to give the housing units intended for them to members of the informal settlers group Kadamay (Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap) who had illegally occupied the housing project in Pandi, Bulacan recently.

Speaking on the issue for the first time, Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla, AFP spokesman, told media at the Camp Aguinaldo press briefing that the military organization accepts and understands the decision made by Duterte.

It will be recalled that about 24,000 Kadamay members had occupied around 5,700 vacant units at six housing project sites in Pandi since March 8. They have put up barricades in front of the housing units to hold off authorities who would attempt to evict them from the government housing project.

Padilla said the President reached the decision to give up the military's claim to the housing units with the plight of the poor in mind.

"The position of the Armed Forces is that we don't see any problem with that (decision)," Padilla said. "The move made by the President was meant to prevent trouble from happening there. Besides, he already made an announcement that those who will be affected, the awardees who have units there will be replaced with new units."

Padilla also said the houses taken by the Kadamay members are ultimately not a loss to soldiers because new houses will be given to them.

He said that based on information given to them, the Bulacan Villa Lois has 675 units allocated to AFP and Philippine

National Police (PNP) personnel.

Kadamay wants more

Even after the President legalized their stay at the housing units they forcibly occupied in Bulacan, Kadamay said it will continue to occupy idle government housing projects.

Gloria "Ka Bea" Arellano admitted that there is no guarantee that they would no longer occupy idle government housing units similar to what they did in Pandi, Bulacan citing that what the poor needs are dwellings where they can live in.

Some 4,000 Kadamay members took over the vacant housing units in the resettlement sites in Pandi, Bulacan, including those intended for policemen and soldiers.

Kadamay members insisted their right to live in the housing as they maintained that they have been unoccupied for five years so the government should just give them away for free.

Arellano hailed the President's move but went further by saying that the government should just distribute the houses to Kadamay members for free since they are too poor to pay for the monthly dues for the housing units.

Since the dues might reach up to P420,000 in one year, Arellano explained that the poor cannot afford to pay the amount in what she described as government business making it necessary for the indigent Filipinos living on the streets, waterways and under the bridges to be provided with free housing units.

She also demanded that the National Housing Authority (NHA) to improve the implementation of its resettlement projects that would truly benefit legitimate poor members of the society.

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TAGGED BY FBI

Immigration Commissioner Jaime Morente (left) and DOJ Sec. Vitaliano Aguirre present alleged Islamic State members Husayn Al-Dhafiri and Rahaf Zina (center) on Thursday. —JOAN BONDOC

TOURING COUPLE NABBED FOR 'LINKS TO TERROR GROUP, THREAT TO PH'

By Aie Balagtas See
@ABalagtasSeeINQ

Government agents acting on information from the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) have arrested a couple with alleged links to the terror group IS (Islamic State).

Husayn Al-Dhafiri and Rahaf Zina were arrested on March 25 outside a shopping mall in Taguig City, but Justice Vitaliano Aguirre presented them to the media at the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) headquarters only on Thursday.

The arrest was kept under wraps for several days to wait if it would draw any "reaction," Aguirre explained.

Citing intelligence reports from the Armed Forces of the Philippines, Aguirre said Al-Dhafiri, a Kuwaiti national, "has links to terrorism and is believed to pose a threat to the national security of the Philippines."

"He is alleged to have been involved in explosives manufacturing and possibly in operational planning against Kuwait," he added.

Zina, a Syrian, was reportedly the former wife of IS' "No. 2 man," according to lawyer Jose Carlito Licas of the Bureau of Immigration.

At the same briefing, BI Commissioner Jaime Morente said the couple were in the country "because they are planning to bomb (a target)—not sure if in Kuwait or in the Philippines."

The suspects were tracked down by the BI with help from the FBI, the officials said.

Since 2016, Al-Dhafiri has been in and out of the Philippines as a tourist but he last entered the country in January this year on a working visa, which a manpower company of dubious background helped him obtain, according to Morente.

Licas noted that Al-Dhafiri

used his real name in his passport and not the one that appeared on a watch list kept by the Kuwait government. The ongoing NBI investigation has yet to verify his job and the company he worked for.

Licas said a background investigation was still ongoing to determine if Al-Dhafiri—who reportedly went to Davao and Cebu in January—had already made contact with local terrorist groups.

The probe so far has gathered scant information on Zina, who is believed to have been placed in Al-Dhafiri's care as part of a "tradition" among IS members to look after the wife of a slain commander.

Al-Dhafiri and Zina were detained at the NBI for violation of immigration laws and are set to be deported to Kuwait and Qatar, respectively.

Facing reporters, all Al-Dhafiri could say was: "I need a lawyer, please." INQ

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Terror attack foiled; 2 IS suspects nabbed

By GHIO ONG

Authorities foiled a possible terror attack following the arrest of a Kuwaiti man and his Syrian wife, both alleged members of the Islamic State (IS).

Kuwaiti Husayn al-Dhafiri and Syrian Rahaf Zina had been living and working in Manila since January. They were arrested on March 25 at a condominium unit in Taguig City, Justice Secretary Vitaliano Aguirre II told a press conference yesterday.

"They arrived in the country on Jan. 28" from Qatar, Aguirre said, adding the couple used their real names in their passports issued in Kuwait.

Aguirre cited military intel-

ligence reports pointing to al-Dhafiri as allegedly involved in explosives manufacturing and planning a terror attack against his home country Kuwait.

Immigration commissioner Jaime Morente added al-Dhafiri is a ranking IS operative in Syria and is also known as Warsh al-Kuwaiti and Abu Muslim al-Kuwaiti.

Morente said Zina is the widow of Abu Jandal Al-Kuwaiti, a high ranking IS commander who was killed during an airstrike in December last year.

Morente said a working visa allowed al-Dhafiri's entry to the country, which was approved by a recruitment agency Q8 Solutions.

He said the couple flew to Davao for four days and to Cebu for three

days before flying back to Manila.

Aguirre added al-Dhafiri also entered the country as a tourist in 2016.

Aguirre though admitted the couple are not directly linked to any local terror group in the country, saying they are still verifying their activities during their stay.

"We are speculating why they are in the Philippines," Aguirre said.

He said they had to delay the announcement of the capture of the couple.

"We kept this under wraps for about a week. It was a signal for the others to continue their terroristic activities," Aguirre said.

Morente said the couple would be processed for depor-

tation within the month.

Immigration associate commissioner Jake Ligas added they would work on the cancellation of their passports.

Al-Dhafiri would be deported to Kuwait where he is suspected of bomb plots. Zina would be deported to Qatar, from where she last came.

"Both of them will be properly received by the security forces of those countries," he said.

The Kuwaiti embassy in Manila could not be contacted for comment.

In the meantime, they have been detained at the National Bureau of Investigation's facility in Manila since March 26, a day after their arrest. – With Rey Galupo, AFP, Reuters

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Two suspected ISIS members arrested in Taguig

By JEFFREY G. DAMIGOG

Two suspected members of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), have been arrested after the United States' Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) linked them to terrorism.

Kuwaiti Husayn Al-Dhafiri, a male, and Syrian Rahaf Zina, a female, were arrested on March 25, 2017, on 28th St., Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City, but were only presented to the public yesterday by Justice Secretary Vitaliano Aguirre.

"Based on official communications forwarded to the Bureau of Immigration (BI) by the United States' Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Husayn Al-Dhafiri a.k.a. Warsh Al-Kuwaiti and a.k.a. Abu Muslim Al-Kuwaiti, has links to terrorism and is believed to pose a threat to the national security of the Philippines," Aguirre told reporters.

Both suspects were arrested by the BI upon the Fugitive Search Unit (BI-FSU) upon the request of the Kuwaiti government through a Note Verbale. They've been in the country for three

months already. They failed to present any immigration document during verification and were turned over a day after their arrest to the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), where they are currently detained at its detention facility.

After being charged and going through a month-long deportation proceeding, Husayn will be deported to Kuwait and Rahaf to her country of origin in Qatar as the governments of the two countries are waiting to secure them.

"They will be answering charges in their own country because they were reportedly planning for a bombing operation. The place we still do not have any fixed information but it could be in Kuwait, it could be in the Philippines," Immigration Commissioner Jaime Morente said.

Aguirre, citing intelligence reports from the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), said Husayn has been "involved in explosives manufacturing and possibly on operational planning against Kuwait."

On the other hand, Aguirre said, "Rahaf Zina claimed to be the wife of Husayn Al-Dhafiri."

Citing Kuwait Security Service confidential information, Aguirre said that Rahaf is "the widow of one of the ISIL leaders in Iraq who got killed during combat operations... Abu Jandal Al-Kuwaiti, the number two military commander of ISIL operating in Syria."

"Based on the tradition, a widow of their killed comrades will be taken care of by the living members by marrying said widow," Aguirre said, explaining why the woman is with Husayn.

Meanwhile, Brig Gen Redito Padilla, Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) spokesman, stressed that there is nothing to be alarmed with the arrest of the two suspected terrorists as the military is on top of the situation.

"It's not a question if there is a threat or not but our readiness to act on the threat," Padilla said.

"So I will go back to that premise because that is very important doctrinal foundation for everybody to understand. But for the Armed Forces, the presence of the threat is not what is critical, what is very important and critical to the Armed Forces is its ability to respond when a threat becomes active," he said. (With a report from Francis T. Wakefield)

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ONLINE NEWS

07 APRIL 2017

AFP still getting details on Duterte's planned visit to Pagasa Island

From the Philippine News Agency (Apr 6): **AFP still getting details on Duterte's planned visit to Pagasa Island**

As President Rodrigo Duterte announced his intentions to visit Pagasa Island, the largest of the Philippine-held feature in the Kalayaan Island Group, this coming June 12 the military on Thursday said it is still getting details on the purported visit.

"This is a matter I need to consult with our seniors," AFP spokesperson Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla when asked whether it is advisable for the Chief Executive to visit the island.

Aside from his visit which will fall on the country's 119th Independence Day anniversary, Duterte also ordered the military to occupy and secure all Philippine-held features in the Kalayaan Island Group and set up facilities that will ease the difficulties being experienced by troops manning these islands.

"I was not able to hear what his (President Duterte's) announcement was this afternoon but he has made previous declaration that he supports whatever we are doing in our area and he is after the welfare of our soldiers in our occupied islets, so he is also on the same plane as our military and defense personnel to provide for the better living conditions of our personnel," Padilla said.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said the facilities Duterte wanted to set-up for the soldiers included barracks for the men, water desalination plants, and sewage disposal systems, power generators (conventional and renewable), light houses, and shelters for fishermen.

The AFP spokesperson said Duterte was entitled to visit Pagasa Island, both as a Filipino citizen and his status as Commander-in-Chief.

But the President's visit to Pagasa Island is also dependent on what kind of threats the visit might faced.

"There's always the presence of a threat, that's why we said either it is a low level threat, a high level threat will all depend (on that)," Padilla stressed.

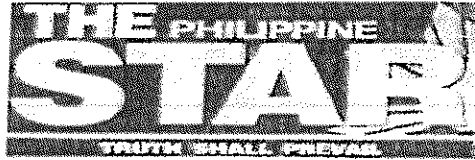
Out of the seven island and three reefs being controlled by the Philippines, Pagasa is the largest measuring 37.2 hectares.

Other Philippine possessions in the Spratlys include Likas Island which measures 18.6 hectares; Parolo Island, 12.7 hectares; Lawak Island 7.93 hectares; Kota Island, 6.45 hectares; Patag Island, 0.57; Panata Island, 0.44 hectares; Rizal, Balagtas and Ayungin Reefs.

<http://www.pna.gov.ph/index.php?idn=1&sid=&nid=1&rid=978280>

Army Core Purpose: Serving the people. Securing the land.

07 April 2017



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Shoot yourself rather than surrender, Rody tells soldiers

Use the last bullet on yourself and die as a patriot.

This was President Duterte's advice to the troops of the Western Command in Puerto Princesa, Palawan when he met them yesterday.

"Do not surrender to the enemy.

As much as this could be a dreadful task to you, do not give the enemy the opportunity to mistreat you. They will only use you as target practice, you will be treated like a pig only to be executed," he said.

Duterte made the statement as he

gave 30,000 Glock pistols to the troops.

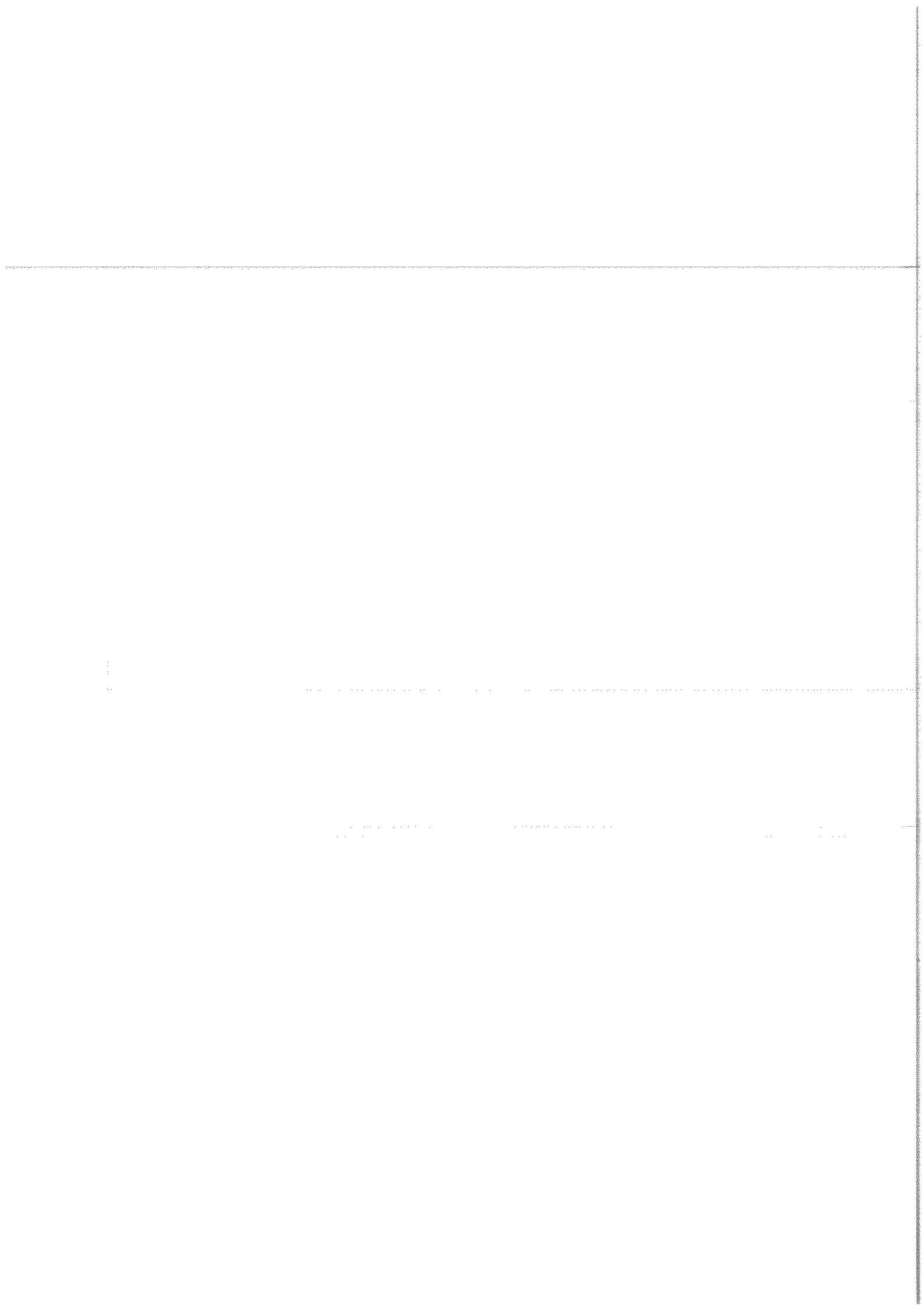
He said they could use these side arms to defend themselves in areas controlled by the communist New People's Army (NPA).

Speaking before the troops during his visit to the Western Command,

Duterte told them to just kill themselves with the pistols rather than be subjected to torture and humiliation by the enemy.

He advised the troops to reserve the last round "for emergency use."

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"I ordered 30,000 of the sidearms, I will give them all to you. On the last bullet, put the pistol to your head and tell the enemy 'f**k you.' At least you die with dignity," Duterte said.

He reminded the soldiers that death would eventually catch up with everyone.

"If it is your time, it's your time. If it is my time, then that's it. It's my time. That's our destiny," he said.

The President told the soldiers to bring their sidearms at all times, lamenting how off duty soldiers and policemen were killed and mutilated by communist rebels in February.

"I remind you to bring firearms whenever you go out of camp. You will find yourself defenseless without it," he said.

In the same speech, Duterte again expressed his anger at how the NPA rebels repeatedly shot unarmed soldiers during an attack last February, which prompted him to lift the government ceasefire and suspend the peace talks.

Hopes

The government and the communist rebels agreed on a joint interim ceasefire on Wednesday in the Netherlands, according to government peace panel adviser Angeles City Mayor Edgardo Pamintuan.

"This is a major breakthrough. This could lead to a comprehensive ceasefire agreement which will pave the way for a just and lasting peace in our country," Pamintuan said.

Pamintuan, who was among the signatories to the agreement as adviser of the government panel, explained the ceasefire guidelines and ground rules would be formulated by the government and the National Democratic Front (NDF) in a Joint Ceasefire Committee to oversee the temporary cessation of hostilities.

The NDF is the umbrella organization representing the Communist Party of the Phil-

ippines (CPP) and the NPA in the peace talks with the government.

"The agreement directed the said committee to meet, even in-between formal talks, to discuss, formulate and finalize the guidelines," Pamintuan said.

He said talks would resume in May with the hope of fast-tracking the agreements on substantial issues on social and economic reforms, and political and constitutional reforms.

Malacañang, for its part, is hoping that the signing of the interim joint ceasefire agreement will result in lesser attacks from the communist rebels.

"We hope this prevents further hostilities and unnecessary loss of lives on the ground," presidential spokesman Ernesto Abella said.

While in Palawan, Duterte welcomed the development.

"So, there will be less problem from the NPA. There will be a cessation of hostilities again," he said.

Duterte also reminded chief peace government negotiator Silvestre Bello III to ensure that his pre-conditions are met by the CPP-NDF.

He said Bello was tasked to make sure that the CPP-NPA-NDF will comply with his preconditions before formally resuming the peace talks.

Duterte said he wanted the communist rebels to stop collecting revolutionary taxes and stop claiming some areas in the country under their control and influence.

"Third is that I want a guarantee in writing and fourth is that they must release all soldiers and policemen in captivity, including some civilians and barangay leaders. If there are none of these, then I do not want the talks to proceed," Duterte said.

"If they are met, then we will talk again," he added.

He also extended his offer anew to CPP founding chairman Jose Maria Sison to come home. — Christina Mendez, Jaime Laude, Ding Cervantes

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Malaya

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MALAYANING PHOTO

Boodle fight. President Duterte shares a meal with troopers of the Western Command during a visit at their headquarters at Camp General Artemio G. Ricarte in Puerto Princesa, Palawan.