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OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

NEWS CLIPPINGS

12 April 2017

Wednesday

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

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS • FEARLESS VIEWS

TODAY'S WEATHER FORECAST | APRIL 12, 2017 | WEDNESDAY

PHILIPPINE AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY (PAR)

RIDGE OF HIGH PRESSURE AREA
EXTENDING ACROSS LUZON AND VISAYAS
EASTERLIES AFFECTING EASTERN SECTION OF MINDANAO
(As of 3:00 PM - Apr. 11, 2017)

SUNRISE 5:44 AM	SUNSET 6:10 PM
MOONRISE 07:05 PM	MOONSET 6:24 AM
FULL MOON APR 11 2:08 AM	LAST QUARTER APR 16 5:57 PM
LOW TIDE MANILA SOUTH HARBOR 5:23 PM 0.06 Meter	HIGH TIDE 10:50 AM 0.73 Meter

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

☁ Cloudy skies with rainshowers and/or thunderstorms

	APR 13	APR 14	APR 13	APR 14	APR 13	APR 14		
METRO MANILA	☁ 26-35°C	☁ 25-35°C	TAGAYTAY	☁ 21-31°C	☁ 21-30°C	TACLOBAN	☁ 24-31°C	☁ 23-29°C
TUGUEGARAO	☁ 25-33°C	☁ 25-34°C	LEGAZPI	☁ 26-32°C	☁ 25-32°C	CAGAYAN DE ORO	☁ 23-31°C	☁ 24-29°C
LAOAG	☁ 24-33°C	☁ 25-32°C	PUERTO PRINCESA	☁ 25-32°C	☁ 26-32°C	METRO DAVAO	☁ 25-33°C	☁ 24-31°C
BAGUID	☁ 17-26°C	☁ 16-25°C	ILOILO/BACOLOD	☁ 26-32°C	☁ 27-32°C	ZAMBOANGA	☁ 24-32°C	☁ 24-31°C
SBMA/CLARK	☁ 25-35°C	☁ 26-36°C	METRO CEBU	☁ 25-32°C	☁ 25-31°C			

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AIR 21
SAGUT KO, PADALA MO!

PILIPINAS HD

BEAM

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ABUS, SOLDIERS CLASH IN BOHOL; 9 KILLED

STORY BY PHILIP C. TUBEZA AND LEO UDTOHAN

A day after the military said it saw no terrorist threat in Central Visayas despite a US Embassy warning, suspected Abu Sayyaf bandits strike in Bohol but are cornered by government forces

A2

**By Philip C. Tubeza
and Leo Udtohan**
@Team_Inquirer

At least nine people were killed on Tuesday in a gun battle between government troops and suspected Abu Sayyaf bandits in Bohol province, far from the terrorists' southern jungle bases and in a region where the US government had warned the gunmen might carry out kidnappings.

Five Abu Sayyaf bandits, three soldiers and a policeman were killed in the gun battle in the mountain village of Napo, Inabanga town, according to a joint statement issued by Chief Supt. Noli Taliño, head of the Police Regional Office in Central Visayas, and Lt. Gen. Oscar Lactao, chief of the military's Central Command.

Director General Ronald dela Rosa, the chief of the Philippine National Police, said troops and policemen attacked the bandits early Tuesday in Inabanga, where the gunmen had arrived aboard three fast boats.

The bandits entered Inabanga, 71 kilometers from Tagbilaran City, going upriver toward Napo on Monday night, Mayor Josephine Jumamoy said in a radio interview.

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Residents alert authorities

She said residents of Napo reported the presence of the armed men to the police, who immediately sent officers and soldiers to the area.

Dela Rosa said the intruders took cover in three houses as the firefight broke out.

The firefight started around 5:20 a.m. on Tuesday and was still raging late in the afternoon.

The Philippine Air Force joined the fray in the afternoon, dropping bombs on the gunmen's location.

As of 4:40 p.m., nine bombs had hit the area, shaking the ground as they exploded.

The more than 60 bandits had either been forced out or killed in the two houses and the others were holed up and surrounded by government forces in the third house, Dela Rosa said.

If it is proven that the gunmen were from Abu Sayyaf, it may be the bandit group's first known attempt to carry out ransom kidnappings deep into the heartland of Central Visayas, far from its jungle lairs in the southern provinces of Sulu and Basilan.

Abu Sayyaf bandits have crossed the sea border with Malaysia on powerful speedboats and kidnapped scores of foreign tourists in past years.

"Based on the information, they arrived in the area in boats, which is the modus operandi of the Abu Sayyaf. If they were New People's Army, they would have arrived by land. So most likely, they are Abu Sayyaf," Dela Rosa told reporters.

"If we were not able to monitor this and engage them with our government forces, it's a cause for alarm if they were able to carry out kidnappings," he said.

US Embassy advisory

The US Embassy recently advised Americans to take precautions amid "unsubstantiated yet credible information" of possible kidnappings by terrorists in Bohol, nearby Cebu province and other areas in Central Visayas.

The Australian Embassy also warned its citizens about possible kidnappings by "terrorist groups" in Central Visayas.

On Tuesday, the British Embassy issued a similar warning to its citizens in the Philippines.

Dela Rosa said he could not say whether the gunmen were the group referred to in the US Embassy advisory.

He said the threat monitored by the Central Visayas regional police was an Abu Sayyaf plan to kidnap people in the region.

"But it did not say where or when. The threat was generic, general and nothing specific. If this is confirmed to be Abu Sayyaf and it's confirmed that their purpose is to kidnap [people] in Cebu and Bohol, then that's it," he said.

"As of now, our men on the ground are saying that these are Abu Sayyaf members. We still don't know the situation of the enemy if they have been killed or they have been able to run away," he added.

PNP confirms threat

Dela Rosa on Monday confirmed a terrorist threat to kidnap tourists in Central Visayas, but gave assurance that the police had taken steps to protect tourists traveling to the region.

He said the PNP had monitored the threat that led to the US Embassy advisory.

Gen. Eduardo Año, the Armed Forces of the Philippines chief of staff, told The Associated Press (AP) that military intelligence operatives had been trying to track down the movements of the suspected Abu Sayyaf bandits, who first traveled from Sulu to southern Zamboanga Peninsula.

Intelligence later indicated the gunmen landed ashore in

Inabanga, prompting military and police officials to deploy their forces, Año said.

The attack on Inabanga came a day after Año said the military did not see any terror threat in central Philippines despite the US Embassy warning.

President Duterte, speaking at a news conference in Davao City before leaving for a three-country tour of the Middle East on Monday, also played down the US Embassy warning, saying the government could handle any terror threats.

The United States and the Philippines have separately blacklisted the Abu Sayyaf as a terrorist organization for bombings, kidnappings for ransom and beheadings.

Some Abu Sayyaf commanders have pledged allegiance to the Islamic State group of jihadists in Iraq and Syria.

Mr. Duterte has ordered the military to destroy the Abu Sayyaf in Sulu and in outlying island provinces.

In Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, where Mr. Duterte was visiting, presidential spokesperson Ernesto Abella on Tuesday declined to confirm whether it was the Abu Sayyaf behind the attack in Inabanga.

"We still have to further clarify the identity of those behind the attack. We'll wait for (National Security Adviser Hermogenes) Esperon and Defense Secretary (Delfin) Lorenzana," he said.

Col. Edgard Arevalo, chief of the AFP public affairs office, praised the residents of Napo for alerting the military to the arrival of the gunmen.

He said cooperation between communities and security forces was important in containing the spread of terrorism from Mindanao to nearby places.

Año said the gunmen were "well armed with [large]-caliber weapons, but now cornered in an isolated" part of the village.

—WITH REPORTS FROM CYNTHIA D. BALANA, YUJI VINCENT GONZALES, FRINSTON LIM, DORIS C. BONGCAC, ALLAN NAWAL, AP AND AFP INQ

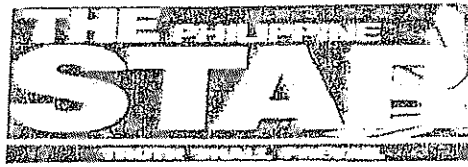


WATCH: Troops clash with suspected Abu Sayyaf in Bohol, says Bato
<http://inq.news/BatoOnBoholClash>

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Troops thwart Abus in Bohol; 9 killed

By JAIME LAUDE

Five suspected members of the terror group Abu Sayyaf were killed in a gun battle with security forces in Bohol, days after the United States, Australia and Canada alerted their citizens to possible kidnapping by militants in the province, one of the country's most popular tourist destinations.

The United Kingdom - through its Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) - yesterday issued its own travel advisory to its citizens, citing "high threat" of terrorism in the Philippines, especially in some parts of the Visayas and Mindanao.

"The FCO advise against all but essential travel to the remainder of Mindanao and to the south of Cebu province, up to and including the municipalities of Dalaguete and Badian, due to the threat of terrorism," the FCO said.

Initial reports said three soldiers and a policeman were also killed in the fighting in the outskirts of Barangay Napo, Inabanga.

The Army's 47th Infantry Battalion along with local police first clashed with the terrorists headed by Muammar Askali, alias Abu Rami, along the riverside of Sitio Ilaya in Inabanga town.

If it was indeed the Abu Sayyaf that clashed with security forces,

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ie land.

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Troops From Page 1

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it would be the first recorded major foray of the terror group into the Visayas region, far from their strongholds in Jolo and Basilan.

The Abu Sayyaf is currently holding more than two dozen captives in the island of Jolo.

Security forces launched the operation against the bandits after receiving intelligence that a heavily armed group of 10 people was seen on three boats in the area, Armed Forces chief Gen. Eduardo Año said.

The group's motive for traveling to Bohol was not known. They were cornered in an isolated section of the town.

"Combined government security, acting on received intelligence information, encountered a group of heavily armed lawless elements in Sitio Ilaya, Barangay Napo, Inabanga, Bohol," Año said.

He added a soldier and a policeman were also wounded in the clashes reportedly still raging as of yesterday afternoon.

The travel advisories issued by the US, Australia and Canada also cover Cebu, another popular tourist destination.

Tourists have started arriving in the two provinces as well as in other tourist destinations as the country goes on break for the Holy Week.

Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla, AFP spokesman, said fighting broke out at around 7 a.m.

"Security forces reported the group is well armed with heavy caliber weapons," Padilla said.

Air Force and naval assets were deployed to assist in the operations, said Padilla.

An undetermined number of bandits reportedly holed up in three houses as Air Force planes bombed the area.

Three soldiers and a policeman died in the heavy fighting, said Lt. Col. Ericson Rosana, spokesman for the Capiz-based 3rd Infantry Division.

Rosana said an Air Force plane launched an airstrike on the bandits' location as a

Navy gunboat was deployed to block the terrorists' possible exit route.

Three M16 rifles and an M14 assault rifle as well as an improvised explosive device (IED) placed inside a sack were recovered from the slain bandits.

"On behalf of the combined forces of the AFP and the PNP in the Visayas, we want to congratulate our people in Bohol who made a brave stand to defend themselves against the threat of terrorism," Cebu-based Central Command (Centcom) chief Lt. Gen. Oscar Lactao and Central Visayas police regional director Chief Supt. Noli Taliño declared in a statement.

Aside from being close to Cebu where various international events are being held in line with the Philippines' chairmanship and hosting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit this year, Bohol is one of the favorite tourist destinations in the Visayas.

"We are still trying to determine their motive as to why they were in Bohol. The intelligence information that we've got was that the group arrived Sunday night and it was immediately reported to us," said military spokesman Col. Edgard Arevalo.

"We have received a report that five of the enemies were killed and we have also recovered from them four high-powered firearms," he said earlier yesterday.

"But sadly, three on the government side were also killed, while two others were wounded."

Deeper probe

Philippine National Police (PNP) chief Director General Ronald dela Rosa said it was not clear yet if the Bohol incident was related to an earlier security threat monitored by his men.

He said the Central Visayas and the Bohol Provincial Police are now looking deeper into

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the incident.

"We can't tell yet because the threat is generic, general and not specific. If it's confirmed that it was the Abu Sayyaf, then we can confirm that their purpose is to kidnap in Cebu and Bohol, then that's it," Dela Rosa told reporters.

He stressed there was no cause for alarm as the police and military were able to thwart possible attacks by the terror group. The PNP chief said he was still waiting for comprehensive reports from the field.

"So far I had just talked to our man on the ground, Bohol Police chief Senior Supt. Felipe Natividad, and he reported to me that there were dead and wounded," he said.

Capt. Jo-Ann Petinglay, spokesperson for the Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom), said intelligence sharing led to the discovery of the Abu Sayyaf kidnapping plot in Bohol.

"So we alerted Central Command, that's why they raised the alert. We cannot just ascertain the exact date as to when the Abu Sayyaf group will hatch their plot," Petinglay said.

Westmincom chief Lt. Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr. noted that previous kidnappings by the Abu Sayyaf, like the one in Sipadan in Malaysia and Dos Palmas in Palawan, were carried out around Easter.

Petinglay said the Abu Sayyaf might have moved their kidnapping activities outside the Sulu and Basilan areas because of the relentless operations against them by government security forces.

"That's why we are on alert during this Lent," Petinglay added.

She also reported that eight government militia members have been killed in fighting with the Abu Sayyaf in the mountains of Sumisip, Basilan.

The arrival of the bandits in Bohol came barely a week before the holding of the second part of the ASEAN ministerial meetings in Panglao scheduled on April 19 to 22.

While the military said it

could only confirm the arrival of 10 of the Sulu-based bandits in Bohol, more of them could already be in the province scouting for victims.

Early this month, government troops killed more than 10 Abu Sayyaf militants in an attempt to free Vietnamese captives.

Abu Sayyaf, which means "bearer of the sword," earlier this year beheaded a German hostage and two Canadian captives suffered the same fate last year. They were executed when deadlines to pay ransom expired.

President Duterte said the Islamic State (IS) is trying to gain a foothold in Mindanao, where many towns are impoverished and underdeveloped.

He has pleaded with Philippine separatist groups to reject advances of extremists.

The military has been engaged in large-scale offensives against the Abu Sayyaf but progress has been hampered by the presence of civilians in its strongholds in Jolo and Basilan islands.

Travel advisory

In its travel advisory, Britain's FCO also advised against all travel to western Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago because of terrorist activity and clashes between the military and insurgent groups.

The FCO warned that terrorist groups continue to plan attacks and have the capacity and the intent to carry them out at any time and anywhere in the country.

Attacks could be indiscriminate, including in places visited by foreigners like airports, shopping malls, public transport and places of worship.

"You should remain vigilant at all times and report anything suspicious to the local authorities," it said.

The advisory said there has been an increase in kidnapping of foreign nationals, including attacks targeting foreigners and tourists, since late 2015. Multiple attacks occurred in November 2016. Terrorist groups continue to plan kidnap operations

against western nationals in the Philippines.

"This threat extends throughout the Philippines, both on land and at sea, but is particularly acute in the southern Philippines (Mindanao, southern Palawan and central Visayas, including Siquijor and Dumaguete)," it said.

The FCO cited the travel advisory issued by the US

embassy in Manila on April 9 regarding an "unsubstantiated yet credible information it received that terrorist groups may attempt to conduct kidnappings in Central Visayas, which includes both Cebu and Bohol provinces."

"You should be especially vigilant in these areas," the FCO said. — With Roel Pareño, Cecille Suerte Felipe, Reuters

army2012@gmail.com – Tel no. (02) 845-9555 Local: 5285, 5295

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12 April 2017

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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5 ASG, 3 soldiers, 1 cop die in Bohol clash

By **MARS W. MOSQUEDA**
and **FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD**

CEBU CITY - At least five suspected members of the notorious Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), three soldiers, and a policeman were killed in an encounter in Sitio Ilaya, Barangay Napo, Inabangga town in Bohol yesterday morning.

The clash which erupted at 5 a.m. Tuesday also wounded a soldier and a policeman. **►10**

5 ASG, 3 soldiers, 1 cop... ◀1

A joint statement released by Central Command (Centcom) chief Lt. Gen. Oscar Lactao and Police Regional Office (PRO) 7 Director Chief Supt. Noli Talino said government troops seized three M16 rifles, an M14 rifle, and one improvised explosive device at the clash site.

The encounter occurred barely a week before the holding of the second leg of ministerial meetings of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit in Panglao Island, Bohol. The summit is scheduled to run from April 19 to April 22.

SPO4 Pepito Tradio, officer-in-charge of the Inabangga Police Station, said the police received a text message about the arrival of three pump boats with armed men in Barangay Napo Monday night.

Tradio said he immediately informed the Bohol Provincial Police Office, who in turn informed the military about the report.

AFP Chief of Staff General Eduardo Año said the Army's 47th Infantry Battalion, led by 2nd Lt. Estelito Saldua,

along with members of the Bohol Provincial Police Office (BPPPO), the Regional Public Safety Battalion (RPSB), and the Provincial Intelligence Branch responded to the area that resulted in the clash.

Abu Rami

A military source said the suspected Abu Sayyaf terrorists were led by Muammar Askali alias Abu Rami who was previously monitored in Sindangan, Zamboanga del Norte.

AFP Public Affairs Office (PAO) chief Marine Colonel Edgard Arevalo said they have yet to

determine why the ASG sailed to Bohol.

"They only arrived there last (Monday) night. We have yet to ascertain if this (ASG presence) has any relation to the United States embassy advisory," Arevalo said.

The US embassy had earlier said they received an "unsubstantiated yet credible information" of threats in the Visayas region.

It advised its citizens in the country

to avoid travel plans to the Visayas, particularly Cebu and Bohol.

"There is an ongoing threat of terrorist actions and violence against US citizens and interests abroad, including the Philippines," the US embassy said.

Año said troops from the Army, Air Force, and the Navy were deployed to the clash site to reinforce engaged troops.

"On behalf of the combined forces of the AFP and the PNP in the Visayas Region, we want to congratulate our people in Bohol under the able leadership of Governor Edgar Chatto, and all the local chief executive down to the municipal and barangay levels, who made a brave stand to defend themselves against the threat of terrorism," Lactao and Taliño said in a statement.

"Four of our brave troops made the supreme sacrifice of giving their lives during the course of this operation. Their heroism will forever be engraved in the hearts of our people. Today's incident showcases how strong we can be if all stakeholders, the law enforcers, the civilian government and the community act together," the statement read.

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9 dead in clash between ASG, troops in Bohol

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD
• MARS W. MOSQUEDA JR.

Government troops were locked in battle with a small group of suspected Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) fighters yesterday in Bohol, a week before ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) converge in nearby Panglao Island.

At least nine have died in the ongoing clash in the mountainous barangay of Napo in Inabanga, about 71 kilometers from Tagbilaran, Bohol's capital city.

A joint military-police statement said five ASG fighters, three soldiers, and a policeman were killed in the day-long clash that started at 5:20 a.m.

This was confirmed in a press briefing in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City by Armed Forces spokesman Marine Col. Edgard Arevalo, who said the troops encountered at least 10 ASG gunmen.

Government troops seized three M16 and M4 rifles and an improvised explosive device (IED) in the clash site. It marked the first time ASG men were spotted in the island, roughly 700 kilometers from Basilan and Jolo, their base of operation.

Inabanga Mayor Josephine Jumamoy confirmed the encounter, although information was sketchy because the area does not have cellphone signal.

The presence of the notorious ASG was detected Monday night through the help of residents who immediately informed the police. Witnesses said the ASG gunmen arrived in three pump boats.

SPO4 Pepito Tradio, officer-in-charge of the Inabanga police station, immediately informed the provincial office which formed a joint team of soldiers and policemen to verify the report.

The joint statement was signed by Centcom Commander Lt. Gen. Oscar Lactao and PRO 7 director Chief Supt. Noli Talino.

AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Eduardo Ano said elements of the Army 47th Infantry Battalion, led by 2nd Lt. Estelito Saldua, and members of the Bohol Provincial Police Office (BPPCO) and the Regional Public Safety Battalion (RPSB) were involved in the firefight.

Ano said additional forces were sent to assist government troops.

"Security forces reported that the armed group is well armed with heavy caliber weapons, but are now cornered in an isolated section of the sitio," Ano added.

A military source said the group is reportedly led by Muammar Askali, alias "Abu Rami," who was previously monitored in Sindangan, Zamboanga del Norte.

The encounter has put in peril the holding of the second leg of the ministerial meetings of the ASEAN Summit set April 19-22 in the resort island of Panglao.

12 April 2017

The Manila Times

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Army on alert over Sayyaf threat

BY EUGENE Y. ADIONG

BACOLOD CITY: Philippine Army soldiers on Negros island were placed on alert for the observance of the Holy Week after they were told that a threat posed by the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) had been confirmed.

Major General Jon Aying, 3rd Infantry Division commander, said they had received information on the movement of the ASG and other Muslim extremist groups in the Sulu Sea.

Aying added that all Army units in Negros Occidental were ordered to be on alert and to coordinate with local police.

Soldiers on Negros island will work

with the police in securing beach resorts, coastal areas and residences owned by foreigners, he said.

"The PNP [Philippine National Police] has been on full alert already," the Police Regional Office 18 said in a statement.

"COP (Chiefs of Police) have been instructed to constantly remind their

personnel to be vigilant and alert, and intensify their [intelligence] monitoring and information gathering regarding the movement of the ASG," it added.

Earlier the Philippine Coast Guard-Bacolod City station in Negros Occidental received information on the ASG's plan to kidnap tourists at beach resorts around Sulu Sea.

Lieutenant Senior Grade Jimmy Oliver Vingno, commander of Coast Guard-Bacolod City, said while the threat does not cover Negros Occidental, neighboring Negros Oriental is an area of concern.

The United States Embassy had released a travel advisory warning its citizens to avoid traveling to Cebu and Bohol because of the threat.

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The Manila Times

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NPA's claim Cotabato raid

THE communist New People's Army (NPA) has claimed responsibility for the disarming of a village chief and 11 of his barangay tanod (village watchmen) in a daring raid in North Cotabato on Sunday.

But the NPA, in a statement, denied it abducted Barangay Chairman Michael Lingaro and his village watchmen.

"There is absolutely no truth to the AFP's [Armed Forces of the Philippines] pathetic and desperate claims that the NPA unit abducted Barangay Captain Michael Lingaro and his men or used them as 'human shield' following the successful disarming," Rigoberto Sanchez, NPA Southern Mindanao spokesman, said in the statement.

Sanchez added that the communist rebels, disguised as government troops, seized 32 assorted weapons from Lingaro and his men in the village of Mahongkog in Magpet town during the weekend raid.

"Without firing a single shot and posing as enemy troops, Red fighters of the Mount Apo Sub-Regional Command-NPA in Southern Mindanao disarmed a barangay [village] captain and his men, confiscating 32 firearms and other military hardware in Barangay Mahongkog," he said.

The Police Regional Office 12 (PRO 12) in General Santos City, which has jurisdiction over North Cotabato's 17 towns and capital, Kidapawan City, first reported Lingaro's abduction at about noontime on Sunday.

PRO 12, in a text advisory to reporters, said the village chairman was abducted by NPA rebels.

Members of the municipal peace and order council in Magpet and nearby towns said the group that raided Mahungcog was led by Commander Joel Pulido of the NPA's Guerilla Front 53.

Mahungcog is a hinterland village surrounded by mountain ranges believed to be lairs of NPA guerrillas.

Sanchez said rebel forces confiscated two M16 automatic rifles, one M4 Bushmaster assault rifle, two M14 rifles, two Garand rifles, four Carbine rifles, two M79 grenade launchers, four .45-caliber pistols, two 9mm pistols, one Uzi sub-machine gun, a dozen shotguns and 91 assorted magazines, including 12 vests and four military radio handsets.

He added that rebels held a dialogue with villagers, explaining the purpose of the raid before withdrawing from the area where the military has stepped up recruitment of spies and launched anti-insurgency operations.

There was no immediate statement from the military on Sanchez's accusations.

Peace negotiators recently signed an interim ceasefire deal during resumption of talks in The Netherlands but agreement this has to be approved by President Rodrigo Duterte and the NPA before it could take effect.

**AL JACINTO AND
JULMUNIR I. JANNARAL**

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Soldier killed in NPA clash

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

A soldier was killed while two other government troopers were wounded following an encounter between Army soldiers and New People's Army (NPA) rebels in Cotabato Province Monday afternoon.

Army Captain Alexander Cabales, the spokesman of the 10th Infantry Division said the encounter happened at Sitio Kimampang,

Barangay Balite, Magpet, Cotabato Province at about 5:10 p.m. Monday.

It was learned that troops from the 39th Infantry Battalion were scouring the area when it encountered more or less 40 armed men believed to be members of the Guerrilla 53, Southern Mindanao Regional Command.

This prompted the Mortar Section based at Temporan Civilian Armed Auxiliary (CAA) Detachment in

Barangay Temporan, Magpet, Cotabato, provided indirect fire support and delivered four rounds of 81mm caliber to the enemy location that ended at about 5:40 p.m.

Cabales said firefight lasted for almost one hour and followed by sporadic exchange of fire that lasted at about 6:20 p.m. the same day.

The enemy then withdrew towards the southeast direction.

12 April 2017

Malaya
The National Newspaper

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13 officers in fight vs BIFF promoted

BY VICTOR REYES

PRESIDENT Duterte has promoted an Army brigadier general leading the fight against the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters and 12 other officers to the higher rank.

The 13 officers wore their new ranks in rites presided by Army chief Lt. Gen. Renato Miranda last Monday at the Army headquarters in Fort Bonifacio.

The officers were led by Brig. Gen. Arnel Dela Vega, commander of the Army's 6th Infantry Division, who was promoted to major general.

As commander of the Maguindanao-based 6th ID, Dela Vega is supervising the military campaign against the BIFF, a group of about

200 to 300 men that operates mainly in Maguindanao.

There had been no major skirmish in recent months between government soldiers and the BIFF, composed of former members of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front that signed a peace accord with the government in 2014.

The Armed Forces leadership has set a deadline of six months or until June this year to defeat the Abu Sayyaf Group, the BIFF and the Maute Group which the military classify as terrorist groups.

Promoted from colonel to brigadier general (one-star) were Felipe Bejar Jr., commander of the 51st Engineering Brigade; Perfecto Rimando Jr., commander of the 801st Infantry Brigade; Glorivine

Dida, assistant deputy commander of the 2nd Infantry Division;

Fernando Trinidad, commander of the 903rd Infantry Brigade; Francisco Mendoza Jr., commander of the 802nd Infantry Brigade; Felicisimo Budiongan, assistant deputy commander of the Mechanized Infantry Division;

Ramiro Manuel Rey, commander of the elite Special Forces Regiment; Arnulfo Matanguihan, commander of the 302nd Infantry Brigade; Nixon Fortes, commander of the 103rd Infantry Brigade;

Milfredo Melegrito, commander of the 702nd Infantry Brigade; Jose Faustino Jr., commander of the 501st Infantry Brigade; and Manolo Samarita, commander of the 602nd Infantry Brigade.

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Soldier wounded in BIFF ambush

SHARIFF AGUAK, Maguindanao (PNA) – A soldier was wounded when Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) fighters ambushed government troops conducting foot patrol in Saydona Mustapha town, Maguindanao, Tuesday.

Sr. Supt. Agustin Tello, Magundan-

ao provincial police director, said about 15 BIFF fighters ambushed elements of the 40th Infantry Battalion patrolling the village of Ganta at 7 a.m.

Tello said Private First Class Butch Albarico was slightly injured when the armed men fired rifle grenades towards the soldiers.

Tello said the soldiers were sent to the village following the reported sightings of BIFF members in the community.

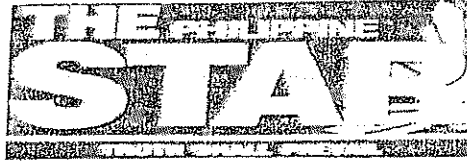
"Local residents requested for Army patrol in their village after BIFF members were seen roaming around the village at night," Tello said.

The seven-man Army team, according to Tello, quickly returned fire, triggering a 15-minute sporadic fire fight until the gunmen fled.

Three BIFF fighters were wounded, he added.

Tello said residents fled to safer grounds after hearing gunfire.

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Police and soldiers take position as they battle Abu Sayyaf bandits in the village of Napo in Inabanga, Bohol yesterday.

AFP

12 April 2017

The Manila Times

Page: A4

Editorial

Chutzpah alone will not cut it for AFP, PNP

THEY have been there but they have not done that. That is, the much-hyped wiping out of threat groups, both communist and separatist, by the more recent occupants of Malacañang.

The hot air that the administrations of Aquino (2010 to 2016) and Arroyo (2001 to 2010, which included the unserved years of the ousted Estrada) were blowing apparently just proved that promises are made to be broken.

Take those big words wasted, especially on the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), which during the Aquino and Arroyo administrations were supposed to have been stamped out, only for the group to flaunt its agenda of terror and banditry through lucrative kidnaps-for-ransom and horrific beheadings of Filipinos and foreigners.

Now, under the Duterte administration, the same promise was made last Sunday by Gen. Eduardo Año, the Armed Forces Chief of Staff.

Similar to timetables that accompanied those vows that went undelivered, Año gave a deadline—June 2017—for the elimination, once and for all, of the ASG, which, incidentally, is now affiliated with the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, or ISIS.

"They [the ASG terrorists] are no match to us," said the military chief who also on Sunday ordered government troops to "operate at full speed, double or increase the operational tempo some more" during a visit to a military camp in Sulu province in southern Mindanao, where the ASG is most active.

One day later, on Monday, it was the turn of Philippine National Police (PNP) chief, Director General Ronald de la Rosa, to echo the AFP chief.

De la Rosa, though, did not say outright that the Abu Sayyaf Group could be on the warpath in the country's Central Visayas region, which is composed of the provinces of Bohol, Cebu, Negros Oriental and Siquijor and the cities of Cebu, Lapu-Lapu, Mandaue and Dumaguete.

"These were the favorite spots of the Abu Sayyaf. You should not go there. All the other parts [are] okay," de la Rosa said, apparently referring to the group's favored kidnap vantage points in the conflict-torn South and to the supposedly safe areas, including Central Visayas.

Surprisingly, the AFP also on Monday said it had "not seen any threat" hanging over the Central Visayas, but that it "encourages[s] everybody to be vigilant and report any suspicious person, object or circumstance so that the [military] can take immediate counter action."

It is comforting to know that at least the police seemed to be, well, on top of the situation, but incredible that the Armed Forces of the Philippines did not have any idea what de la Rosa was talking about.

The AFP's self-imposed deadline of making the Abu Sayyaf Group history by end-June this year, we suppose, still stands.

The AFP had better "coordinate" (the buzz word not only of the business types but also of the military kind) with the PNP, at least to assure the US Embassy in Manila that had warned of terrorist groups attempting to carry out kidnappings in Central Visayas, particularly Cebu and Bohol, two of the more popular destinations among local and foreign tourists.

Like de la Rosa, the embassy did not mention a date when the supposed kidnappings and other threats would take place.

A less cavalier response on the part of the AFP, beyond describing the Abu Sayyaf as not being a worthy opponent, will probably send the military back to earth, to be reminded that bragging about its unproved and unenviable record against the terrorist and criminal band is not the appropriate way of putting its money where its mouth is not.

If the military showed a bit of false modesty about what it can do against the Abu Sayyaf, then it could help prove that "[i]t's [really] more fun in the Philippines."

Chutzpah alone will not cut it for the AFP, as well as the police. They displayed it before but until now they have not presented peace-loving Filipinos with a really dead terrorist of note.

Anyway, June 2017 is just a date.

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Army dons star ranks to 13 new generals

FORT BONIFACIO, Metro Manila – Thirteen senior officers of the Philippine Army donned with their new star ranks during the flag raising ceremony held here Monday, April 10, 2017.

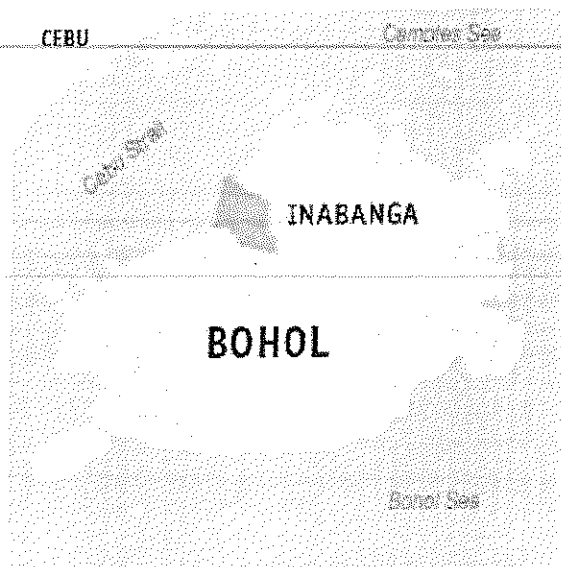
Promoted to Major General was Arnel B. Dela Vega, Commander of the 6th Infantry Division. Promoted to Brigadier Generals were Felipe B. Bejar Jr., Commander of the 51st Engineering Brigade; Perfecto M. Rimando Jr., Commander of the 801st Infantry Brigade; Glorivine R. Dida, Assistant Deputy Commander of the 2nd Infantry Division; Fernando T. Trinidad, Commander of the 903rd Infantry Brigade; Francisco F. Mendoza Jr., Commander of the 802nd Infantry Brigade; Felicisimo C. Budiongan, Assistant Deputy Commander of the Mechanized Infantry Division; Ramiro Manuel A. Rey, Commander of the Special Forces Regiment (Airborne); Arnulfo C. Matanguihan, Commander of the 302nd Infantry Brigade; Nixon M. Fortes, Commander of the 103rd Infantry Brigade; Milfredo M. Melegrito, Commander of the 702nd Infantry Brigade; Jose C. Faustino Jr., Commander of the 501st Infantry Brigade; and Manolo M. Samarita, Commander of the 602nd Infantry Brigade.

Lt. Gen. Glorioso V. Miranda, the Commanding General Philippine Army, led the ceremony with the HPA-based officers, enlisted personnel, and civilian employees as the audience

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www.interaksyon.com/national

Govt forces clash with suspected Abu Sayyaf fighters in Bohol



Government security forces are battling “heavily armed” gunmen suspected of being Abu Sayyaf fighters in the town of Inabanga, Bohol, authorities confirmed Tuesday.

The clash broke out around 7 a.m. when troops from the Army’s 47th Infantry Battalion led by 2nd Lieutenant Estelito Saldua, joined by police, acted on intelligence information on the presence of gunmen by the riverside in Sitio Ilaya, Barangay Napo, Armed Forces chief of staff General Eduardo Año confirmed.

Philippine National Police chief Ronald dela Rosa also told journalists at least one soldier was killed and another wounded in the clash.

The gun battle came a day after Dela Rosa confirmed what the US embassy in Manila, in an advisory on Sunday, had warned of Sunday “unsubstantiated yet credible information that terrorist groups may attempt to conduct kidnappings” in Central Visayas.

“The security operation was launched in relation to the monitored presence of 10 armed men with three pumpboats” sighted by residents in Ilaya, the statement from Año said.

An earlier report from the 3rd Military Intelligence Battalion on Monday said three unidentified speedboats were seen near the home of a Normal Millorya in Ilaya, which tended to bolster separate information from the intelligence unit of the 3rd Infantry Division that an alleged Abu Sayyaf member under Muammar Askali, alias Abu Rami, who had been monitored in Sindangan, Zamboanga del Norte, “was already in Inabanga.”

Another suspected Abu Sayyaf member was also reported to have been monitored in Siquijor province.

The forces that engaged the group described it to be “well armed with heavy caliber weapons” but reported that the gunmen were “now cornered in an isolated section of the sitio.”

More troops have been sent to reinforce those involved in the ongoing firefight.

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The military has stepped up operations against the Abu Sayyaf in southern Philippine islands Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi as they work to meet a self-imposed target to significantly weaken the group by June 30.

CENTRAL COMMAND
ARMED FORCES OF THE PHILIPPINES
Camp Lapu-Lapu, Cebu City

POLICE REGIONAL OFFICE 7
Camp Sergio Osmeña, Osmeña Blvd.,
Cebu City

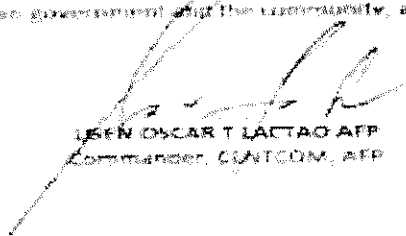
April 11, 2017


PRESS STATEMENT

On behalf of the combined forces of the AFP and the PNP in the Visayas Region, we want to congratulate our people in Basilan under the able leadership of Governor Edgar Chetto, and all the local chief executives, down to the municipal and barangay levels, who made a brave stand to defend themselves against the threat of terrorism. The government security forces simply reinforced the vigilance of the Basilanons who organized themselves into a strong force to keep the province safe from any threat group.

A joint and inter-agency operation was conducted against the suspected members of Abu Sayyaf Group who reportedly entered the Visayas Region by boat. Their movement, however, was monitored when they entered our area of responsibility. Tactical victories have been accomplished, with five (5) body counts and a number of high-powered firearms (3 M16 and 1 M4) recovered as of 1:00 PM today. The exchange of fire broke out between the responding troops and the armed group at Barangay Insabanga, Basilan at 5:20 o'clock in the morning. At the moment, our combined forces are conducting clearing operations to resolve the incident in the shortest time possible.

Four of our brave troops (1 PNP, 3 AFP), however, made the supreme sacrifice of giving their lives during the course of this operation. Their heroism will forever be engrained in the hearts of our people. Today's incident showcases how strong we can be if all stakeholders, the law enforcers, the local government and the community, act together.


LISEN OSCAR T. LACTAO AFP
Commander, CANTCOM, AFP


PCSUPT NOLT G. TALINO
Regional Director, PRO7, PNP

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9 killed as gov't forces foil Abu Sayyaf attack in Bohol

(UPDATED) 3 soldiers, a cop, and at least 5 of the armed men are killed in clashes that started at 5 a.m. on Tuesday

(4th UPDATE) – The military and the police on Tuesday, April 11, exchanged gunfire with "heavily armed lawless elements" in Bohol. They are believed to be members of local terrorist group Abu Sayyaf.

Three soldiers, a cop, and at least 5 of the armed men were killed in the clashes that started at 5 am on Tuesday, according to a joint statement issued by the police and the military.

"Tactical victories have been accomplished, with 5 body counts and a number of high powered firearms recovered as of 1 p.m. today.... Four of our brave troops, however, made the supreme sacrifice of giving their lives during the course of the operation," reads the statement signed by military Central Command chief Lieutenant General Oscar Lactao and police regional director Chief Superintendent Noli Taliño.

Residents on Tuesday morning alerted the police of the presence of 3 pumpboats along the riverside of Sitio Ilaya of Barangay Ilaya in Inabanga town.

The encounter comes a week after the government downplayed a travel warning from the US embassy which discouraged its citizens from visiting Bohol and neighboring Cebu.

"We want to congratulate our people in Bohol.... The government security forces simply reinforced the vigilance of the Boholanos who organized themselves into a strong force to keep the province safe from any threat groups," the joint statement added.

The first clash occurred at 5:20 am. At about 7 am, Armed Forces chief General Eduardo Año announced that the armed group was "well armed with heavy caliber weapons" but have already been cornered in "an isolated section of the sitio."

Año also announced that they had boosted the presence of local police and the military, deploying additional ground troops and sea and air assets to repel the armed group.

Later on Tuesday morning, Philippine National Police chief Ronald Dela Rosa told reporters that a soldier was the first casualty of the clashes against the armed men believed to be members of the local terrorist group Abu Sayyaf.

Colonel Edgard Arevalo of the military's Public Affairs Office also confirmed this.

The clashes were reportedly over by 1 p.m. Four government forces and 5 of the armed men were killed. The military began clearing operations.

The Abu Sayyaf Group is notorious for its kidnap-for-ransom activities. It is also known to conduct operations in the waters of southern Philippines, but Dela Rosa said the police had earlier gotten raw reports of kidnap threats in Central Visayas.

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ONLINE NEWS

12 APRIL 2017

www.retiredanalyst.blogspot.com

Army alert up vs. terror threat: Aying

Brig. Gen. Jon Aying, 3rd Infantry Division commander, yesterday said Army troops under his command have been directed to strengthen security measures amid intelligence reports of terror threats in Central Visayas.

The US Embassy in Manila has issued an advisory to its citizens to avoid visiting the region.

The 3ID command covers Negros Island Region, and Western and Central Visayas.

Army troops have been directed to coordinate with the Philippine National Police to step up security measures during Holy Week in churches where crowds are expected to converge, and to augment checkpoints, Aying said.

Aying said he has also directed Army battalion commanders to strengthen their coordination with the Navy, Philippine Coast Guard and Maritime Police for joint operations.

They have also been directed to meet with local government officials who are being asked to report the presence of new faces in their areas as a precaution, Aying said.

Brigade and battalion commanders have also been directed to conduct coastal operation to secure resorts and residences of foreigners, Aying said.

PNP chief, Director General Ronald Dela Rosa, in a press conference in Camp Crame, said the regional director of the Police Regional Office 7 informed him about the terror threats.

He assured though that the PNP has taken appropriate actions.

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Soldiers, cops search NorMin for Abus from Bohol

Police and Army units on Tuesday afternoon started searching hospitals in four provinces and five cities in Northern Mindanao for Abu Sayyaf members who may have survived the clash in Bohol province earlier on the same day.

Philippine National Police (PNP) Region 10 spokesperson Supt. Lemuel Gonda said security forces are carefully monitoring hospitals and clinics just in case some of the bandits were able to escape Inabanga town in Bohol.

He said the entire PNP regional command and the 403rd Infantry Brigade were on full alert after receiving reports of the clash between the Abu Sayyaf bandits and government troops in Inabanga.

"We are monitoring any movements here in case some of the bandits were able to escape," he said.

The clash in Sitio Ilaya, Barangay Napo, Inabanga town left three three soldiers dead.

Five bandits were also reported dead, according to a report reaching the PNP Region 10.

A soldier identified as Corporal Porlas and a policeman identified as PO2 Nazareno were wounded.

The dead soldiers were identified as 2Lt Saldua, Sgt Duero and Cpl Cahaban.

The report said five bodies of the bandits were recovered along with three M16 and a M4 assault rifles, and several improvised explosive devices.

Citing the report, Gonda said ten bandits on three motorized boats arrived at the river of Inabanga on Tuesday night.

He said the Philippine Air Force staged a bombing sortie in Ilaya.

Bohol, an island in Central Visayas, is a famed tourist destination. Among its attractions are the Chocolate Hills, Panglao Beach and Spanish-era churches.

The Abu Sayyaf is known to target foreign tourists for its kidnap-for-ransom activities.

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www.pna.gov.ph

4 gov't troops, 5 Abu Sayyaf bandits killed in Bohol encounter

At least four government troops and five alleged Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) rebels were killed in the early Tuesday encounter in Sitio Ibaya, Barangay Napo in Inabanga town, Bohol.

The government casualties comprised an Army lieutenant, two soldiers and a member of the Philippine National Police (PNP) Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT), said Lt. Dodie Belloga, commander of the 47th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army based in Bohol.

One soldier was also wounded in action, Belloga added.

Also, government troops recovered five bodies of armed men and confiscated four high-powered firearms, including three M-16 Armalite rifles and one M-4 rifle, he said.

In a telephone interview mid-afternoon of Tuesday, Lt. Col. Belloga disclosed that the joint Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and PNP operation was carried out after they received intelligence reports of the presence of unidentified armed men, numbering more or less 10, in Bohol.

The government troops immediately set out at the break of dawn Tuesday to track down the said armed men, and while on patrol, an encounter ensued around 6:45 a.m., where the government forces immediately lost four of its troopers during the first volley of shots, he said.

Hot pursuit operations ensued as the police and military continued to close in on the rebels, he added.

An air strike by government's F260 planes at the encounter site was launched hours later as hundreds of civilians in the area were made to evacuate to safer ground.

Lt. Col. Belloga said he earlier told the mayor of Inabanga and the village officials that residents must be evacuated so they would not be caught in the crossfire or used as hostage or human shield by the armed group.

The clashes continued sporadically until Tuesday afternoon as military and police personnel were determined to not allow any of the suspected Abu Sayyaf bandits to leave the island.

Lt. Col. Belloga appealed that the names of the slain military and police personnel be withheld yet, pending the notification of their families.

He said they are still trying to establish whether the presence of the armed men believed to be Abu Sayyaf bandits is directly connected to the intelligence reports that circulated since this past weekend.

The intelligence reports had said that the Abu Sayyaf, led by a certain Abu Rami, left Mindanao to carry out kidnap activities in the Visayas but without specific targets.

However, military and police authorities said that included in the possible targets are Cebu, Bohol, Negros

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Oriental, Apo Island, and Siquijor, due to their proximity to one another.

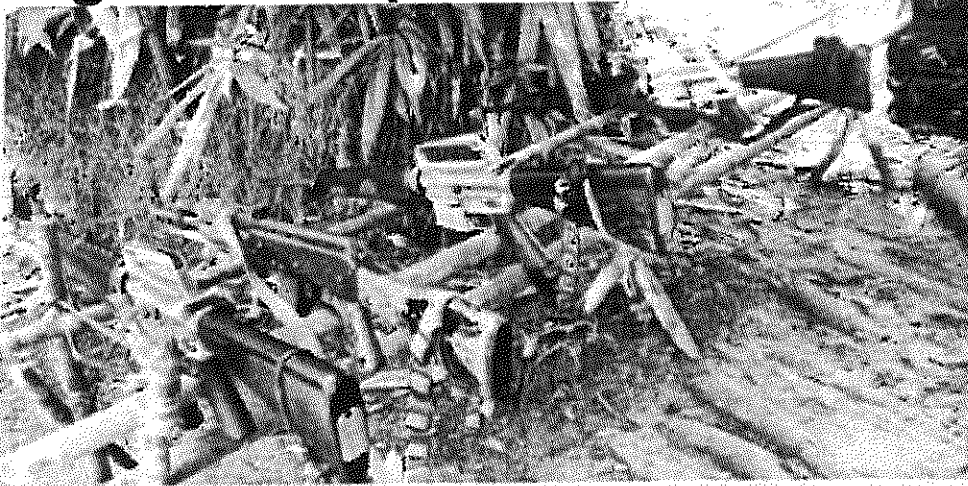
Lt. Col. Belloga said he believes there is still a number of suspected Abu Sayyaf bandits in Bohol as continuing firefight meant that the armed group still has strong firepower.

Meanwhile, he said the New People's Army (NPA) is ruled out as suspects in the clashes because Bohol has been previously declared insurgency-free.

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NPA seizes 32 guns from village chief in Cotabato province as 10th ID raises Red tag vs Karapatan



Assault rifles are laid out on bamboo poles in this file photo on the Communist Party of the Philippines website (<https://www.philippinerevolution.info/>)

InterAksyon.com

MANILA, Philippines -- Communist rebels, disguised as government troops, disarmed a barangay captain and his men in Magpet town, Cotabato province over the weekend, seizing 32 firearms and other military hardware then spent at least two hours explaining their action to residents, a rebel spokesman said.

Meanwhile, the Army's 10th Infantry Division openly tagged the Southern Mindanao office of the human rights organization *Karapatan* among legal organizations supposed allied to the rebel National Democratic Front of the Philippines. The claims aired by Captain Alexandre Cabales, acting public affairs chief of the unit, was in reaction to allegations of military involvement in a recent series of killings of peasant activists in Compostela Valley and Davao del Norte provinces.

Rigoberto Sanchez, spokesman of the New People's Army in Southern Mindanao said Sunday morning's disarming of Michael Lingaro, chairman of Barangay Mahongkog, and the paramilitary unit he led was carried out without a single shot being fired.

Sanchez also dismissed military claims the rebel unit used Lingaro and his men as "human shields."

He said the guerrillas of the Mt. Apo Sub-regional Command took two M16 rifles, one M4 Bushmaster assault rifle, two M14 rifles, two M1 Garand rifles, four carbines, two M79 grenade launchers, four .45 caliber pistols, two 9mm pistols, an Uzi sub-machinegun, 12 shotguns, 91 assorted magazines, 12 vests and four military radios during the 9 a.m. raid.

They then "talked to the masses and explained the purpose of the successful disarming before they safely withdrew from the barangay," he added.

An earlier advisory from the Communist Party of the Philippines' information bureau said the guerrillas stayed until 11 a.m. before withdrawing.

Sanchez said Lingaro and his group "are being used by the Army's 39th (Infantry Battalion) to conduct counterrevolutionary terror on civilians in the hinterlands."

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Meanwhile, in his own statement, the 10th ID's Cabales condemned the "unfounded allegations of several NDF-allied organizations attributing the deaths of several people in Davao Region" to the unit and challenged "these organizations to file the necessary complaints or cases against the perpetrators of these killings, they be soldiers or not, before the appropriate government investigating or judicial bodies, so that justice could be served."

If the suspects are 10th ID troops, he said, "we will welcome, cooperate and support the investigations and judicial process," because the military does "not condone any misbehavior or abuses of its members and will be very grateful to those who will help us purge our ranks of misfits and abusive members."

Cabales said the 10th ID's own "investigation and research" as well as reports from the police have yet to identify the suspects or motives behind the murders of Ramon and Leonila Pesadilla in Compostela town, and of Arlene and Arman Alcominar and Cora Lina in Laak, all in Compostela Valley province; Pedro Pandagay in Mabini, Danilo Nadal and Edwin Catog in Pantukan, and Elias Pureza in San Isidro, all in Davao del Norte.

All the victims were members of peasant or indigenous people's organizations involved in campaigns for land and opposing the entry of large-scale mining and other extractive industries. These organizations have often been tagged rebel "legal fronts" by the military.

Cabales dared *Karapatan* Southern Mindanao's Jay Apiag to "man up" and present proof of military involvement in the murders of "confirm the notion that the existence of *Karapatan* is to support the CPP-NPA armed struggle by undermining the successful efforts of the government against the communist violent insurgency through all these baseless and unfounded allegations."

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Army calls NPA to free POWs

THE ARMY'S 10th Infantry Division (ID) has called on the communist groups to immediately release Sgt. Solaiman Calucop and PFC Samuel Garay who were abducted last Feb. 2 while the unilateral ceasefire was in effect.

Maj. Gen. Rafael Valencia, 10th ID commander, said there is no hindrance for the release of the two soldiers as there are no military operations being undertaken against the abductors.

"We believe that any group who is sincere in talking peace with the government should rectify the treachery committed by their armed group i.e. abducting soldiers while ceasefire is in effect," Valencia said. "Thus, this call for the immediate release of the two abducted soldiers."

Capt. Alexandre Cabales, acting chief of the division's Public Affairs Office, said that ever since the "treacherous abduction" by the New People's Army (NPA) in the midst of the unilateral ceasefire, the 10th ID has not conducted any offensive military operations against the abductors.

"This was done in order not to compromise the safety of the two soldiers and believing that they should be released unconditionally as their abduction was done by an armed group of a party involved in formal peace talks with the government and a ceasefire was still in effect," Cabales said.

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Death toll in Basilan clash rises to 8

The death toll on Monday's encounter between the military and suspected Abu Sayyaf Group members has climbed to eight.

"Last night, we received a report that the total number of those killed in the encounter was eight. Seven are Civilian Active Auxiliary (CAA) and the other one is a member of the Barangay Peacekeeping Action Team," Capt. Jo-ann Petinglay, Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom) told the Philippines News Agency on Tuesday.

Eleven others were also wounded, including six soldiers, she said.

Two military officials were among the wounded soldiers, she added.

Troops under the Army's 4th Special Forces were conducting a patrol when they chanced upon the suspected members of the Abu Sayyaf group. Three militiamen were instantly killed in the initial gunfight.

The succeeding firefight between the reinforcement troops and the retreating bandits left five more militiamen killed.

Petingaly said there are about 40 militiamen assigned to a special forces company.

"Our militiamen are for territorial defense, meaning they are also trained in accordance with military procedures," she said.

She said the militiamen, who are mostly natives of Basilan, are rendering duty on rotational basis.

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Army warns vs. extortion activities in Antique

The Philippine Army has urged businessmen or contractors in Antique to reject extortion demands from lawless elements, including the New People's Army (NPA) rebels.

Lieutenant Colonel Vener Morga, commander of the Philippine Army's 82nd Infantry Battalion, said the extortion activities happened in Guimaras and Northeastern Iloilo but as a precaution, he is also warning businessmen and contractors in Antique province. He said the NPA has presence in the towns of Hamtic, Sibalom and San Remigio.

Morga urged the public to help stop extortion activities by reporting such incident to the Armed Forces of the Philippines or the Philippine National Police.