

*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**

**08 April 2017**

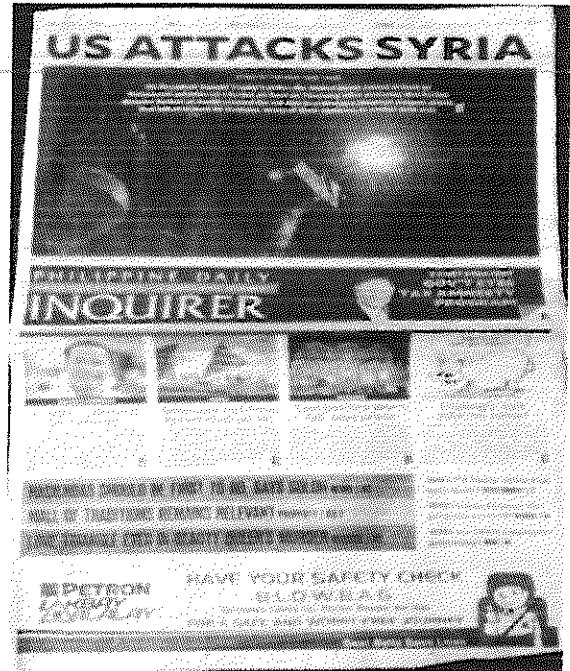
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*Army Core Purpose: Serving the people. Securing the land.*

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

# NEWS HEADLINES

## 08 APRIL 2017



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

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# US cruise missiles hammer Syria

*Russia hits US 'aggression'*

**BEIRUT - US forces fired a barrage of cruise missiles at a Syrian airbase yesterday in response to what President Donald Trump called a "barbaric" chemical attack he blamed on the Damascus regime.**

The massive strike - the first direct US action against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's government and Trump's biggest military decision since taking office - marked a dramatic escalation in American involvement in Syria's six-year civil war.

It followed days in which images of dead children and victims suffering convulsions from the suspected sarin gas attack in the rebel-held town of Khan Sheikhun shocked the world.

Syria's regime has denied any use of chemical weapons and state media yesterday described the US strike - which was reported to have pulverized the base and killed at least four servicemen - as an "act of aggression."

The US strike also killed nine civilians, including four children, state news agency SANA reported.

The news agency said five of the civilians were killed in the village of Shayrat just outside of the base of the same name.

It said four more were killed in two other nearby villages - Al-Hamrat and Al-Manzul.

Russia also denounced the US action, with Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov saying President Vladimir Putin considered it "aggression against a sovereign state" that would inflict "considerable damage" on US-Russia ties.

Trump announced the strike in a brief televised address delivered hours after the UN Security Council failed to agree on a probe into the suspected chemical attack.

Declaring it in America's "vital national security interest" to prevent the spread of

chemical weapons, Trump accused Assad of a "very barbaric attack" in which "even beautiful babies were cruelly murdered."

"Tonight I call on all civilized nations to join us in seeking to end this slaughter and bloodshed in Syria and also to end terrorism of all kinds and all types," Trump said.

Officials said the US fired 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles at the Shayrat Airfield at 3:40 a.m. Syrian time yesterday.

### 'Blown to pieces'

The missiles were fired from the *USS Porter* and the *USS Ross*, which belong to the US Navy's Sixth Fleet and are located in the eastern Mediterranean.

The strike targeted radars, aircraft, air defense systems and other logistical components at the military base south of Homs in central Syria, from where Washington believes

Tuesday's deadly strike was launched.

Officials said measures had been put in place to avoid hitting sarin gas they said was stored at the airfield.

"The airbase was almost completely destroyed - the runway, the fuel tanks and the air defenses were all blown to pieces," the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

The Britain-based monitoring group said at least four servicemen were killed, including an air commodore.

The base was the second most important for Syria's air force, Observatory chief Rami Abdel Rahman told *AFP*, after the Latakia airbase in Assad's coastal heartland where Russia also maintains extensive facilities.

Homs governor Talal Barazi told *AFP* there were several dead and wounded at the base and that large parts of it were on fire.

"It will take some time to determine the extent of the damage," he said. "Of course we condemn this, all action targeting Syrian military bases is condemnable."

Syrian state media confirmed the strike, with news agency *SANA* saying:

"This American aggression follows the slanderous media campaign by some countries after what happened in Khan Sheikhun."

Iran, another key Assad ally, also condemned the action.

### Opposition urges more US action

But Syria's opposition National Coalition hailed the strike and called for further US action against Assad's air force.

"The Coalition welcomes the strike and urges Washington to neutralize

Assad's ability to carry out air raids," spokesman Ahmad Ramadan told *AFP*. "We hope for more strikes... and that these are just the beginning."

The strike came despite a warning from Russia of potential “negative consequences” if Washington carried out military action in Syria.

Russian has insisted that the chemical weapons that caused the deaths in Khan Sheikhun had been stockpiled by “terrorists” on the ground and possibly released by a conventional strike.

US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson accused Russia – which props up the Assad regime and agreed to mothball Syrian chemical weapons in a 2013 deal – of being incompetent or complicit in permitting Assad’s actions.

Russian military officials in Syria were informed of the strike beforehand in order to avoid casualties that could prompt a broader crisis.

The White House was quick to paint the decision as limited to deterring the use of chemical weapons, and not part of a broader military campaign to remove Assad by force.

“The intent was to deter the

regime from doing this again, and it is certainly our hope that this has had that effect.” Pentagon spokesman Navy Captain Jeff Davis told reporters.

Tillerson said the attack should leave no one in any doubt that Trump is willing to act if any actor “crosses the line.”

It will send ripples around the world, from Pyongyang to Tehran, as nations and leaders take the measure of the novice but often bellicose president.

The timing of the strike, during a meeting with China’s President Xi Jinping, will give weight to Trump’s threats to deal with North Korea’s nuclear and missile programs unilaterally if necessary.

### **‘Strong message’ sent**

Allies rushed to support the US military action, including Britain, Saudi Arabia and Israel.

“In both word and action, President Trump sent a strong and clear message today that

the use and spread of chemical weapons will not be tolerated,” Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s office said.

On Wednesday, Trump had decried the suspected attack – which killed at least 86 people, including 27 children, and wounded more than 500 – as an “affront to humanity.”

“It crossed a lot of lines for me,” Trump said, alluding to Barack Obama’s failure to enforce his own “red line” on the use of chemical weapons in Syria four years ago.

In 2013, Trump had urged then-president Obama not to intervene against Assad.

The Khan Sheikhun incident appears to have marked a turning point for Trump, just days after his administration signaled it was no longer seeking the Syrian leader’s departure from power.

Tillerson called Thursday for “a political process that would lead to Assad leaving” and said his future role in the country was “uncertain.”

–AFP

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The Manila Times

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## Daughter of slain Army carpenter attends graduation

**SHARIFF AGUAK, Maguindanao:** The daughter of the Army's 524th Engineering Battalion personnel who was killed by a Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) gunman in Mamasapano was escorted by a foster dad from the Army as she marched on her graduation day on Friday.

Hafra Macadatar, 13, was escorted to her graduation ceremony at Palumbe Elementary School at Lambayong, Sultan Kudarat by Lt. Col. Harold Cabunoc, commanding officer of the 33rd Infantry Battalion.

Her father, Cpl. Tamano Macadatar, was killed by a BIFF member in Barangay Tukanalipao last Tuesday while he and several others were constructing a peace and learning facility for the residents.

Lt. Col. Maynard Camarao, battalion commander of Macadatar, joined Cabunoc at Hafra's graduation. Both

Camarao and Cabunoc have adopted the slain Army man's children.

"It's an honor to stand as father of Hafra on the occasion his father, the late Tammy Macadatar, had supposedly prepared for and had wished to attend," Cabunoc said.

Hafra's mother, Jean, an Ilocana, is in Kuwait working and could not attend the graduation of her daughter.

Macadatar, a skilled construction worker, was a member of the Moro National Liberation Front who was integrated into the Army as part of the MNLFF's peace agreement with the government.

His unit was tapped by a non-government organization to help put up a learning center in Barangay Tukanalipao.

He was killed in the project site by a BIFF bandit using a caliber .30 M1 Garand rifle. The suspect and his eight

cohorts, armed with assault rifles, escaped before responding policemen could reach the crime scene.

More than 7,000 MNLF guerillas were absorbed by the Armed Forces and the Philippine National Police after the group forged a final peace pact with Malacañang on September 2, 1996.

The treacherous murder of the unarmed Macadatar angered barangay (village) leaders and local officials of Mamasapano.

His superiors provided his immediate relatives with cash assistance and facilitated his burial immediately after he was killed in keeping with Islamic tradition of burying the dead within 24 hours from the time of death.

Cabunoc said Macadatar's children are also entitled to an AFP scholarship program for military dependents killed in the line of duty.

**JULMUNIR I. JANNARAL**

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## Soldiers hurt in clash with Sayyaf get medals

By ROEL PAREÑO

ZAMBOANGA CITY – President Duterte honored at least 28 soldiers who were wounded in a recent encounter with Abu Sayyaf bandits in Sulu.

Duterte pinned merit medals on the soldiers when he visited them at a hospital inside Camp General Teodulfo Bautista on Thursday.

The soldiers also received cash assistance, guns and mobile phones.

"I am impressed by your performance here. *Haping-happy ako*," the President told the soldiers.

Lt. Col. William George Cordova, commander of the 41st Infantry Battalion, led the soldiers who were given merit medals.

The soldiers encountered around a hundred bandits in Barangay Upper Laus in

Talipao town on April 2. Ten bandits were killed and two high-powered firearms were recovered.

Meanwhile, military officers who led operations against Abu Sayyaf bandits, members of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters and other militants in Mindanao were promoted.

Western Mindanao Command chief Maj. Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr. was promoted to lieutenant general while Cols. Cirilito Sobejana, commander of Joint Task Force Sulu, and Jose Faustino Jr. were promoted to brigadier general.

Armed Forces of the Philippines chief Gen. Eduardo Año led the donning of ranks ceremony at Camp Teodulfo Bautista also on Thursday.

– With Christina Mendez, Edith Regalado



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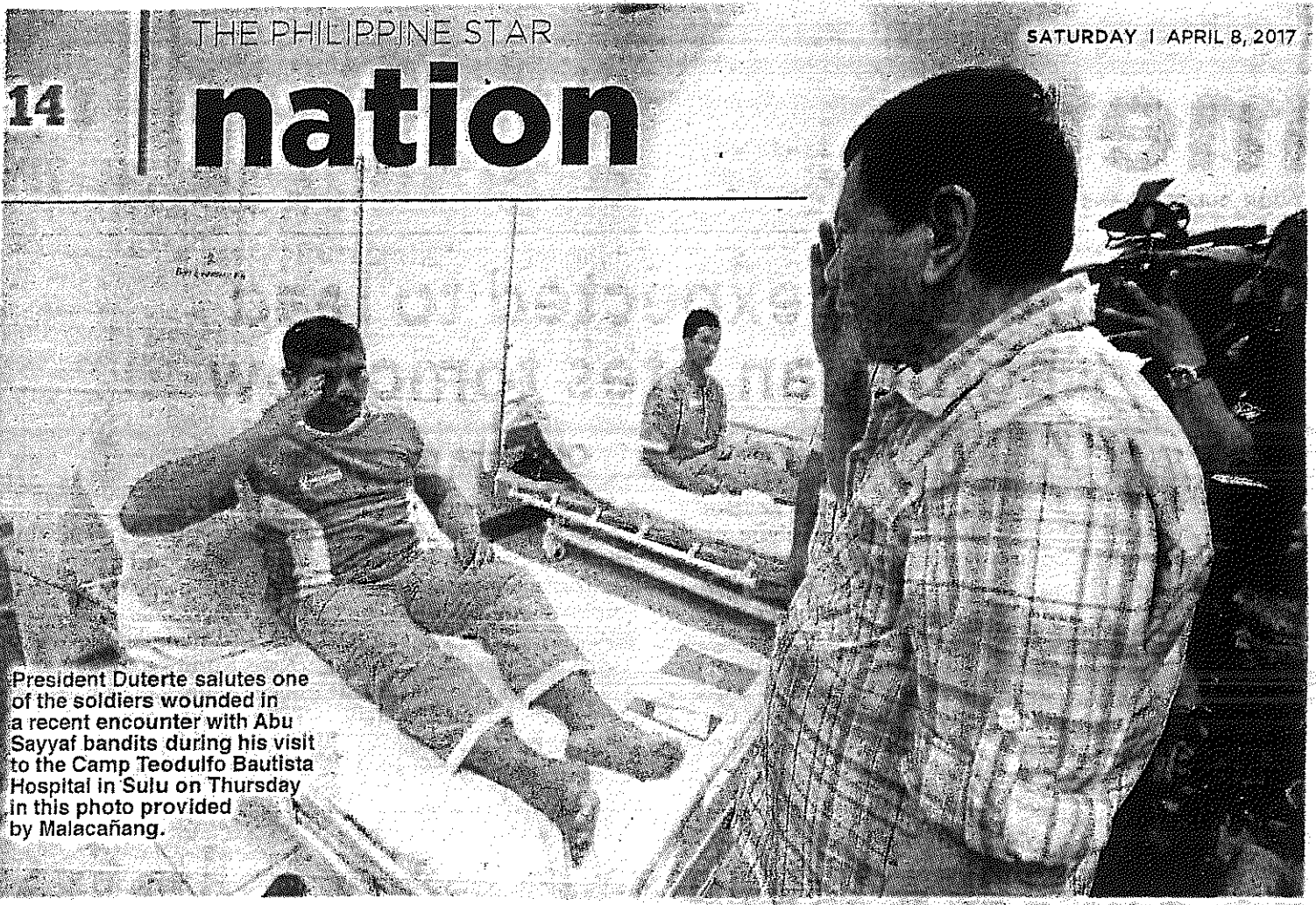
THE PHILIPPINE STAR

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President Duterte salutes one of the soldiers wounded in a recent encounter with Abu Sayyaf bandits during his visit to the Camp Teodulfo Bautista Hospital in Sulu on Thursday in this photo provided by Malacañang.



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**MANILA BULLETIN**  
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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# Duterte honors 28 soldiers wounded in Sulu skirmish

By **NONDY E. LACSON**  
and **FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD**

**ZAMBOANGA CITY** – President Rodrigo Duterte bestowed the Wounded Personnel Medal to the 28 soldiers of the 41st Infantry Battalion under the Joint Task Force Sulu during his visit in Sulu province Thursday.

Capt. Jo-Ann Petinglay, spokesperson of the Armed Forces of the Philippines - Western Mindanao Command (AFP-WestMinCom), said soldiers of the 41st Infantry Battalion, including the battalion commander and a junior offi-

cer, were recognized by the President.

The military personnel were wounded when they figured in a 3-hour encounter with around 100 Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) bandits in Barangay Upper Laus, Talipao last Sunday, which resulted in the death of 10 bandits and the recovery of two high-powered firearms.

Awarded with the Wounded Personnel Medal were Lieutenant Colonel William George Cordova, the battalion commander of the 41IB, 1st Lieutenant Joe Mari Landicho, Sergeant Randy Balutoc, Sergeant Samian Calangan, Corporal Crispin Agoy, Corporal Brainard Dumondon, Corporal Ronald Allan Lorenzo, Corporal Jonathan Mukay, Corporal Mariel Reboredo and Corporal Ruben Olaso.

Likewise awarded were Private First Class Jomar Avero, Private First Class Randy Culhi, Private First Class John Joseph Diaz, Private First Class James Layugan, Private First Class Daniel Paclay, Private First Class Rebushsein Babo Stock, Private First Class Ronald Tabliago, Private First Class Jun Terrenal, Private First Class Kristian Ayangao, Private First Class Jomar Yap, Private First Class Jomer Dalayday, Private First Class

Yasher Bayongan, Private First Class Emerson Awingan, Private Royman Talana, Private Julius Ancheta, Private Michael Xedric Adriatico, Private Judie Domingo and Private Jeffrey Viernes.

Four other soldiers, Private First Class Freddie Anggaco, Private First Class Ryan Maymaya, Private First Class Bobbyn Pacas, and Private Eugene Pagat, were brought to the Camp Navarro General Hospital and a private hospital in Zamboanga City on Sunday, April and were last listed in stable condition.

The armed engagement ensued in the middle of the intensified conduct of military operations launched by the Joint Task Force Sulu, in the hope of rescuing the Vietnamese kidnap victims and to neutralize the bandits.

"Our troops are very motivated to carry on their duties, because they know the Commander-in-Chief, President Rodrigo Roa Duterte, supports them," Lt. Gen. Carlito G. Galvez, Jr. AFP WestMinCom Commander said.

"Most of our soldiers who sustained minor wounds already want to go back to the field to hunt down the Abu Sayyaf and rescue the remaining hostages," he added.

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# The Manila Times

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## ARMY RESERVIST LINKED TO KIDNAP, ROBBERY GANG KILLED

A RESERVIST of the Philippine Army tagged by the police as member of kidnap and robbery group was killed when he fired shots at operatives serving a search warrant for illegal possession of firearms against him in Ozamis City on Thursday. Chief Supt. Agripino Javier, Northern Mindanao regional police director, identified the reservist as 1Lt. Anthony Theodore Tamparong of 903rd Community Defense Center based in Camp Dominguez, Sinacaban, Misamis Oriental. The police recovered from the slain Army reservist the 1911A1 caliber .45 pistol loaded with six live ammunition, four empty shells of caliber 9mm and several rounds of ammunition for different calibers including an M-203 grenade (40mm) several identification cards, bayonet scabbard, military compass and three other ammo boxes containing 150 empty shells of caliber .45 pistol. Javier said Tamparong was a member of a Dragon Group, a remnant of the notorious Kuratong Baleleng kidnap and robbery group.

**FERNAN MARASIGAN**

## DUTERTE AWARDS WOUNDED SOLDIERS IN SULU

**SHARIFF AGUAK, Maguindanao:** President Rodrigo Duterte on Thursday accorded the Wounded Personnel Medal to 28 soldiers of the 41st Infantry Battalion (41IB) under the Joint Task Force Sulu at the Kuta General Teodulfo Bautista Hospital in Busbus, Jolo. The President recognized the gallantry of the 28 soldiers of the 41IB headed by their battalion commander and a junior officer, after sustaining wounds in a three-hour fierce gun battle with an estimated 100 members of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG). Capt. Jo-Ann Petinglay, spokesperson of the Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom) said the fierce encounter with the terrorist group resulted in the deaths of 10 Abu Sayyaf bandits and the seizure of two high-powered firearms, in Barangay Upper Laus, Talipao. Awarded were Lieutenant Colonel William George Cordova, 41IB battalion commander; 1st Lieutenant Joe Mari Landicho; Sergeants Randy Balutoc and Samian Calangan; Cpl. Crispin Agoy; Cpl. Brainard Dumondon; Cpl. Ronald Allan Lorenzo; and several others. Meanwhile, four soldiers – Private First Class Freddie Anggaco, Pfc. Ryan Maymaya, Pfc. Bobby Pacas and Private Eugene Pagat are currently in stable condition after undergoing medical procedures. The armed engagement ensued in the middle of the intensified conduct of military operations launched by the Joint Task Force Sulu, in the hope of rescuing the Vietnamese kidnap victims and to neutralize the bandits.

**JULMUNIR I. JANNARAL**

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**Tempo**

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# Rody awards 28 soldiers hurt in clash

A gold cross medal, a new pistol, mobile phone, and financial assistance were among the incentives distributed by President Duterte to wounded government troops in Jolo, Sulu last Thursday.

The President visited 28 soldiers wounded in a recent battle with the Abu Sayyaf Group and expressed the government's appreciation for their sacrifices for the nation. The soldiers belonging to the 41st Infantry Battalion were recuperating at the Camp Teodulfo Bautista Station Hospital in Jolo.

Army Capt. Jo-Ann D. Petinglay, spokesperson of the Armed Forces of the Philippines-Western Mindanao Command, said the awardees were Lieutenant Colonel William George Cordova, the battalion commander, 1st Lieutenant Joe Mari Landicho, Sergeant Randy Balutoc, Sergeant Samian Calangan, Corporal Crispin Agoy, Corporal Brainard Dumondon, Corporal Ronald Allan Lorenzo, Corporal Jonathan Mukay, Corporal Mariel Reboredo, Corporal Ruben Olaso, Private First Class Jomar Avero, Private First Class Randy Culhi, Private First Class John Joseph Diaz, Private First Class James Layugan;

Private First Class Daniel Paclay, Private First Class Rebushsein Babo Stock, Private First Class Ronald Tabliago, Private First Class Jun Terrenal, Private First Class Kristian Ayangao, Private First Class Jomar Yap, Private First Class Jomer Dalayday, Private First Class Yasher Bayongan, Private First Class Emerson Awingan, Private Royman Talaña, Private Julius Ancheta, Private Michael Xedric Adriatico, Private Judie Domingo, and Private

Jeffrey Viernes.

"I am impressed by your performance here. Haping-happy ako," Duterte said before a gathering of the troops at the military camp.

The President commended the bravery of the injured soldiers as he awarded them Wounded Personnel Medal. The wounded soldiers also received cash assistance, a Glock 30 .45 pistol, and brand new cellular phone from the President. The troops clashed with Abu Sayyaf insurgents in Talipao, Sulu last April 1.

In his remarks, the President pledged anew to provide better housing for soldiers following the takeover of their units by an urban poor group in Bulacan.

"Lahat ng maitulong ko sa inyo, ibibigay ko. Yung housing na inagaw ng mga mahirap lang rin, hayaan na niinyo 'yan. Gawaan ko kayo ng bago at 'yung mas maganda," Duterte said.

Before the end of the year, each soldier will also receive a brand new pistol to boost their safety whenever they leave the military camp, according to the President.

He also promised to pursue the peace initiatives with the Muslim separatists groups as well as the communists.

He said the government has started talks with Nur Misuari, leader of the Moro National Liberation Front, as well leaders of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, to advance peace in the South.

"Nur Misuari is talking to me, sabi niya, konting panahon lang kasi inassemble niya 'yung mga tauhan niya dito," he said. **(Genalyn D. Kabiling and Francis T. Wakefield)**

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## Duterte visits, awards medals to wounded soldiers

**PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte** flew to Jolo, Sulu, Thursday afternoon to visit soldiers wounded in recent clashes with the Abu Sayyaf.

The President made the visit after visiting soldiers in Western Command in Palawan.

Soldiers from the 41st Infantry Battalion fought with about 100 members of the Abu Sayyaf in a three-hour gunbattle in

Barangay Upper Laus, Talipao, last Sunday, April 2.

Ten members of the Abu Sayyaf were believed to have been killed but 32 soldiers were wounded.

Duterte pinned the Wounded Personnel Medal on 28 officers and enlisted personnel during his visit to Kuta General Teodulfo Bautista Hospital in Jolo.

Those awarded with

medals include Lieutenant Colonel William George Cordova, battalion commander of the 41IB, 1st Lieutenant Joe Mari Landicho, Sgts. Randy Balutoc, Samian Calangan, Corporals Crispin Agoy, Brainard Dumondon, Ronald Allan Lorenzo, Jonathan Mukay, Marriel Rebred and Ruben Oleos.

The other soldiers who were cited include Private

First Class Jomar Aver, Randy Culhi, Joseph Diaz, James Layugan, Daniel Paclay, Rebushsein Babo Stock, Ronald Tabliago, Jun Terrenal, Kristian Ayangao, Jomar Yap, Jomer Dalayday, Yasher Bayongan, Emerson Awing, Royman Talana, Julius Ant-eater, Michael Xedric Adriano and Judie Domingo Jeffrey Viernes.

Duterte also pinned the Wounded Personnel Med-

al to Private First Class John Joseph Diaz after his unit clashed with the Abu Sayyaf in Talipao, Sulu.

Four soldiers who sustained gunshot wounds were brought to Zamboanga City after the encounter. They were Private First Class Freddie Anggaco, Private First Class Ryan Maymaya, Private First Class Bobbyn Pacas, and Private Eugene Pagat

**EMontano**

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### **3 BIFF men slain in clash**

MAGUINDANAO – Three suspected members of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters were killed and two others wounded in an encounter with government troops in Marasapano, Maguindanao on Wednesday.

Army personnel were pursuing the suspects in the killing of Cpl. Tamano Macadatar on Tuesday when they chanced upon the militants.

The fatalities were identified as Solaiman Kadir, Muktar Indato and Mutalib Said. The wounded were known only as a certain Abubakar and Guiday.

Local officials said a certain Marox and Muslimin led the group of militants.

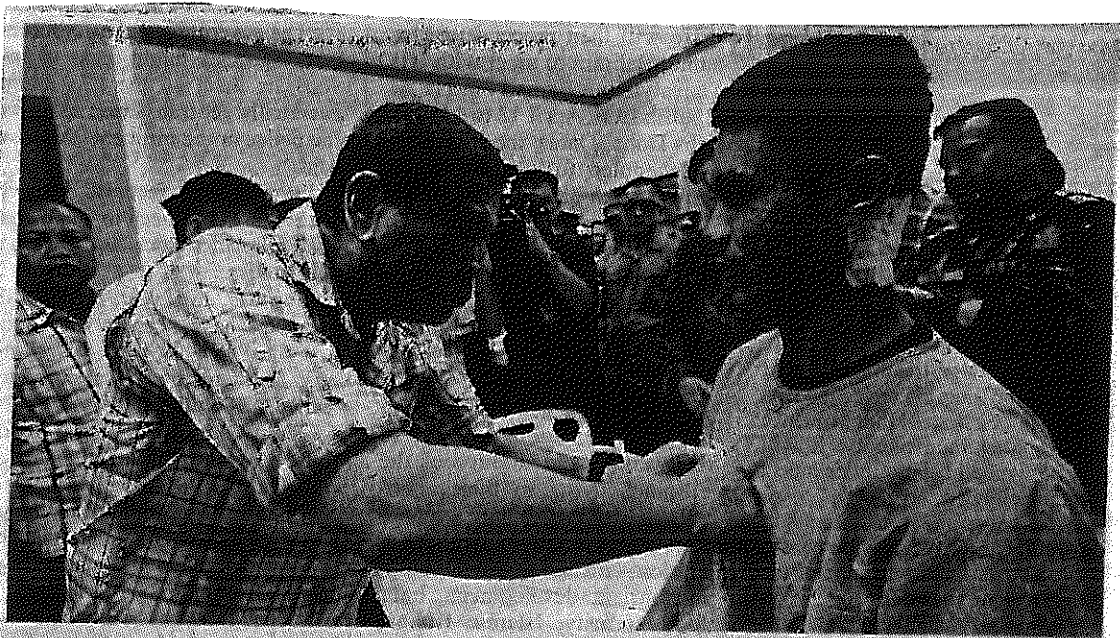
Communication equipment, a fragmentation grenade, combat uniforms and bomb materials were recovered at the scene.

– John Unson

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The  
**Standard**  
DEFINING THE NEWS

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**WOUNDED, BUT UNBOWED.** President Rodrigo Duterte pins the Wounded Personnel Medal on 1st Lt. Jose Mari Landicho during his visit at Camp Teodulfo Bautista Station Hospital in Jolo, Sulu on Thursday. Landicho was among 28 soldiers, including two officers, recuperating at the hospital following an encounter with the terrorist group Abu Sayyaf. (Story on A3) Malacañang Photo

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**Heroism cited** President Duterte awards a Wounded Personnel Medal to First Lt. Jose Mari Landicho during his visit at Camp Teodulfo Bautista Station Hospital in Jolo, Sulu last Thursday. PNA



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**PRESIDENT Duterte talks to Private First Class Ronald Tabliagao before awarding him a Wounded Personnel Medal during a visit to Camp Teodulfo Bautista Station Hospital in Jolo, Sulu. (Presidential photo)**

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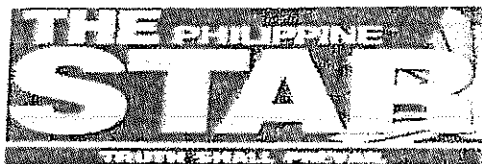
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A World War II veteran pays respect to his fellow soldiers at the Filipino Heroes Memorial on Corregidor Island in Cavite during the 75th Veterans Day celebration.

EDD GUMBAN

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# Duterte tells AFP: Wipe out Sayyaf

By EDITH REGALADO

DAVAO CITY—President Duterte yesterday ordered the military to finish off the Abu Sayyaf. During his visit at Camp Teodulfo Bautista in Jolo late Thursday, Duterte stressed before the troops the campaign against the Abu Sayyaf and the war against illegal drugs should go full force.

"We will not let up on the war against the Abu Sayyaf and drugs. They would not honor their word. If they like to kill, then we will go ahead and kill them up to the last man," he said.

The President said government will deal with the Abu Sayyaf using the full force of the law.

The Abu Sayyaf has remained one of the leading threat groups in the country.

The militant group has reportedly divided their 19 remaining hostages into five groups in order to elude pursuing government forces.

Duterte flew into Jolo and visited the wounded soldiers at the military hospital.

The President awarded the Wounded Personnel Medallion (WPM) to 28 soldiers who were wounded during recent clashes with the militant group in Sulu.

The wounded soldiers also received cash assistance, a Glock pistol and a mobile phone from the President. "I am impressed by your performance here. I am very happy," Duterte said in a speech before members of the Army's 41st Infantry Battalion at Camp Teodulfo Bautista.

The President also distributed Glock pistols to each soldier inside the camp.

Duterte gave the troops a pep talk, reiterating his administration is in talks with Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) founding chairman Nur Misuari as well as leaders of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to help in the pursuit of peace in the country. "Nur Misuari is talking to me and he asked for more time to assemble his men," Duterte said.

"Maybe this will lessen the problem, except the war on drugs and terrorism," he said.

Duterte also told the troops that he had invited Communist Party of the Philippines founding chairman Jose Maria Sison to come home for medical treatment and assistance.

Duterte said he was informed that Sison has fallen sick while in exile in the Netherlands.

He also told the troops that the government could not afford fighting the communists for another 50 years, which is why the peace talks with the rebels are ongoing.

"I know it is hard for you that your comrades had to die this way. But you know, we cannot fight another 50 years," Duterte told the troops.

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The  
**Standard**  
DEFINING THE NEWS

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## Duterte to military: Finish Abu Sayyaf

By John Paolo Bencito

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte has ordered the military to finish the Islamist terror group Abu Sayyaf after allegedly turning back on their word with the government.

While he extends a hand of peaceful cooperation with other rebel groups, Duterte reiterated his tough stand against Abu Sayyaf and terrorism.

"On [terrorism] there is no backing out as in the anti-drug campaign. The country would be devastated here, we do not derive any benefits from them [the Abu Sayyaf]," Duterte said, in a mixture of English and Filipino during his visit to Camp Teodulfo Bautista Station Hospital in Jolo, Sulu.

"They would not honor any talks. All they want is kill, kill, kill, kill. That's all they know. Let's finish them," he added.

Duterte was in Jolo on Thursday to visit soldiers wounded in recent clashes with the Abu Sayyaf. The province is known to be a stronghold of the ASG.

In the same speech, Duterte said his administration was in talks with Nur Misuari, leader of the Moro National Liberation Front as well as leaders of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front to help in the pursuit of peace in the country.

"Nur Misuari is talking to me, pleading for more time while he assembles his members. We should no longer have a problem except terrorism and the killer drugs," Duterte said.

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## Rody to AFP: Finish Abu Sayyaf

**PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte has ordered the military to finish the terrorist Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) even as he junked altogether smoking the peace pipe with the extremist group.**

"Dito [terrorism] walang atrasan 'to pati sa droga. Masisira ang bayan natin dito. Wala tayong makukuhang sa kanila [Abu Sayyaf] na ano," Duterte said in a speech later Thursday before troops of the 41st Infantry Battalion in Jolo, Sulu.

"They would not honor kahit anong klaseng usapan. Gusto lang nila patay, patay, patay, patay. Yun lang ang alam nila. Eh 'di ubusin natin sila eh."

The President visited soldiers in Jolo wounded in recent clashes with the Abu Sayyaf. Jolo is known to be a stronghold of the ASG.

The President has re-

peatedly lambasted the extremist group for beheading their hostages and kidnapping foreigners in Mindanao seas.

Meanwhile, it will be recalled that soldiers from the 41st Infantry Battalion fought with about 100 Abu Sayyaf members in a three-hour gunbattle in Barangay Upper Laus, Talipao, last Sunday, April 2.

Ten members of the Abu Sayyaf were believed to have been killed but 32 soldiers were wounded, it was learned.

Duterte pinned the Wounded Personnel Medal on 28 officers and enlisted personnel during his visit to Kuta General Teodulfo Bautista Hospital in Jolo.

Those awarded with medals were Lieutenant Colonel William George Cordova, battalion commander of the 41IB, 1st Lieutenant



President Duterte

Joe Mari Landicho, Sgts Randy Balutoc, Samian Calangan, Corporals Crispin Agoy, Bramard Dumondon, Ronald Allan Lorenzo, Jonathan Mukay, Mariel Rebred and Ruben Oleos.

The other soldiers who were cited include Private First Class Jomar Ayer, Randy Culni, Joseph Diaz, James Layugan, Daniel Paclay, Rebushsein Babo Stock, Ronald Tabliago,

Jun Terrenal, Kristian Ayangao, Jomar Yap, Jomer Dalayday, Yasher Bayongan, Emerson Awing, Royman Talana, Julius Anteaer, Michael Xedric Adriatico and Judie Domingo Jeffrey Viernes.

Duterte also pinned the Wounded Personnel Medal on Private First Class John Joseph Diaz after his unit clashed with the Abu Sayyaf in Talipao, Sulu. **Efren Montano**

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# INQUIRER

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## IN PERFECT HEALTH



Jose Maria Sison—AFP

## SICK JOKE? I'M VERY WELL, THANK YOU, SAYS JOMA

LUCENA CITY—He's very well, thank you.

There's no reason for President Duterte to be worried sick about exiled Communist Party of the Philippines founder, Jose Maria Sison, enough to urge him to come home, promise him freedom and offer to pay for his hospitalization.

Sison on Friday said he was in perfect health and thanked the President for his concern.

"I am very well," Sison said when asked by the Inquirer on his health condition in an online interview.

The Utrecht-based Sison said he would return to the country when a "significant advance" in the peace process happens, like the release of all political prisoners and the signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (Caser) during the peace negotiations with the government.

"It can happen this year," Sison said.

On Thursday, the government and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines ended the fourth round of formal peace talks held in Noordwijk, The Netherlands.

Both parties scheduled the fifth round of talks for May 26 to June 2.

In a speech in Pampanga on Wednesday, President Duterte said Sison was "very sick."

The President invited Sison to return to the country, relaying his offer through Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Jesus Dureza and government chief negotiator Silvestre Bello III.

"You tell Sison—because he is sick, he is very sick—he can come home. I will give him freedom of movement. I will not arrest him. I'll even pay for his hospitalization, if he wants," Mr. Duterte said he told Dureza and Bello.

Sison said, "I thank President Duterte for his offer of medical assistance, personal security and freedom of movement for me."

He said his reported immediate disappearance from the venue of the peace talks after the signing of the joint interim ceasefire was upon his doctor's advice.

"The lady doctor is strict [about] getting me out of a large number of people because I am still on steroids and vulnerable to infection by other people," Sison said.

He did not elaborate.

Late last month, Sison's Facebook photos showed him in the company of his family before his discharge from Utrecht Medical Center.

He said he was confined due to skin-deep inflammations because of decreased autoimmunity defense during winter in Europe.

"My health is not an issue or news matter," he told the Inquirer.

He said he was physically fit and ready for the talks.

—DELFIN T. MALLARI JR. INQ

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THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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# Gov't needs ₱200 B to enable 220,000 farmers to realize their dream farms

ROCKY NAZARENO

NOORDWIJK, The Netherlands – Some 220,000 farmers will likely benefit from the ongoing peace negotiations between the Philippine government (GRP) and the National Democratic Front (NDF).

But for them to realize their dream farms under the socio-economic agenda of the ongoing peace talks, Congress must appropriate P200 billion to

purchase over 650,000 hectares of both private and public lands that will be distributed to the farmers.

A source privy to the ongoing discussions for the Comprehensive Agreement on Socio-Economic Reforms (CASER) said the over 650,000 hectares of private and public lands have already been processed by the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), secured by corresponding notices of coverage, and just need the ►12

payment before they are distributed to qualified beneficiaries.

"The tenants and tillers are the priority. The DAR will determine who will be given the lands," said the source, who was among those who actively participated in the deliberations for CASER in the Fourth Round of Peace Talks between the GRP and NDF at the Radisson Blu Palace Hotel here from April 2 to 6.

"We just cannot take away the land. We still have to pay for them," the source added.

As such, the source said, the CASER team will be coming up with recommendations to draft a "New Agrarian Reform Law" that will allow the allocation of ₱200 billion for the purchase of the 650,000 hectares of land.

"We will still need Congress to get these things going. Because only Congress can appropriate such a big budget," the source added.

The sources added that these farmer-beneficiaries are deemed to

have tilled these lands. And the average land reform grant would be three hectares for every farmer.

According to the source, there are already seven million agrarian reform beneficiaries since the administration of former President Corazon Aquino.

"But there are a lot more (farms) that should be given away to farmer-beneficiaries if we are to tilt the balance in favor of our working population," said the source.

He added that ₱50 billion in funds, recovered from the hidden wealth of former President Ferdinand Marcos that are now being held in escrow in banks, could be used to finance the government's agrarian reform program. These funds, he said, could also be used to defray some of the costs of buying the land for the 220,000 farmer-beneficiaries.

"Sa ngayon daw, may nakatabi nang (As of now, there may be) more than ₱50 billion recovered from the Marcos hidden wealth. But since there is no

operative law at this time, this amount is in the National Treasury," he said.

The source stressed that this is the main reason a new agrarian reform law should be crafted.

Given the tedious process that needs to be undertaken to source these funds, the peace delegation member said that it may take "three years before the farmers assume ownership of these lands for free."

But he nevertheless remains confident that the CASER, deemed the heart and soul of the peace talks that could end 48 years of armed conflict between the government and the communist rebels, could be signed by December on the basis of this commit-

ment by the GRP on free distribution of land.

"With the signing of the CASER, the approval of the interim joint ceasefire agreement could even be forged on the same occasion," the source said.

He added: "What is important is that we're now solidly moving forward. The path to peace is getting clearer with each round of talks, each informal negotiation, each backchannel exchange."

Meanwhile, the European Union said it stands ready to support the implementation of the latest Agreement on an Interim Joint Ceasefire forged by the GRP and the NDF.

In a statement issued Friday, the Delegation of the European Union to

the Philippines said this interim agreement, which becomes effective when a permanent ceasefire agreement is forged as part of a Comprehensive Agreement on End of Hostilities and Disposition of Forces, "demonstrates the power of political processes to resolve conflict."

"It is an encouraging step toward generating goodwill and trust in the peace negotiations, to encourage the forging of a more stable and comprehensive Joint Ceasefire Agreement and to provide an enabling environment for an early signing of a comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms," the EU Delegation said. (With a report from Roy C. Mabasa)



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# Land deal to cost P200b

By Raul M. Francia

**N**OORDWIJK AAN ZEE, The Netherlands—The plan to distribute one million hectares of agricultural land for free to landless farmers will cost around P200 billion, the government said in a statement after peace negotiators announced the proposal here Thursday.

This was among the main agreements reached at the close of the 4th round of formal talks between the panels of the government and the National Democratic Front in this cold North Sea town about 50 kilometers southwest of Amsterdam on Thursday.

In a joint statement, the two panels said: "The reciprocal working committees on social and economic reforms firmed up their agreement on distribution of land for free as the basic principle of genuine land reform. This is the main message of the bilateral meeting of the RWCs-SER and an achievement

of the fourth round of talks."

The one million hectares constitute the remainder of the lands identified for distribution under the previous agrarian reform laws from combined big and medium landholdings throughout the country. Their expropriation were delayed either due to resistance by landowners or conversion to other uses.

"Under CASER, their distribution will be given priority although there will be additional huge agricultural properties that may be subjected to expropriation," a ranking member of the reciprocal committee told Ma-

nila Standard.

From a low of P89 billion, the government has estimated the cost of agricultural land for distribution under CASER to be around P200 billion.

"Both parties agreed to accelerate the process of concluding a CASER," the panels' joint statement read.

The distribution of land for free is among the components of the GRP and NDF drafts under CASER's agrarian reform and rural development provision. The other components are coverage, compensation to landowners, confiscation, lease/lease-back and plantations, implementation mechanism and land use, among others.

Another major provision of CASER is national industrialization and economic development for which separate bilateral teams were also convened to harmonize contentious provisions from the GRP and NDF draft agreements.

On the second day of the formal talks on Tuesday, the panels agreed to an interim joint ceasefire the effectivity of which

will be upon the approval of the guidelines and ground rules that will cover the presence of armed units of both parties in local communities and the creation of buffer zones, identification of prohibited, hostile and provocative acts and the formation of ceasefire monitoring and verification mechanisms.

"Matters regarding a single government authority and taxation shall be discussed and resolved in forging the Comprehensive Agreement on Political and Constitutional Reforms within the framework of the proposed Federal Republic of the Philippines," the agreement said.

The panels stressed that the interim joint ceasefire agreement "shall be effective until a permanent ceasefire agreement is forged as part of the Comprehensive Agreement on End of Hostilities and Disposition of Forces [final peace agreement]."

At the conclusion of the meeting, the two panels also agreed on the agenda of the 5th round of formal talks on May 22 to June 2, also here hosted by the Royal Norwegian Government.

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## Govt, Reds hail 'step forward' in peace talks

NEGOTIATORS of the Philippine government and the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) closed a fourth round of talks in the Netherlands on Thursday with both parties agreeing to declare a ceasefire, distribute free land and release prisoners.

In a joint statement, the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) as well as the CPP, the New People's Army (NPA) and the National Democratic Front (NDF) agreed that a "significant step forward" was achieved when they signed the Agreement on an Interim Joint Ceasefire on April 5 that could eventually lead to an end to hostilities.

"This is the farthest point that we have already achieved in our negotiations with the CPP-NPA-NDF," Presidential Peace Adviser Jesus Dureza said.

The two parties explained that they have directed their respective ceasefire committees "to discuss,

► **TalksA2**

formulate and finalize the guidelines and ground rules for the implementation of the Agreement."

The guidelines will be the "annexes" in the main agreement on an interim joint ceasefire that will provide for the rules governing "the presence of armed units and elements of both parties in local communities, the creation of buffer zones, the prohibition of hostile and provocative acts, and ceasefire monitoring and verification mechanisms."

The government and the NDF agreed that the interim joint ceasefire would take effect only "upon the approval and signing of these ground rules." It will also be effective until a permanent ceasefire agreement is forged as part of the proposed Comprehensive Agreement on End of Hostilities and Disposition of Forces.

And to comply with President Rodrigo Duterte's conditions for the forging of a ceasefire, the two parties said the issues relating to "revolutionary tax" collection and a single government authority "shall be discussed and resolved as part of the Comprehensive Agreement on Political and Constitutional Reforms, within the framework of the proposed Federal Republic of the Philippines."

The NDF also agreed to "effect the immediate, safe and expeditious release of Armed Forces of the Philippines and Philippine National Police elements held captive by the New People's Army

in Eastern Mindanao."

The two parties announced that the captives held in Soccsksargen region would be released before Easter, April 16, and those held in Bukidnon and Caraga after that.

Although both sides agreed on an interim joint ceasefire, Dureza clarified that the two parties still needed to come up with mutually agreed guidelines before it takes effect.

"After three days of not-so-easy exchanges and difficult meetings, the GRP and NDFP panels a few hours ago signed a document where the two sides agreed to a joint interim ceasefire agreement that is NOT YET effective but will be operationalized and implemented as soon as the guidelines, rules and mechanisms are mutually agreed upon by both sides," Dureza said in a Facebook post.

The next round of talks was tentatively set on May 27 to June 1, also in the Netherlands.

### CPP wants socioeconomic deal signed ahead

Aside from agreeing to declare a ceasefire, both parties' achievements in the fourth round of talks included firming up agreements on the free distribution of land, which is one of the provisions of the proposed Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (Caser).

CPP founding chairman Jose Ma. Sison, who is also the NDF chief political consultant, emphasized that Caser must be signed before, or simultaneously with, the interim joint ceasefire.

Sison said that as he read and studied the drafts of the proposed agreements from the GRP and NDF and their comparative matrices, he found common points of agreement.

"However, that as a matter of principle, Caser should be a step ahead of the joint ceasefire agreement, unless these agreements can be signed at the same time by the panels and then by the principals," he added.

The panels also plan to work on coming up with amendments to the existing agrarian reform law to reflect the agreements.

NDF peace panel chairman Fidel Agcaoili echoed Sison's statement and reiterated "the wisdom of securing the approval of the Caser ahead of any single joint ceasefire agreement, unless both agreements could be signed simultaneously.

In their joint statement, both parties also said that they remain committed to exploring all options for the release of political prisoners.

Elisabeth Slattum, a Norwegian facilitator, said peace negotiations were the only way to resolve the conflict between the Philippine government and the communists "through dialogue and political processes."

The fourth round of talks came after a five-week impasse that followed violent clashes between the military and the NPA, which prompted President Duterte to scrap the talks.

Duterte was later persuaded to reopen the talks but he set conditions, including the adoption of a more stable joint ceasefire arrangement.

**CATHERINE S. VALENTE**

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# Allowing Kadamay to keep units is 'mere lip service'

By Macon Ramos-Araneta

**S**ENATE Majority Leader Vicente Sotto III said President Rodrigo Duterte's allowing members of Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap (Kadamay) to keep the housing units in Bulacan they forcibly occupied remains a "mere lip service."

He said the President's statements might still be withdrawn in case of legal implications.

He noted that Kadamay members were still considered "informal settlers" until the housing units, originally intended for police and soldiers, were properly turned over to them.

The President, Sotto said, could always withdraw his public pronouncements.

"I think the President is humble enough to admit if he has made a mistake," he said.

As of now, he said allowing Kadamay members to occupy the units was not a done deal.

"They can be removed anytime if the administration feels

that there is a law that will be violated."

He called on Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea to conduct a thorough study on the matter.

"Right now, they are informal settlers who were allowed to live there. That's the situation as of now. There's no turnover yet, no turnover of papers, no signing, no giving [of whatsoever]," stressed Sotto.

Kadamay members have been occupying some 5,000

vacant housing units in seven housing areas in Bulacan since March 8, prompting the National Housing Authority to give them an ultimatum to vacate the units or face eviction notices.

The NHA later on agreed not to push through with the Kadamay members' eviction.

At the moment, the NHA has begun its process of profiling the occupied areas in Bulacan to determine whether the occupants can be deemed as "qualified."

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# Occupy Spratly isles? Too late

By DJ Yap  
and Philip Tubeza  
@Team\_Inquirer

Mr. President, you're 40 years too late.

Magdalo Rep. Gary Alejano on Friday ridiculed President Duterte's vow to deploy troops to unoccupied South China Sea islands and reefs claimed by the Philippines, saying nothing was left to grab in those disputed waters.

"There are no more islands in South China Sea to occupy unless we grab islands from Vietnam and China and run the risk of a shooting war," said Alejano, who filed last month an impeachment complaint accusing the President of dereliction of duty in refusing to assert the country's sovereign rights over Benham Rise and Panatag (Scarborough) Shoal.

"It seems that the President is unaware of the issues in the West Philippine Sea," he said in a statement. "The President is 40 years late in his appreciation since scrambling for islands to occupy by claimant countries happened in [the] 1970s."

Even assuming there were still uninhabited islands to occupy, he said, new occupation would constitute a violation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in South China Sea, a

pact signed by the Philippines but not by China.

On Thursday, Mr. Duterte ordered the Armed Forces of the Philippines to deploy troops to unoccupied islands in the West Philippine Sea, a portion of the South China Sea claimed by the Philippines.

He said he intended to plant a Philippine flag on Pagasa Island, the second-largest island in the Kalayaan group in the Spratlys region occupied by the Philippines.

Military chief Gen. Eduardo Año on Friday said he would follow Mr. Duterte's order, stressing that a UN-backed arbitral tribunal had already ruled last year in favor of Manila's South China Sea claims.

"That's an order from the President and I intend to carry that out. Those features (in the Spratlys island chain) are ours as per [the] arbitration ruling, so we don't see any problem," Año said. "We will reinforce our troops and improve the structures and facilities there."

Año declined to identify features or rocks claimed by the Philippines in the Spratlys that had not been occupied by the AFP. But he said the military would have to set up structures on these features.

Alejano said Mr. Duterte's

rhetoric, which he made during a visit to a military base in Palawan, was a clear indication that his camp recognized the "gravity" of the impeachment complaint filed by the Magdalo lawmaker.

The lawmaker had earlier alleged that the President betrayed the public trust and violated the 1987 Constitution by refusing to call China out on its incursions in the Philippines, including Benham Rise, an underwater landmass declared by the United Nations in 2012 to be part of the country's continental shelf.

## Inaction, dereliction

He also took Mr. Duterte to task for public statements indicating "inaction" and dereliction of his duty to assert the country's sovereign and maritime rights, and territorial claims over Benham Rise, Panatag Shoal and the rest of the West Philippine Sea.

"The last time we heard the President speaking of raising the Philippine flag in a disputed territory, he later on admitted that he was merely joking. Let us try to be more critical on the pronouncements of the President and hold him accountable for it," Alejano said, noting Mr. Duterte's "contradictory and conflicting" pronouncements.

Out of around 52 islands and reefs in the Spratlys, the Philip-

pinas controls eight islands and Ayungin (Second Thomas) Shoal.

The potentially mineral-rich Spratlys chain is claimed in whole or in part by Brunei, China, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam. In the 1990s, the military grounded an obsolete World War II-era transport ship on Ayungin Shoal, to serve as a sign of Manila's claim.

Pagasa, at 37 hectares, is the biggest island controlled by the Philippines in the Spratlys and is just 34 hours away by boat from the town of Rizal in Palawan province.

The Department of National Defense said it was planning to improve its facilities already in place in the area, to include a barracks, water desalination systems, power generators, lighthouses and shelters for fishermen.

"The President recently announced plans to improve, and implement the Pagasa development plan, which included nine areas," presidential spokesperson Ernesto Abella said.

"This is part of his mandate to serve the best interests of the nation," he added.

#### Chinese jet sighted

China's foreign ministry on Friday expressed concern over Mr. Duterte's statement, saying it hoped that the Philippines would

continue to properly manage maritime disputes there.

Both sides are to meet in May to discuss a bilateral mechanism to handle disputes over their respective claims.

Mr. Duterte's statement also came on the same day that an American think tank said a Chinese fighter jet had been spotted on a Chinese-held island in the disputed territory.

The Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative (AmTI) identified the aircraft as a J-11 fighter jet and was visible in a satellite image taken on March 29 of Woody Island in the Paracel island chain.

News of the sighting came as US President Donald Trump was in Florida for meetings with China's President Xi Jinping on Thursday and Friday at which he was expected to air US concerns about China's pursuit of territory and militarization of outposts in the South China Sea.

AmTI said it was unclear how long the plane had been there, but added that similar deployments on artificial islands China had built further south in the South China Sea's Spratly archipelago could be expected now that military facilities had been completed there. —WITH REPORTS FROM LEILA B. SALAVERRIA, REUTERS, AP AND AFP INQ

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# AFP: Occupy PH islands, 'di ikagagalit ng China

Nina FRANCIS WAKEFIELD at FER TABOY

Naniniwala si Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Spokesman Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla na hindi magdudulot ng tensiyon sa South China Sea o West Philippines Sea (WPS) ang planong pagbisita ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte sa Pag-asa Island in Palawan sa Hunyo 12, Araw ng Kalayaan.

Sa press briefing, sinabi ni Padilla na walang dahilan para ikagalit ito ng China dahil may bilateral consultations/relations ang Pilipinas sa Beijing.

"I don't (believe it will) because we have opened up bilateral consultations with the Chinese and they have always mentioned that everything will be always discussed peacefully," ani Padilla

Sa kanyang pagbisita sa AFP Western Command nitong Huwebes, sinabi ni Duterte na posibleng magtungo siya sa Pag-

asa Island sa Hunyo 12 upang siya mismo ang magtirik ng watawat ng bansa sa isla para bigyang-din ang soberanya natin doon.

Iniyutos din niya sa AFP na okupahin, tirikan ng watawat, at tayuan ng mga istruktura ang mga teritoryo ng bansa sa WPS.

"Patì 'yung ano, basta 'yung bakante na 'yung atin na, tirahan na natin, ibig sabihin," ani Duterte. "Mukhang agawan kasi ito ng isla, eh. And what's ours now, at least kunin na natin and make a strong point natin there that it is ours."

Bagamat matagal nang bahagi ng Kalayaan sa Palawan, maangkin ng China, Taiwan at Vietnam ang Pag-asa

Sinabi ni Padilla na maaaring ang nais tukuyin ng Pangulo ay ang mga okupado nang lugar sa WPS

Ayon naman kay Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, may

siyam na teritoryo ang Pilipinas sa Kalayaan Island Group: ang Ayungin Shoal, Pag-asa Island, Lawak, Parola, Patag, Kota, Rizal Reef, Likas, at Panata.

"We have Philippine Marine troops in every one of them. The president wants facilities built such as barracks for the men, water (desalination) and sewage disposal systems, power generators (conventional and renewable), light houses, and shelters for fishermen," ani Lorenzana.

Kahapon, sinabi ni AFP chief of staff General Eduardo Año na ipinag-utos na niya ang deployment ng mas maraming tropa sa pitong isla at dalawang shoal sa WPS.

"That's an order from the president and I intend to carry that out. That's ours as per Arbitration Ruling so we don't see any problem," sabi ni Año

at

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## AFP to upgrade island facilities, not launch land grab in S. China Sea

By Mario J. Mallari, Joyce Anne Rocamora and Gerry Baldo

The military yesterday said it plans to upgrade and improve facilities on islands it already occupies in the disputed South China Sea, not to embark on a new land grab.

President Rodrigo Duterte the other day said he had ordered the Armed Forces to "occupy all" remote reefs claimed by Manila.

The Commander-in-Chief added he wanted "nine or 10" islands occupied and fortified, but did not make clear whether he was referring to the nine islands already held by the Army, or to some of the 40-odd other Spratly features also claimed by Manila.

"The context with which we take the order is to improve on our already occupied islands, islets and features," military spokesman Col

Edgard Arevalo told *Agence France Presse*.

The Department of Defense said the plan was to add military barracks, water desalination systems, power generators, light houses and shelters for fishermen to the features that the Philippines currently occupies.

"The President recently announced plans to improve, and implement the Pag-asa development plan which includes nine areas," presidential spokesman Ernesto Abella said, referring to Pag-asa municipality, the country's political subdivision for the Spratly Islands that it claims.

"This is part of his mandate to serve the best interests of the nation," he added.

Also, the Palace official said Mr. Duterte's planned trip to Pag-asa Island on Independence Day is illustrative of his administration's push for an independent foreign policy.

"It will be significant that it will be the first time a President visits and commemorates Independence Day in (the) municipality. It will also be symbolic of our independent foreign policy," Abella said in a statement.

"If he does push through, he will be accompanied by the governor, the three Palawan congressmen and the leaders of the municipality of Kalayaan. The government maintains its commitment for the development of these islands for the benefit of our citizens thereat," he added.

China's Foreign Ministry expressed concern at Mr. Duterte's reported remarks and said it hoped the Philippines could continue to properly manage maritime disputes with China.

Armed Forces of the Philippines spokesman Brig Gen. Restituto Padilla, for his part, said he did not think Mr. Duterte's order required the military to occupy further outcrops.

All other major outcrops inside the section of the Spratlys claimed by Manila are already occupied by troops from other claimant countries, maritime law expert Jay Batongbacal yesterday told *Agence France Presse*.

Only a few "reefs and shoals" do not currently have soldiers on them, he said, adding the Philippine government would likely back away from the President's explosive original proposal.

But Armed Forces chief of staff Gen. Eduardo Año, however, stressed that is prepared to carry out the President's order to occupy Philippine-owned features in the Spratlys Island chain.

"That's an order from the President and I intend to carry that out. Those features (in the Spratlys Island chain) are ours as per Arbitration Ruling, so we don't see any problem," he said before this was clarified by the Palace.

Ano added all eight islands in the Spratlys under Philippine jurisdiction, and Ayungin Reef, are already occupied by Filipino troops.

"We will reinforce our troops and improve the structures and facilities there," the AFP chief stressed.

The eight islands now occupied by Philippine Marine troops are Pagasa, the seat of Kalayaan municipal government, Parola, Likas, Lawak, Koro, Patag, Panata, and Balagtas. Manila calls them as Kalayaan islands Group (KIGs) or internationally known as the Spratlys.

Ayungin Shoal is where the Philippine Navy's BRP Sierra Madre is grounded and now serves as barracks for Marine forces.

"We have occupied a total of eight islands and one shoal in West Philippine Sea. All others are occupied by China, Vietnam and others (claimant countries)," said Año.

He added the areas that will be occupied by Philippine troops include submerged lands or rocks but the country will need to set up structures for this.

"Within our EEZ (exclusive economic zone) there are submerged lands or rocks that we may occupy but we need to put up structures

where our troops can stay," he said.

Ano, however, refused to reveal the number of troops to be deployed and their location for security reasons.

#### Pursue plans

For Sen. Gregorio Honasan, there is nothing immoral or unconstitutional with claiming what is Philippine territory amid the President's plan to visit and erect a Philippine flag on a disputed island in the South China Sea.

According to the lawmaker, Mr. Duterte as mandated can visit any part of the Philippines.

"There is no argument over what we are constitutionally bound to do over something that is really ours. It is procedural," he stressed.

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), for its part, said the plan only signifies the President's commitment to his mandate with respect to Philippine territory.

"The aim is to improve the living conditions, safety and personal security of Filipinos in those areas," DFA Assistant Secretary Charles Jose told reporters.

"We remain committed to improving our relations with China and other partners in the region," he added.

China claims most of the sea and in recent years has been building up disputed reefs into artificial islands that can house military facilities, further raising tensions.

Duterte's announcement was a sharp departure from his prior efforts to improve Manila's relations with Beijing by adopting a non-confrontational approach over their competing claims in the strategically vital waters.

This has sparked domestic criticism that Duterte was not defending Philippine territory in the face of Chinese assertiveness.

#### 'Still on campaign trail'

Magdalo partylist Rep. Gary Alejano, for his part, again criticized the President for his alleged pretense in ordering the military to occupy islands in the West Philippine Sea.

"The campaign period is over. Campaign time has been over for a

year, promises should have been executed since day one in office. But it seems that Duterte is still in the campaign trail," he noted.

Alejano, who filed an impeachment complaint against the President last month, said the sortie of Mr. Duterte to the province of Palawan and his visit to a military base is a clear indication that his camp recognized the gravity of the impeachment complaint lodged against the President.

"However, by mere speaking to the troops could not erase or cover the fact that he has betrayed public trust and committed the crime of dereliction of his sworn duty as President when he utterly failed and/or refused to assert the country's exclusive sovereign rights and maritime rights and territorial claims over Benham Rise and Panatag Shoal and the rest of the West Philippine Sea as embodied in the supplemental impeachment complaint against the President," the opposition lawmaker said.

According to Alejano, Mr. Duterte has been too late to assert the country's rights over the islands in the West Philippine Sea, noting that the President has been unaware of the issues involving the disputed territory.

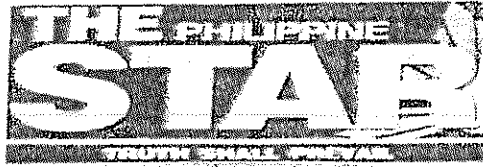
"It seems that the President is unaware of the issues in the West Philippine Sea. The scramble to occupy islands there has started in the 1970s. The president is 40 years late in his appreciation since scrambling for islands to occupy by claimant countries happened in 1970s," the Magdalo lawmaker said.

He said there are no more islands in South China Sea to occupy unless the country grabs islands from Vietnam and China and run the risk of a shooting war.

He noted if ever there are still uninhabited islands to occupy, new occupation is a violation of the existing Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in South China Sea in which the Philippines is a signatory and is faithfully complying with its provisions even if China is not. **AFP and PNA**



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# China concerned over Rody order on SCS

By JAIME LAUDE

China has expressed concern over President Duterte's directive to the military to occupy nine islands in the Spratlys under the Philippines' control.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying raised her country's concern at a regular press briefing yesterday as Armed Forces of the Philippines chief

Gen. Eduardo Año declared the military's readiness to carry out Duterte's order, as well as its plans to upgrade and improve facilities on islands already occupied by the AFP.

*Chinese fighter jet spotted on SCS island. See Page 12.*

"We hope the Philippine side can  
**Turn to Page 12**

continue to properly manage maritime disputes with China and safeguard together the sound and stable situation of China-Philippines relations," Hua said.

She also aired Beijing's resolve to "firmly safeguard its territorial sovereignty, its maritime rights and interests" in the South China Sea, which is rich in resources and hosts vital shipping lanes.

"That's an order from the President and I intend to carry that out. As per arbitration ruling that's ours, so we don't see any problem," Año said, referring to a ruling by a UN-backed arbitral tribunal reaffirming the Philippines' maritime entitlements and invalidating China's excessive nine-dash line claim.

"Actually, all the seven islands and two shoals are already occupied by our troops," Año added.

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), through spokesman Charles Jose, stressed the Philippines remains committed to improving relations with Beijing and that the President was merely performing his mandate with respect to Philippine territory.

"The aim is to improve the living conditions, safety and personal security of Filipinos in those areas," Jose said.

Duterte's announcement had appeared to be a sharp departure from his previously cordial overtures to Beijing and non-confrontational approach.

But military officials said they did not think the order required the military to occupy new outcrops.

"The context with which we take the order is to im-

prove on our already occupied islands, islets and features," military spokesman Col. Edgard Arevalo said.

"The President's order was very crystal clear. Occupy only the existing areas that we claim," a navy commander, privy to development plans in the South China Sea, said.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said there were plans to repair and upgrade facilities in the Spratlys.

"The President wants facilities built such as barracks for the men, water and sewage disposal systems, power generators, lighthouses and shelters for fishermen," Lorenzana said.

Another general, who also declined to be named, said there were development plans in the South China Sea in 2012, which included building a secured port on Pag-asa island and helicopter pads in three smaller islands where troops are deployed.

But the plan, which also called for an increase in troop deployment in the occupied islands, was stopped after the Philippines in 2013 filed an arbitration case against China in The Hague.

The Philippines occupies nine "features," or islands and reefs, in the West Philippine Sea, including a World War II-vintage transport ship which ran aground on Ayungin (Second Thomas) Shoal in the late 1990s.

The US State Department declined comment on Duterte's remarks, but has in the past urged rival South China Sea claimants to lower tensions and resolve differences in accordance with

international law.

"The President recently announced plans to improve, and implement the Pag-asa development plan which includes nine areas," Duterte spokesman Ernesto Abella said, referring to Pag-asa municipality, the Philippines' political subdivision for the Spratly islands.

All other major outcrops inside the section of the Spratlys claimed by Manila are already occupied by troops from other claimant countries, Filipino maritime law expert Jay Batongbacal said yesterday.

China claims most of the sea and in recent years has been building up disputed reefs into artificial islands that can house military facilities, further raising tensions.

### Fully occupied

There are no more disputed islands in the West Philippine Sea (WPS) for Filipino soldiers to occupy.

Rep. Gary Alejano of party-list group Magdalo, who has filed an impeachment complaint against President Duterte, made this statement yesterday in reaction to Duterte's order for soldiers to occupy islands in the West Philippine Sea.

"Even if the President is unaware of the issues in the WPS. The grabbing and occupation of islands happened in the 1970s. The President is 40 years late. There are no more islands to occupy unless we grab islands from Vietnam and China and run the risk of a shooting war," he said.

"Even if assuming there are still uninhabited islands to occupy, new occupation is a violation of the existing Declaration on the Conduct

of Parties in South China Sea, in which the Philippines is a signatory and is faithfully complying with its provisions even if China is not," he said.

He named the 10 features where there is Philippine presence as Pag-asa (Thitu Island, which is 37.2 hectares in area), Likas (West York, 18.6 hectares), Parola (Northeast Cay, 12.7 hectares), Lawak (Nanshan Island, 7.93 hectares), Kota (Laoita Island, 6.45 hectares), Patag (Flat Island, .57 hectares), Panata (Lankiam Cay, 4.4 hectares), Rizal (Commodor Reef), Balagtas (Irving Reef) and Ayungin (Second Thomas Shoal).

Sen. Pantilo Lacson said the occupation of the islands could go hand-in-hand with the efforts of the President to strengthen ties with China, which has been very aggressive in asserting its own claims on the South China Sea.

"Asserting our sovereignty and territorial integrity can take many forms and courses of action. Whatever goodwill and good relations the President has established with China, at the end of the day, our national interest should always take the front seat," Lacson said.

Senate Majority Leader, Vicente Sotto III said that he was a supporter of the President's plan to send troops to the islands and said that he fully supports the move.

Senate committee on national defense and security chairman Sen. Gregorio Honasan said that the occupation of the islands, including the planting of the Philippine flag on these territories, is well within the bounds of the Constitution. – **With Jess Diaz, Marvin Sy, Helen Flores, Reuters, AFP**

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MANILA BULLETIN  
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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# Duterte bid to occupy WPS islands gains support

MARIO B. CASAYURAN  
AND FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

Senate Majority Leader Vicente Sotto III and two other senators who are former military officers threw yesterday their support behind the decision of President Duterte ordering the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to occupy and place Philippine flags on at least nine contested islands in the West Philippine Sea (WPS or South China Sea).

In the territorial dispute over parts of the Spratly Islands and other islands, islets, and shoals in the WPS, the United Nations arbitration court ruled last year in favor of the Philippines as it rejected the historical claim of China over these parts.

Sotto said he supports the President's de-

cision, by saying "I know he is planning to do that." He added "China will be informed and I know they will not object."

Sen. Gregorio B. Honasan II, one of the rightist rebels of the 1986 military revolt that triggered the EDSA people power phenomenon, said he sees "nothing illegal or immoral or unconstitutional or wrong with planting-raising the Philippine flag on Philippine territory."

A Philippine Military Academy (PMA) graduate like Honasan, Sen. Panfilo M. Lacson said "asserting our sovereignty and territorial integrity can take many forms and courses of action."

"Whatever goodwill and good relations the President has established with China, at the end of the day, our national interest should always take the front seat," he said.

### No cause for tension

Meanwhile, the AFP believes the planned visit of President Duterte to Pag-asa Island in Palawan on June 12 will not cause nor escalate tension in the West Philippine Sea.

Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla, AFP spokesman, said the Philippines has been opening

up bilateral consultations/relations with China and there is no reason for such a move to unsettle Beijing.

"We have opened up bilateral consultations with the Chinese and they have always mentioned that everything will always be discussed peacefully," Padilla said.

In his visit to the AFP Western Command last Thursday, Duterte said he may go to Pag-asa Island on June 12 to raise the Philippine flag there to draw attention to the country's jurisdiction over the disputed island.

He ordered the AFP to occupy all the islands/territories and put structures and the Philippine flag on Pagasa island.

"Basta 'yung bakante na, yung atin na, tirahan na natin, ibig sabihin (As long as they're unoccupied, that's ours; let's live on it)," Duterte said in an ambush interview at Camp Artemio Ricarte in Puerto Princesa City, Palawan.

The 37.2-hectare Pag-asa Island, the second largest of the naturally occurring Spratly Islands, lies 480 kilometers west of Puerto Princesa City in Palawan.

Although the island is being administered as part of

Kalayaan, it is also being claimed by China, Taiwan, and Vietnam.

"Sa coming Independence Day natin, I may go to Pag-asa Island to raise the flag there," Duterte said.

#### **Alejano scoffs at plan**

Impeachment complainant and Magdalo Party-list Rep. Gary Alejano scoffed at the President's order to beef up Filipino military presence in the West Philippine Sea, saying Filipino soldiers are already in control of the pinpointed areas.

Alejano said no amount of assurance of

presidential action on the West Philippine Sea could convince him to withdraw the impeachment complaint in which he cited Duterte's inaction on Chinese military's snooping over Benham Rise as an impeachable offense.

Alejano belittled the presidential directive as he noted that Duterte is apparently not aware of the situation in the contested areas.

"Duterte might be referring to the ten (10) features that we already occupied and in that case his order to occupy is not new," the opposition lawmaker said. (With a report from Ben R. Rosario)

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The Manila Times

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# Military to fortify presence in WPS

BY FERNAN MARASIGAN

**T**HE military said Friday it will upgrade facilities on islands it already occupies in the disputed West Philippine Sea (South China Sea), and build structures on unoccupied submerged lands or rocks, as ordered by President Rodrigo Duterte.

Gen. Eduardo Año, Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief of staff, said the military would reinforce troops stationed

► PresenceA8

on eight islands and a shoal, and could still take over territory within the country's 200-nautical-mile exclusive economic zone.

"But we need to put up structures where our troops can stay. I cannot give you the numbers and location for security reasons," said Año in a text message.

On Thursday, the President, following a visit to a Palawan military camp, said he wanted to "maintain our jurisdiction" over the islands in the disputed waters.

"I have ordered the Armed Forces to occupy all. There are so many islands, I think nine or 10, put structures there and the Philippine flag," Duterte said.

In response, Año said, "That's an order from the President and I intend to carry that out."

Even before the President's directive, the military has occupied eight islands and a shoal in the West Philippine Sea, Año said. "All others are occupied by China, Vietnam etc.," he added.

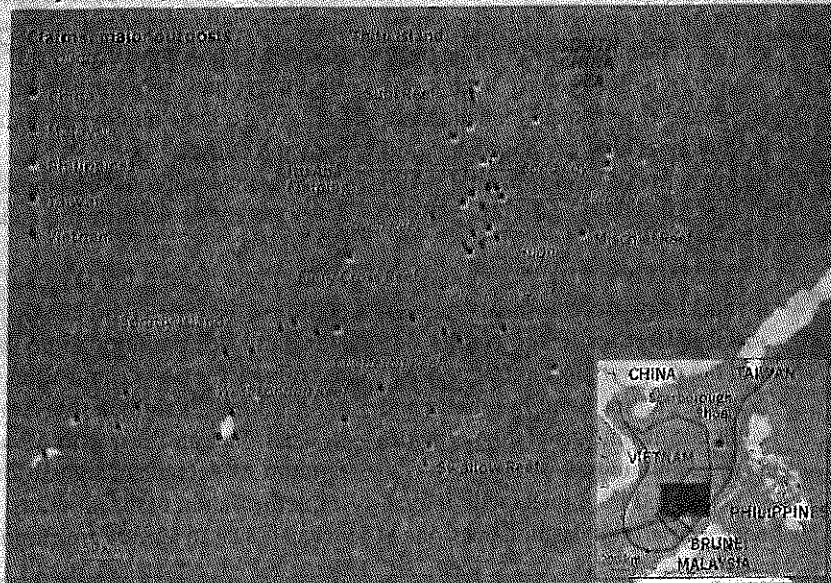
The Philippines controls 10 areas in the West Philippine Sea: Pagasa (Thitu) Island, Likas (West York) Island, Parola (Northeast Cay), Lawak (Nanshan) Island, Kota (Loaita) Island, Patag (Flat) Island, Panata (Lankiam Cay), Rizal (Commodore) Reef, Balagtas (Irving) Reef, and Ayungin (Second Thomas) Shoal.

The Defense department said the plan was to add military barracks, water desalination systems, power generators, lighthouses, and shelters for fishermen to the features that the Philippines already occupies.

"The context with which we take the order is to improve on our already occupied islands, islets and features," military spokesman AFP Public Affairs chief Col. Edgard Arevalo told AFP.

"The President recently announced plans to improve, and implement the Pag-asa development plan which includes nine areas," presidential spokesman Ernesto Abella said, referring to Pag-asa Island municipality, the Philippines' political subdivision for the Kalayaan

## Disputed Spratly Islands



Sources: D Rosenber, Middlebury College/Harvard Asia Quarterly; PHIL gov't/China Maritime Safety Administration (CSIS/AMI)

AFP

### Map showing disputed Kalayaan (Spratly) Islands in the West Philippine Sea (South China Sea). AFP GRAPHIC

(Spratly) Islands that it claims

"This is part of his mandate to serve the best interests of the nation," he added

Pag-asa Island is a municipality under Palawan province. It has about 300 residents, mostly military personnel and their families. It is also being claimed by China, Taiwan and Vietnam.

### Already occupied

Filipino maritime law expert Jay Batongbacal told AFP Friday all other major outcrops inside the section of the Spratlys claimed by Manila are already occupied by troops from other claimant countries.

Only a few "reefs and shoals" do not currently have soldiers on them, he said, adding that the Philippine government would likely back away from Duterte's explosive original proposal.

China claims most of the sea and in recent years has been building up disputed reefs into artificial islands that can house military facilities, further raising tensions.

Duterte's announcement was a sharp departure from his prior efforts to improve Manila's relations with Beijing by adopting a non-confrontational approach over their competing claims in the strategically vital waters.

This has sparked domestic criticism that Duterte was not defending Philippine territory in the face of Chinese assertiveness.

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) on Friday said President Duterte was just performing his duty when he ordered the military to occupy all islands within the West Philippine Sea, and announced a plan to raise the flag at the Pag-asa Island on Independence Day.

"The President is performing his mandate with respect to Philippine territory," DFA spokesman Charles Jose told reporters.

"The aim is to improve the living conditions, safety and personal security of Filipinos in those areas," he added.

But Jose said the Philippines would "remain committed to improving our

relations with China and other partners in the region."

### 'Independent foreign policy'

Duterte announced plans to go to Pag-asa following reports that China was nearly finished with the construction of its facilities in Subi (Zamora), Mischief (Panganiban) and Fiery Cross (Kagitingan) Reefs in the Kalayaan Islands.

The construction of these facilities would allow Beijing to deploy military assets at any time in the region.

"It will be significant that it will be the first time a President visits and commemorates Independence Day in this municipality. It will also be symbolic of our independent foreign policy," Abella, the presidential spokesman, said.

"If he does push through, he will be accompanied by the governor, the three Palawan congressmen and the leaders of the municipality of Kalayaan," he added.

A lawmaker however said President Duterte's order for the AFP to occupy islands in the West Philippine Sea was "useless."

"In fact, our flag is already planted on these islands. The last time we heard the President speaking of raising the Philippine flag in a disputed territory, he later on admitted that he was merely joking. Let us hold him accountable. The truthfulness of words must be seen through concrete actions," Magdalo party-list Rep. Gary Alejano said in a statement.

"There are no more islands in South China Sea to occupy, unless we grab islands from Vietnam and China and run the risk of a shooting war. Even if assuming there are still uninhabited islands to occupy, new occupation is a violation of the existing Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in South China Sea in which the Philippines is a signatory and is faithfully complying with its provisions even if China is not," Alejano added.

**WITH REPORTS FROM AFP,  
CATHERINE S. VALENTE, JAIME R.  
PILAPIL AND LLANESCA T. PANTI**

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## Phl looking to allies vs Korean missile

By JAIME LAUDE

In the event that the prevailing tension in the Korean peninsula turns into a full-blown military conflict, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) is looking at military allies for its anti-missile defenses.

Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla, AFP spokesman, said that while the military has the chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) capabilities, the country has no anti-missile capabilities to counter incoming missile projectiles.

Padilla said that in the event of an attack, our allies have assured us a long time ago that they will come to our assistance," Padilla said amid current missile threats in Korean Peninsula.

He did not name countries but Japan and the United States are closely monitoring the situation in the region.

Over the past weeks, tension has mounted in the already tense Korean Penin-

sula, with the North Korea leadership threatening to launch missile strikes not only at South Korea but at Japan and the US.

Padilla said the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) has an established contingency plan in the event a North Korean missile strays and hits the country.

"We are already in the process of developing anti-missile capability. Currently, we have none," he said.

Padilla said the Philippines is located far from the Korean Peninsula and it is highly remote that a missile will be launched directly toward the country.

"On a limited capacity, we also have the capability to react or respond in the event of a chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear attack," Padilla said.

He said concerned government agencies are ready to address this concern on a limited scale with the Bureau of Fire, the Department of Health and the AFP as prime responders.

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## Duterte expected to lead Kagitingan rites tomorrow

President Duterte is expected to attend the 75th commemoration of Araw ng Kagitingan at Mt. Samat Shrine in Pilar, Bataan tomorrow.

The Department of Education (DepEd) and Department of National Defense will lead various activities as part of the observance of the Day of Valor.

DepEd officials, teachers

and students will join the activity in Bataan.

Education stakeholders took part in the tribute for Filipino war veterans on Corregidor Island yesterday.

A wreath-laying ceremony was also held at the Libingan ng mga Bayani in Taguig, followed by a tribute to the veterans at the Philippine Army headquarters.

### Overtime pay

Meanwhile, employees who will work tomorrow will receive overtime pay, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) said yesterday.

The DOLE said workers would be paid 200 percent of their salary for the first eight hours of work.

Employees will get an

additional 30 percent of their hourly rate for overtime work in excess of eight hours.

The DOLE said those who would not report to work would still be paid 100 percent of their salary.

Malacañang has declared April 9 a holiday in honor of the gallantry of the Filipinos who fought during World War II. – Janvic Mateo, Sheila Crisostomo



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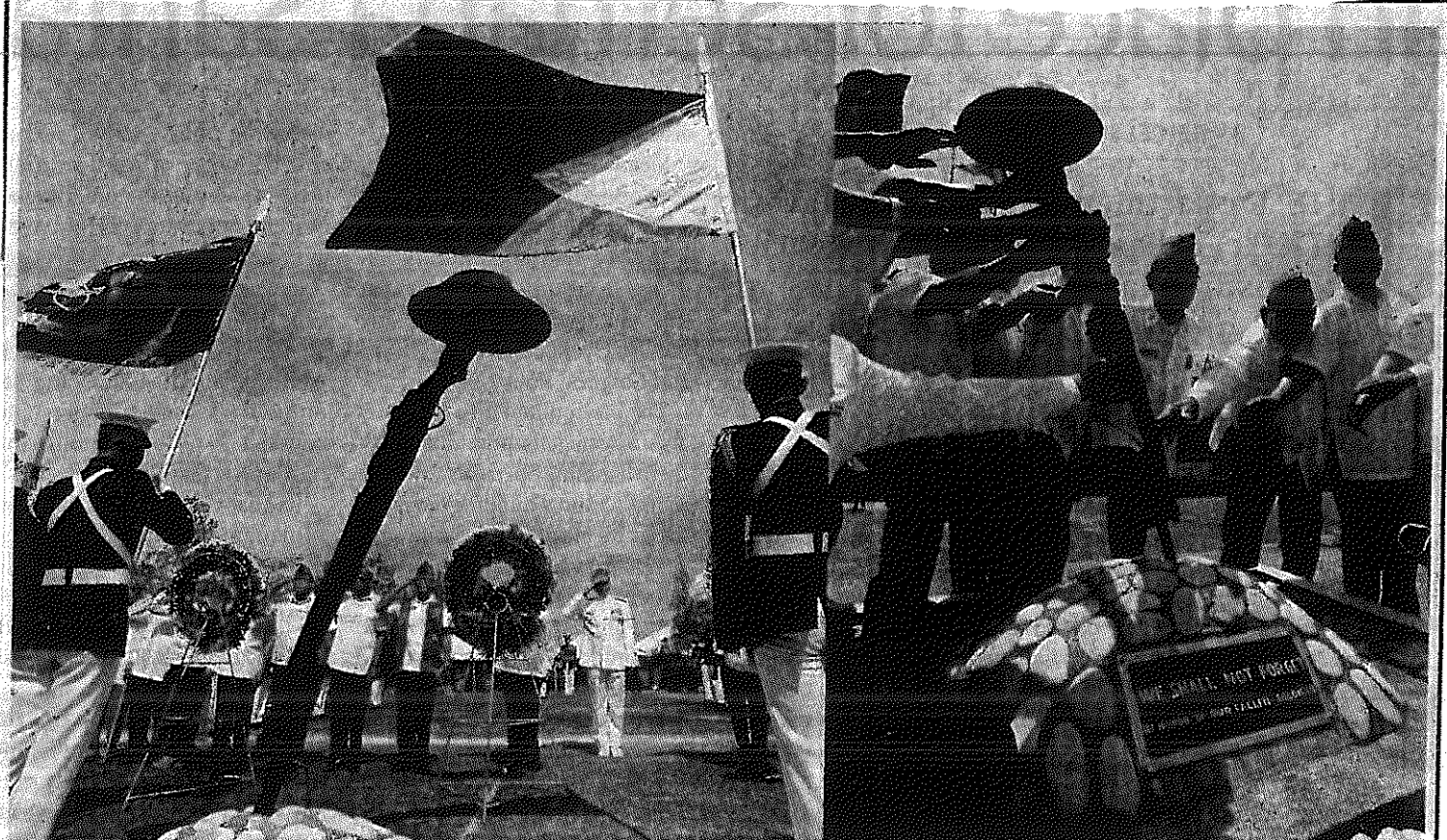
### • Poaching no more

The frequent maritime patrols by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in the Batanes Islands chain has already reaped success as fishermen recount respite in poaching. Marine Colonel Edgard Arevalo, AFP Public Affairs Office Chief, said Batanes Governor Marilou Cayco extended the gratitude of the fisherfolks of Batanes to the military for the continuous maritime patrols being facilitated by the Philippine Air Force, Navy, and Marines in the northernmost islands and sea territory of the province, thus preventing poaching from happening. (Francis T. Wakefield)

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# The Manila Times

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**TRIBUTE** Veterans and military officials hold a ceremony on Corregidor Island in Cavite City on Friday in celebration of Veterans Week (left photo). The veterans also paid tribute to the fallen heroes of World War 2 (right). PHOTOS BY RENE H. DILAN

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# The Standard

DEFINING THE NEWS

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**CHALLENGING FISTS.** Lumad peasants from Mindanao and members of Kalipunan Katutubong Maramayang Pilipinas stage a protest Friday in front of Camp Aguinaldo, headquarters of the Department of National Defense and the Armed Forces of the Philippines, expressing concern over what they call the alarming attacks and bombing against farmers and tribesmen. Manny Palmero

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Pahina. 5

## EDITORIAL

### LAGYAN NG MGA TAO, BAKURAN ANG MGA ISLA

TAMA lang ang utos ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte sa Armed Forces of the Philippines na okupahin nila ang mga isla na nasasakupan ng Pilipinas sa bisa ng pambansang teritoryo o sa ilalim ng United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Matatandaang ginawa ng Pangulo ang nasabing kautusan upang maipakita sa ibang bansa na may lehitimong claim ang Pilipinas sa mga ito at hindi hahayaang angkinin ng iba.

Kabilang sa mga islang pinalalagyan ng mga sundalo o sibilyan o palatandaan ng claim ng Pilipinas bilang anyo ng okupasyon o pagsakop ang mga natitira pang hindi sakop na iba sa West Philippine Sea na sakop ng 200-mile exclusive economic zone at ang 13 milyong Benham of Philippine Rise sa silangan ng Isabela at Quirino.

Maganda na ring malaman na bukod sa Pag-asa Island, sinabi ng AFP na may nakatira nang Philippine Marines sa ilang isla sa WPS at tuloy-tuloy na ang pagpapatrolya ng Philippine Navy sa Benham Rise.

Sa Benham Rise na nasa ilalim ng dagat at 35 metro ang pinakamababaw na parte, hindi sapat ang pagpapatrolya ng PN at may mung kahing magtatag na ang pamahalaan ng isang permanenteng lugar dito na paglagyan ng mga gusali ng pamahalaang Pilipinas gaya ng ginagawa ng iba.

Ang pagbabakod sa iba't ibang anyo ng mga islang atin ay mabisa bilang ligal na aksyon laban sa panghihimasok ng iba.

Kapag pinabayaan o hindi natin ginawa ito mula sa mga araw na ito, tayo na rin ang may sala kung bakit pinanghihimasukan tayo ng mga dayuhan hanggang sa mawalan tayo ng mga sakop na lugar, dapat sana'y pakikibangan ng lahat ng mamamayan.

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Pahina. 4



PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte's surprise announcement during the Philippine Army's 120th anniversary celebration on Tuesday, April 4, to allow the members of the Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap (KADAMAY) to keep the houses in Bulacan that were meant for soldiers and policemen disappointed many people, even his most ardent supporters.

"Nakaka-frustrate!" wailed Overseas Filipino Worker Astee Tagle, who works and studies at the same time in the United States and is a staunch Duterte follower.

"Hindi ko alam ang buong detalye at istorya ng KADAMAY at ng housing na inuukupahan nila.

"Ang sa akin lamang, kung pagbibigyan ni Di-

gong itong mga ito, maraming tao ang mawiwili sa ganitong gawain," she said.

"Alam naman natin na existing ang mga professional squatters, eh."

"Ang dapat sa mga ito i-educate, bigyan ng pangkabuhayan, then pa-bahay na HINDI bigay kundi pansamantalang paupahan sa mababang halaga.

"Maraming tao ang nagmula sa hirap na hindi kinallangan mamerwisyo ng ibang tao, at isisi sa gobyerno ang kahirapan."

"Nakakalungkot lang kung ibibigay nang libre sa mga ito yung bahay dahil nagtantrums sila at nag-welga-welgahan." Tagle further lamented.

Tagle sums up most of the sentiments of the Filipino people who believe

### KADAMAYS SHEER LUCK

that the President does not have to go to the extent of giving everything to the poor as it may lead to total dependence.

"For now, free housing for the poor, free cash transfer for the poor. Sunod free car, free yacht for the poor. Yan ang resulta ng "inequality is wrong" mentality and policy," warned economist Nonoy Oplais, head of Minimal Government Thinkers, Inc.

President Duterte pleaded on Tuesday to PNP and AFP personnel.

"Meron lang po akong pakiusap. This ruckus in Bulacan, eh parang inagaw ng mga kapwa nating Pilipino na mahirap din.

"I will look into the matter seriously. And I will ask your soldiers and the policemen, bitawan n'yo na lang iyan at ibigay na lang natin sa kanila tatal mahirap sila.

"But I promise you, I will look for another land

nearby mas maganda, mas mura, mas komportable."

Senator Richard Gordon, a supporter of Pres. Duterte, criticized the latter's decision, saying that allowing KADAMAY to keep the housing units which they forcibly occupied is a "ticket to anarchy."

Like many Filipinos, I would like to see the government create jobs for the poor, or help find employment for them, instead of rewarding them for their overblown sense of entitlement.

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

## ONLINE NEWS

### 08 APRIL 2017

[www.interaksyon.com](http://www.interaksyon.com)

#### PH to upgrade facilities, not occupy new areas in South China Sea - military

By: Manuel Mogato, Reuters

MANILA, Philippines -- The Philippines will upgrade existing facilities on its inhabited islands and reefs in the South China Sea and not occupy new territories, adhering to a 2002 informal code in the disputed waters, defense and military officials said on Friday.

A statement from President Rodrigo Duterte's office on Thursday said he had ordered troops to occupy uninhabited islands and shoals that the Philippines claims in the disputed waterway, asserting sovereignty in an apparent change of tack likely to anger China.

The firebrand leader, who on the campaign trail joked that he would jet-ski to a Chinese manmade island in the South China Sea to reinforce Manila's claim, also said he may visit Philippine-controlled Pagasa Island to raise the national flag.

But defense and military officials subsequently clarified Duterte's comments.

"The President's order was very crystal clear. Occupy only the existing areas that we claim," a navy commander, privy to development plans in the South China Sea, told Reuters on Friday.

"The Philippines is not allowed to do that, occupy new territories in the Spratly, based on the 2002 agreement," said the navy official.

China claims almost the entire South China Sea, where about \$5 trillion worth of seaborne goods pass every year. Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Taiwan also have claims.

Duterte's comments were made after he was briefed by defense and military brass about South China Sea developments in Palawan, according to his communications office.

"What he really meant was the already-occupied areas," military spokesman Brigadier General Restituto Padilla told reporters on Thursday.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said there were plans to only repair and upgrade facilities in the Spratlys.

"The president wants facilities built such as barracks for the men, water and sewage disposal systems, power generators, light houses, and shelters for fishermen," Lorenzana said.

Another general, who also declined to be named, said there were development plans in the South China Sea in 2012, which included building a secured port on Pagasa (Thitu) Island and helicopter pads in three smaller islands where troops are deployed.

But the plan, which also called for an increase in troop deployment in the occupied islands, was stopped after the Philippines in 2013 filed an arbitration case against China in The Hague.

The Philippines occupies nine "features", or islands and reefs, in the South China Sea, including a World War II-vintage transport ship which ran aground on Second Thomas Shoal in the late 1990s.

The US State Department declined comment on Duterte's remarks, but has in the past urged rival South China Sea claimants to lower tensions and resolve differences in accordance with international law.

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

13

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

[www.interaksyon.com](http://www.interaksyon.com)

## **NDFP, GRP firm up agreement on free land distribution at end of 'difficult' 4th round**

By: InterAksyon.com

MANILA, Philippines -- Government and communist rebel negotiators ended what they acknowledged as a "difficult" fourth round of formal peace talks saying they had "firmed up their agreement on distribution of land for free as the basic principle of genuine agrarian reform."

In a joint statement issued at the conclusion of the four days of talks in Noordwijk an Zee, the Netherlands, the negotiating panels of the government and National Demoratic Front of the Philippines also said they "agreed to accelerate the process of concluding a Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms," the second of the four so-called "substantive agenda" of the negotiations to seek a peaceful resolution to the close to half a century-old communist insurgency.

"This is the main message of the bilateral meeting of the RWCs-SER (Reciprocal Working Committees-Socioeconomic Reforms) and an achievement of the Fourth Round of Talks," they said.

The latest round of talks came after the peace process was almost scuttled when hostilities resumed in early February after the rebels, accusing the military of ignoring a government unilateral ceasefire, terminated their own ceasefire, prompting President Rodrigo Duterte to order his negotiators to stop negotiating.

However, as the fighting worsened, both sides agreed to resume talking although the government refused to declare a unilateral ceasefire this time, prompting the rebels to hold off the planned announcement of their own ceasefire.

During the fourth round of talks, both sides also agreed to continue discussing ways to speed up the release of political prisoners as well as of government personnel held captive by the rebels.

Nevertheless, in another "significant step forward," the peace panels signed an agreement committing themselves to negotiating an interim joint ceasefire agreement.

NDFP chief political consultant Jose Ma. Sison, in his closing remarks, said the ceasefire pact would be signed "immediately after the signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms."

In an interview with independent media outfit Kodao Productions, Sison said he expects the next round for formal talks to begin discussions on national industrialization and economic development.

For his part, NDFP chief negotiator Fidel Agcaoili, in a separaate statement, said "what is important is that we continue to talk even while fighting, in view of the absence of any ceasefire declaration."

"What is important is that we do not lose sight of the substance of peace, which is not equivalent to the silencing of the guns," he added.

Both parties scheduled the next round of talks from May 26 to June 2 at the same venue

In the run-up to this round, both sides' RWCs-SER to work on the draft CASER in what Agcaoili said would be a "neutral venue" in Manila.

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