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NEWS CLIPPINGS

13 April 2017


Thursday

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

13 April 2017






PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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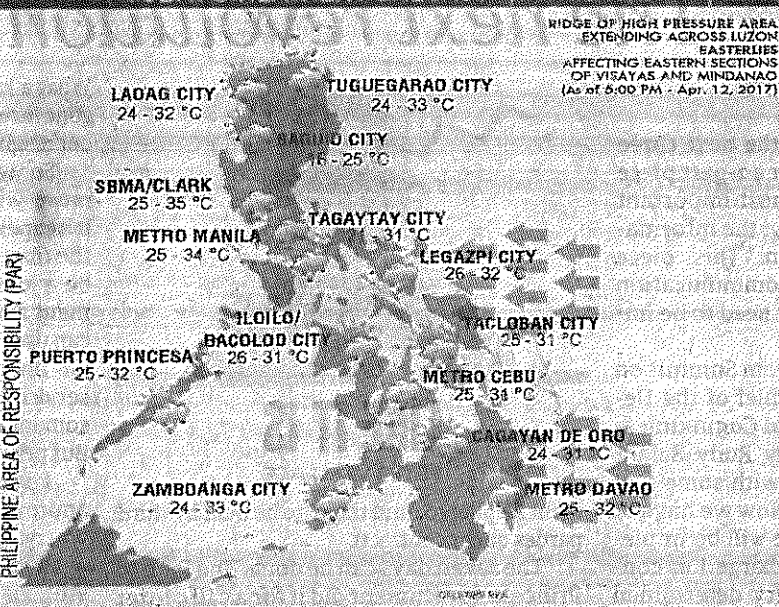
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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

BALANCED NEWS • FEARLESS VIEWS

TODAY'S WEATHER FORECAST | APRIL 13, 2017 | THURSDAY



PHILIPPINE AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY (PAR)

RIDGE OF HIGH PRESSURE AREA EXTENDING ACROSS LUZON EASTERLIES AFFECTING EASTERN SECTIONS OF VISAYAS AND MINDANAO (As of 5:00 PM - Apr. 12, 2017)




SUNRISE	SUNSET
5:44 AM	6:10 PM
MOONRISE	MOONSET
7:53 PM	7:04 AM
FULL MOON	LAST QUARTER
APR 11 2:08 AM	APR 10 5:57 PM
LOW TIDE	HIGH TIDE
MANILA SOUTH HARBOR	
6:10 PM	11:12 AM
0.02 Meter	0.79 Meter

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

Cloudy skies with rainshowers and/or thunderstorms

	APR 13	APR 14	APR 15	APR 16	APR 17	APR 18
METRO MANILA	24 - 35 °C	25 - 34 °C	21 - 30 °C	21 - 31 °C	24 - 30 °C	23 - 29 °C
TUGUEGARAO	25 - 34 °C	24 - 33 °C	25 - 31 °C	23 - 30 °C	24 - 31 °C	23 - 30 °C
LAOAG	24 - 32 °C	25 - 33 °C	25 - 32 °C	26 - 32 °C	23 - 31 °C	24 - 32 °C
BAGUIO	16 - 25 °C	17 - 24 °C	25 - 31 °C	24 - 29 °C	24 - 33 °C	24 - 31 °C
SBMA/CLARK	25 - 36 °C	24 - 35 °C	25 - 31 °C	24 - 30 °C	AIR 21 SAGUT KO, PADALA MO!	
TAGAYTAY	21 - 30 °C	21 - 31 °C	25 - 31 °C	23 - 30 °C	24 - 31 °C	23 - 30 °C
LEGAZPI	25 - 31 °C	23 - 30 °C	25 - 31 °C	23 - 30 °C	24 - 31 °C	23 - 30 °C
PUERTO PRINCESA	25 - 32 °C	26 - 32 °C	25 - 31 °C	24 - 29 °C	24 - 33 °C	24 - 31 °C
PUERTO PRINCESA	25 - 32 °C	26 - 32 °C	25 - 31 °C	24 - 29 °C	24 - 33 °C	24 - 31 °C
ILOILO/BACOLOD	25 - 31 °C	24 - 29 °C	25 - 31 °C	24 - 29 °C	24 - 33 °C	24 - 31 °C
TACLOBAN	24 - 30 °C	23 - 29 °C	25 - 31 °C	24 - 30 °C	24 - 33 °C	24 - 31 °C
CAGAYAN DE ORO	24 - 31 °C	23 - 30 °C	25 - 31 °C	24 - 29 °C	24 - 33 °C	24 - 31 °C
METRO DAVAO	23 - 31 °C	24 - 32 °C	25 - 31 °C	24 - 30 °C	24 - 33 °C	24 - 31 °C
ZAMBOANGA	24 - 33 °C	24 - 31 °C	25 - 31 °C	24 - 30 °C	24 - 33 °C	24 - 31 °C

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MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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Duterte proceeding to Bahrain early today, will sign 6 agreements

By **ROY C. MABASA**

MANAMA, Bahrain – President Duterte is scheduled to arrive here Wednesday night (early Thursday morning, Manila time) making him the first head of the Philippine government to visit this small Arab monarchy in the Persian Gulf in eight years.

Philippine Ambassador to Bahrain

Alfonso Ver said President Duterte will be meeting with King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, King of Bahrain. He will sign five to six agreements, including the establishment of a High Joint Commission which will be the mechanism for the entire range of relationship between Bahrain and the Philippines.

Also to be signed here are amendments to the double taxation and air

services agreements, a memorandum of understanding between the Foreign Service Institute of the Philippines and the Diplomatic Institute of the Bahrain Foreign Ministry, and a business investment agreement between private companies of the two countries.

The signing of these agreements, said Ver, will further strengthen the close relations between the **►5**

Duterte proceeding to Bahrain... ◀1

Philippines and Bahrain and reaffirms the Duterte administration's support and protection of the rights and welfare of overseas Filipino workers.

President Duterte will also attend a business forum at the Capital Club of Bahrain, the prime organization of company executives and bankers here. The Philippine economic team will present possible opportunities for economic exchanges, trade and investment, and tourism.

He will attend a Filipino community event to be held at the Khalifa Sports Stadium. "Thousands of Filipinos are eagerly awaiting to see and hear the President speak to them," Ver said. "They are anxious and excited to hear direct from him his programs, his plans for the workers here – for their welfare, for their protection – and what they can look forward to in the Philippines under his administration."

There are around 60,000 Filipino workers in Bahrain in practically all employment categories, said Ver. "And we want to nurture and elevate these overseas Filipino workers as partners. They're practically the best example of our best ambassadors here."

And although the Filipino community here, compared to Filipino communities in other countries, is small, it is always in the top 20 as sources of remittances. In 2014, they were No. 19

with over ₱8 billion in remittances, he said.

"You know, when we first heard news that the President was coming, sabik na sabik na sila," he said. "Everyone was so eager to meet him, as in the 2016 overseas voting, the President won a landslide victory here – 76 percent. Also, the turnout was the highest in the Middle East – 41 percent – and the 76 percent gave him an overwhelming and decisive victory."

One-stop center

The OFWs in Bahrain are grateful to President Duterte for the one-stop service center where OFWs could avail themselves of various government services in one place, thereby reducing transportation expenses and time spent on documentation formalities.

Leslie Arlen Garduque, a former employee turned entrepreneur here, said this is the first time in her more than a decade of being a migrant worker here that she has seen a President who reached out to the OFWs and implemented a one-stop service center.

Cristalyn Pastrana, another OFW working at the Sheraton Bahrain Hotel, said President Duterte is "already doing a great job." She added: "I just returned home last year shortly after he was elected President and I can tell you, and I consider that to be

the fastest and most orderly arrival and departure experience I had."

The one-stop service center removed all the problems in moving from one government agency to another to complete all the documents needed by an OFW, she said. "This may be a small thing, but for an OFW, it really made a big difference. These changes really mean a lot to us OFWs."

Rowena Mariano Musawi, who also works at the Sheraton Bahrain Hotel, said President Duterte's visit here means a great deal to Filipinos living and working in this Middle East state, "because it shows that he really cares and that he really wants to know the situation of his countrymen here how the Filipinos live in Bahrain and what is their status."

President Duterte will attend a Filipino community event to be held at the Khalifa Sports Stadium at 6 p.m. on Friday (11 p.m., Manila time).

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MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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A journey to Scarborough Shoal, South China Sea's 'Waterworld'

SCARBOROUGH SHOAL, South China Sea (Reuters) – For Filipino fishermen, a trip to the Scarborough Shoal in the South China Sea is an uncomfortable one at the best of times.

Hours working in the scorching sun, a monotonous diet of rice, spam, and fish, sometimes for weeks, all the while watching for tropical storms that could

wreck their modest wooden boats.

For a team of Reuters landlubbers making a reporting trip to the disputed shoal, there were other challenges – the lack of any toilets apart from the sea, sleeping wedged on the open deck, and most of all, the constant worry that the Chinese coastguard would try to drive us away.

►5

A journey to Scarborough... ◀1

Five years after China forcibly blockaded the rich waters from all but its own fishermen, the visit last week confirmed that Beijing had made concessions. Philippine vessels were allowed to fish again, and small boats could enter the lagoon.

But while an international panel last year ruled the shoal should be freely fished by all, China's coastguard was still clearly calling the shots.

Alerted to our presence by Chinese fishermen holding cameras and two-way radios, a coastguard vessel sped toward us before losing track of our boat in the mass of similar looking craft surrounding the prized fishing grounds.

Months in planning, the 200-km (124-mile) journey from the Philippine coast to the shoal took 18 hours in a narrow, 12-meter (40-foot) fishing boat.

Earlier trips had to be cancelled when storms made the crossing too dangerous. On this journey, a second vessel was hired to accompany us as a precaution against bad weather or breakdowns.

Space was limited on rudimentary wooden boats that are steadied by bamboo cane outriggers held together by reams of fishing line. There's no power, and no roof, just a tarpaulin sheet to shelter from

the rain and sun.

Enough water, canned meat, rice and fuel were brought to last a week in case bad weather stranded us at the shoal. For journalists, there's also cameras, tripods, life jackets, as well as a satellite phone and small generator to charge batteries.

Life in 'Waterworld'

Our boats approached the area at daybreak. It is an oasis in a desert of water, a huge flotilla of fishing vessels far away from home, lined up with bows pointing toward the bright green shoal.

In the distance, a Chinese coastguard ship guarded the mouth of the reef, preventing the larger boats from entering.

China and the Philippines have sparred for decades over ownership of this prized lagoon, but with relations improved, Filipino boats now anchor alongside Chinese vessels.

We watched as barefooted men in leggings, long-sleeves, caps and gloves trade freely with each other. Using hand signals, they swap cigarettes or fish, in scenes reminiscent of "Waterworld," the 1995 Kevin Costner film, where polar ice caps have melted and post-apocalyptic tribes live on boats.

We joined fishermen riding small boats over the damaged coral wall of the lagoon, careful to

avoid disrupting men inside who cast nets or spear for fish. Interviews were conducted with masked divers treading water, and we snorkel over the reef with a waterproof camera, checking out the coral and sealife.

The Chinese boats are robust, and luxurious compared with those of the Filipinos, some of which are barely more than rafts.

Clothes and drying fish were hung from the ropes that hold these craft together, the smell overpowered by diesel fumes. Makeshift wire cages of live lobsters trailed behind.

For many Filipinos, trips to Scarborough are swift, seizing what they can during what many fear may only be a temporary truce.

But some stay for months, selling their catch to bigger boats, and tapping new arrivals for fresh supplies to sustain them a few days longer.

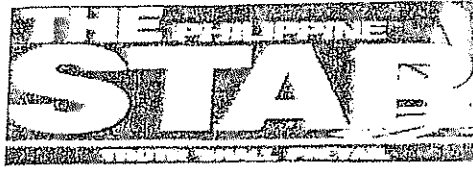
Beijing maintains it has the right to control the shoal, in defiance of the Permanent Court of Arbitration which last year deemed Scarborough a traditional fishing ground for "many nationalities."

China's foreign ministry said this week Scarborough was "an inherent part of Chinese territory" and the coastguard was there to administer fishing and preserve the peace and tranquility.

The Filipinos cooperate, but remain wary.

"They're not here to protect us," said fishermen Vicente Palawan. "Not so long ago, they were water-cannoning us."

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Abu hostage killer slain

By JAIME LAUDE

One of the six Abu Sayyaf terrorists killed in a gun battle with security forces on Tuesday in Bohol was a commander and spokesman for the terror group and had taken part in the kidnapping and beheading of two Canadians and a German in the past year.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) confirmed yesterday the death of Maumar Askali, alias Abu Rami, in clashes with soldiers and policemen in Sitio Ilaya, Barangay Napo in Inabanga, Bohol last Tuesday.

"First, we have sources inside that initially told us that Abu Rami was among those killed during the encounter and secondly, we compared the picture of Abu Rami to the picture of slain Abu Sayyaf there in Inabanga and they resembled 99 percent," AFP chief Gen. Eduardo Año said in a press briefing at Camp Aguinaldo.

Año said Askali's death was a big blow to the Abu Sayyaf as the slain militant had been a zealous commander and spokesman, and a ruthless ransom negotiator.

"If they have further plans to

Turn to Page 2



Screen grab from a video released by the Abu Sayyaf in 2015 shows the bandits surrounding their hostages - two Canadians, a Norwegian and a Filipina. Inset shows an undated photo of Maumar Askali, alias Abu Rami, a key Abu Sayyaf commander who was blamed for the beheading of the foreigners and was apparently attempting another kidnapping mission in Bohol.

AP

Abu From Page 1

kidnap innocent people somewhere, they will now have to think twice," he said.

It was Askali's group which snatched Canadians Robert Hall and John Ridsdel along with Norwegian Kjartan Sekkingstad and their Filipina companion, Marites Flor, from the island resort of Samal in Davao del Norte on Sept. 21, 2015.

Askali, according to Año, was around when his group executed the two Canadians after the family and the government failed to deliver ransom.

The slain terrorist also led the kidnapping of German national Juergen Kantner and his wife Sabine Merz while the two were sailing on a yacht in the waters of Sabah in November last year. Merz was reportedly killed trying to fight off their kidnapers.

Askali's men executed Kantner last February, also for failure to pay ransom.

"He has the capabilities of slain Abu Sayyaf leader Abu Sabaya. He was touted as the next in line to Hapilon or Sahiron of Sulu, being the staunchest advocates of Daesh," Año said, referring to another name of the Islamic State (IS).

Askali had received bomb-making training from Malaysian Zulkifli bin Hir, or Marwan, a top Southeast Asia militant leader who was killed in 2015, according to a police profile.

It was Abu Sayyaf's first known attempt to carry out kidnappings deep in the central Philippine heartland, far from the group's jungle lairs in the southern provinces of Sulu and Basilan.

While the bold kidnapping attempt appears to have been foiled, the militants' success in penetrating the bustling region of beach resorts and other popular attractions could raise concern among tourists and businessmen.

Bohol island lies about 640

kilometers southeast of Manila and is about an hour by boat from Cebu province, a trade and tourism center which has hosted some of the meetings of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

The AFP chief also said the situation in Inabanga is back to normal, although soldiers and policemen are still pursuing the remaining Abu Sayyaf members.

He also belied reports that the military had to dispatch its elite Light Reaction Company (LRC) and elements of the Naval Special Operations Group (Navsog) to Bohol in response to the presence of a big number of Abu Sayyaf in Inabanga.

There were reports soldiers from the 47th Infantry Battalion, while checking on the landing of unidentified armed men on three pump boats in Napo river, encountered some 60 to 70 bandits from Sulu.

"As of our count, actually 11 of them landed in Bohol from Sulu. They took off from Indanan and later reached Inabanga and then we had the encounters. We killed six. So there are still about five that we are tracking down," Año said.

Año said he could only surmise that the group was in Bohol in preparation for another kidnapping operation during the Holy Week.

The bandits, he said, need money after failing to get ransom from the families of their executed Canadian and German hostages.

He also dismissed reports that the group could be plotting to the sabotage the scheduled ASEAN ministerial meeting in Panglao next week.

"They are in dire need of money and they might be in Bohol to acclimatize in the area while targeting as many hostages," Año said, adding the three pump boats used by the

55 Local: 5285, 5295

bandits could accommodate five passengers each

Balik Islam

Some members of the Balik Islam or Muslim converts in the area, Año said, acted as the bandits' contacts as there was no information that the terror group had deployed an advance party to scout for targets.

These members of the Balik Islam are now being investigated for their possible role in the thwarted kidnap opera-

who works for a gravel and sand hauling enterprise near the river, said he saw three unfamiliar motorized boats cruising the river on Monday.

He said on each boat were three men whom he had thought were tourists.

Security forces have cleared the three houses occupied by the terrorists in last Tuesday's fighting that also killed Army 2Lt Estelito Saldua, Sgt. John Dexter Duero, Cpl. Melijune Cajaban, all of the 47th In-

crossed the sea border with Malaysia on powerful speedboats and kidnapped scores of foreign tourists in past years, reflecting their growing capability and desperation for money.

In 2001, they sailed as far as western Palawan province, where they seized 20 people, including three Americans, from a resort.

President Duterte has ordered troops to destroy the extremists and has threatened to declare martial law in the country's south if the threat posed by the Abu Sayyaf and other extremist groups aligned with the IS group gets out of control.

The militants are still holding at least 29 captives in Sulu's jungles, many of them foreign tugboat and cargo ship crewmen seized in the seas surrounded by southern Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia.

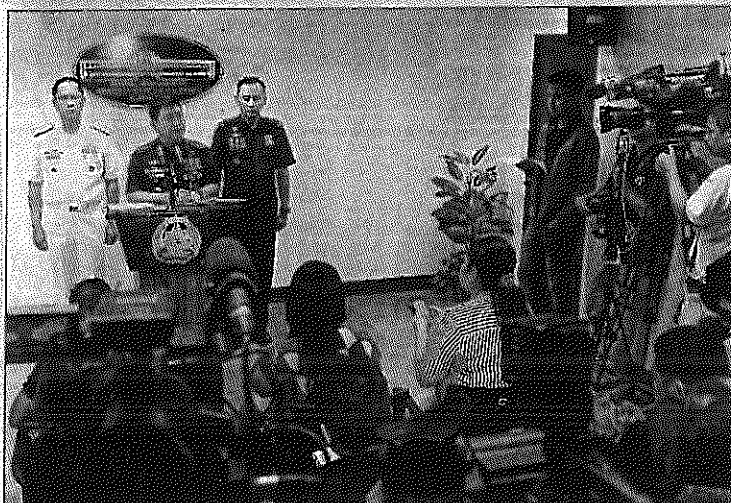
Westmincom chief Lt. Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr. meanwhile, announced the surrender of Abu Sayyaf members Berong Sariol alias Boy Master, and Ben Saudi Dambong Sariol alias Boy Pangit in Tawi-Tawi as offensives against the terror group continued.

The two surrendered to the troops under the Joint Task Force Tawi-Tawi in Barangay Sanga-Sanga, Bongao.

In Zamboanga City, an Abu Sayyaf member was killed on Monday after he shot it out with policemen who caught him and several others using drugs inside a house in a coastal village. Police arrested his eight companions.

Police Chief Insp. Elmer Solon, Station 4 commander, identified the slain Abu Sayyaf member as Matiling Addusi, a henchman of Abu Sayyaf leader Alhabsy Misaya. Also killed in the operation was PO3 Zaide Tutuan.

Reports said the police were on foot patrol when they were informed about the activity of Addusi's group. – Roel Pareño, Freeman, AP



AFP chief Gen. Eduardo Año holds a press conference at the AFP headquarters in Quezon City yesterday.

EPA

tion

Año declined to discuss details of the investigation or identify the Balik Islam members considered as persons of interest.

On reports that one of the Balik Islam members was seen escorting the Abu Sayyaf bandits following their landing, Año said the individual may have already joined the remaining five bandits in their escape.

Inabanga resident Marina Melloria, 51, said a relative of her husband named Joselito Melloria is married to an unnamed Muslim woman. She said Joselito had reportedly received unidentified visitors in his house near the river three times in the past.

A certain Jose Genosis, 56,

fantry Battalion, and P02 Rey Anthony Nazareno, of the local police.

Air Force helicopters bombed the area before the ground assault.

"We mourn the loss of our four members of the uniformed services, including a very young officer," said Año, referring to the fallen Saldua, a graduate of the Philippine Military Academy Class of 2015.

"I congratulate our troops and law enforcers for a job well done. I also pass on our sincerest condolences to the families of our heroes who made the ultimate sacrifice."

He said the remains of the bandits were accounted for and four high-powered firearms were recovered.

Abu Sayyaf militants have

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INQUIRER

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Troops kill Abu who beheaded foreigners

By Cynthia D. Balana and Julie S. Alipala
@Team Inquirer

A leader of the Abu Sayyaf group who was directly involved in the kidnapping and beheading of Canadian and German nationals was among the bandits killed by security forces in a clash in Bohol province on Tuesday, the military chief said on Wednesday.

Muammar Askali, who used the nom de guerre Abu Rami, was one of six Abu Sayyaf bandits killed by soldiers and policemen in a daylong gun battle in Napo village, Inabanga town, Bohol, on Tuesday, according to Gen. Eduardo Año, chief of staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

Three soldiers and a policeman were killed in the fighting.

The military has recovered the body of Rami, a former spokesperson for the Abu Sayyaf, a brutal bandit group notorious for bombing attacks, extortion, kidnappings for ransom and beheadings of foreign hostages in Mindanao.

Año said troops took the picture of Rami after his death and that captured Abu Sayyaf bandits identified Rami.

Government in control

The killing of Rami provided confirmation that the intruders in Inabanga were Abu Sayyaf bandits and indicated that the brutal group was now operating far from its lairs in Basilan and Sulu provinces.

Malacañang on Wednesday called for calm, following re-

ports of Abu Sayyaf presence in Bohol in Central Visayas.

Presidential spokesperson Ernesto Abella said the military and the police were on top of the situation.

"The public should have no cause for alarm, as the situation is contained and our security forces are in control. The government is exerting all efforts to maintain peace and order," Abella said.

Notorious

Speaking in a news briefing at the military headquarters in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, Año described Rami as "a very notorious Abu Sayyaf leader" responsible for several atrocities.

Rami's group beheaded Canadian John Ridsdel on April 25, 2016, and Canadian Robert Hall on June 13, 2016, and elderly German national Jürgen Gustav Kantner on Feb. 26 after the bandits failed to get millions of dollars in ransom.

All the killings took place in the southern province of Sulu, stronghold of the Abu Sayyaf, some of whose leaders have pledged allegiance to the Islamic State (IS) group of jihadists in Iraq and Syria.

Año said Rami had been seen as one of future leaders of an Abu Sayyaf group that could be affiliated with IS.

"He was trying to make a name for himself, trying to arrange a career that could replace (Abu Sayyaf leader Radulan) Sahiron," Año said.

The military in Sulu confirmed that Rami was one of the Abu Sayyaf bandits killed by government forces in Bohol.

Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, commander of the military's



Muammar Askali, aka Abu Rami -AFP

Joint Task Group Sulu, told the Inquirer on Wednesday that Rami and his group were monitored leaving Sulu on Thursday last week

'Left for safer place'

"He and his followers left Sulu for a safer place, but it appears that there's no safe place for the Abu Sayyaf anymore," Sobejana said.

An Inquirer source said military intelligence had noted the absence of Rami and Alhabshi Misaya, another Abu Sayyaf leader, from Sulu following clashes between government forces and the bandits in recent weeks.

Intelligence reports indicated that Rami's group moved to Bohol to link up with Alden Yusup, an Abu Sayyaf leader operating on the Central Visayan island, the source said.

The source said Rami's group left Sulu from Tongkil

town on Mamanok Island

"They went to Bohol using two fishing pump boats and pretended to be fishermen," the source said

Targeting foreign tourists

Rami's group, the source said, planned to kidnap foreign tourists in Loboc, a town in Bohol popular for lunch cruises on a river and sightings of the tarsier, the world's smallest primate, and in Panglao, a dive site off the main Bohol island popular among Western divers.

Año said Rami's group planned to strike during the Lenten season, during which tourists flocked to Bohol.

Chief Supt. Noli Talino, Central Visayas police director, said authorities were not sure how many men were in Rami's group when it entered Napo.

According to accounts of villagers, however, there were at least 10 gunmen who came in three pump boats.

The group entered Inabanga on Monday night, sailing up the Inabanga River to Napo, where residents, alarmed at the unusual make of the boats, alerted the authorities.

Government forces attacked the gunmen early Tuesday. The gunmen took cover in three houses as they traded gunfire with the soldiers and policemen.

The security forces seized control of two of the houses, driving the gunmen to the third house or to the bushes, where Philippine Air Force gunships hit them with bombs in the afternoon.

Six of the gunmen, including Rami, were killed in the fighting and airstrikes.

Military reinforcements arrived on Wednesday to finish the operation, going after the fleeing remnants of Rami's group.

On the run

Año said the five remaining gunmen had fled an overnight seige.

"They are on the run. They have left their belongings [behind]," Año said.

"We already have leads on the direction of their escape. They cannot fight as a potent force like before. They are all running for their lives," he said.

'Back to normal'

Año said the situation in Bohol, far from the Abu Sayyaf's island strongholds in the south, was now "back to normal," even as the military mourned the loss of three soldiers.

He identified the slain soldiers, 2nd Lt. Estelito Saldua, Sgt. John Dexter Duero and Cpl. Miljune Cajaban, all from the 47th Infantry Battalion.

Año said another soldier was wounded in the fighting, but was out of danger.

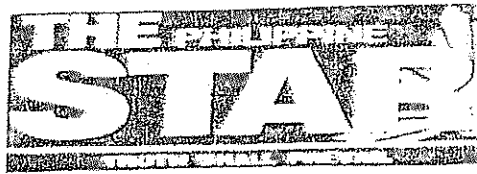
The identity of the slain police officer was not immediately available.

Año also announced the surrender of 11 Abu Sayyaf bandits, including two subleaders, in Sangasanga, Tawi-Tawi, on Tuesday.

The bandits, who identified Rami after his death, surrendered to Joint Task Force Tawi-Tawi, under the command of Brig. Gen. Custodio Parcon, a Medal of Valor awardee. —WITH

REPORTS FROM LEILA B. SALAVERRIA, LEO UDTOHAN, NESTLE SEMILLA, ADOR MAYOL, AP, AFP AND REUTERS INQ

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Palace allays fears of public, tourists in Bohol

By CHRISTINA MENDEZ

There is no need for tourists or Lenten travelers to cancel their trips to Bohol as security forces have contained threats from the Abu Sayyaf

terror group, presidential spokesman Ernie Abella said yesterday in Saudi Arabia.

But even as he allayed concerns over possible terror activities, Abella advised the public to remain vigilant.

Abella was with President Duterte in Saudi Arabia, the first leg of the Chief Executive's three-nation Middle East tour.

"The public should have no cause for alarm as the situation is contained

and our security forces are in control. The government is exerting all efforts to maintain peace and order," he said.

"We encourage everyone to keep calm but remain alert and vigilant and

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Palace

From Page 1

to report to authorities information on any possible threat to public safety," he added.

Six of 10 Abu Sayyaf terrorists who slipped under cover of darkness into the remote town of Inabanga were killed on Tuesday in a gun battle with soldiers and policemen.

One of the fatalities was Abu Sayyaf commander Moammar Askali, who had taken part in the kidnapping and beheading of two Canadians and a German.

The clash last Tuesday also killed three soldiers and a policeman.

"The Palace commends the timely action of our military and police that thwarted the evil plans of some armed lawless elements to sow fear and terror in the province of Bohol," Abella said.

The Palace attributed the authorities' timely response to the Abu Sayyaf threat to vigilance and cooperation of local communities.

"One officer, two soldiers and a policeman paid the ultimate sacrifice in the performance of their duty to serve and protect our people. They are true heroes," Abella said.

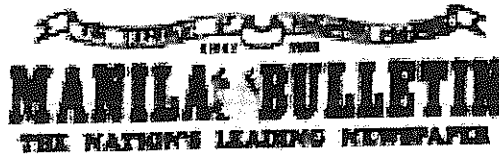
"We salute their gallantry as we also assure their families that they will be provided all the necessary assistance from the government," he added.

The commander of the Army unit that led the firefight with the Abu Sayyaf in Bohol said it was now business as usual in the province.

But Maj. Gen. Jon Aying, commander of the Army's 3rd Infantry Division, said people should remain vigilant as other members of the terror group were on the run after Tuesday's encounter.

- Gilbert Bayoran

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Military asks NPA to release two soldiers this Holy Week

By JOSEPH JUBELAG

GENERAL SANTOS CITY – Military authorities here expressed optimism that the New People's Army (NPA) will set free before Easter Sunday two Army soldiers who have been held captive by the communist rebels for more than two months in Columbio, Sultan Kudarat.

Col. Tyne Banas, 1002nd Army Brigade commander, said the NPA local command should release the two captives—Sgt. Solaiman Calocop and Pfc. Samuel Garay – in compliance with the joint interim ceasefire agreement signed by peace negotiators of the government and the Communist group last April 6 in Noordwijk, The Netherlands.

He said under the agreement, the NPA, armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the National Democratic Front (NDF), will release the captured soldiers this Holy Week.

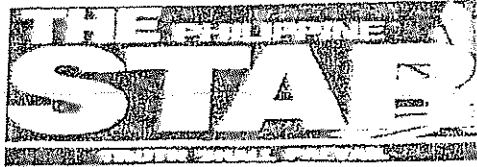
Garay and Calocop, both assigned with the 39th Infantry Battalion, were seized by NPA rebels belonging to Guerilla Front 72, while riding a motorcycle in a remote village in Barangay Telefas, Columbio Sultan Kudarat last February 2.

Columbio town Myor Amirh Musall, who heads a local crisis committee, is negotiating for the release of the two captives.

Banas said the NPA rebels should immediately release the two captured soldiers as a gesture that they really want to pursue peace initiatives with the government.

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SHOOTING STRAIGHT

BOBIT S. AVILA

About that encounter with the ASG in Bohol

It's Holy Thursday and I usually write only religious articles especially that we are now observing Holy Week when the Catholic faithful is exhorted to commune with God and leave all secular work behind and nourish his soul, after all, we are only asked to do so in this one Holy Week. Unfortunately, there were untoward events that happened recently in the Island of Bohol that we need to write about.



In last Tuesday's column we published the US embassy travel advisory or warning to its citizens not to travel to Central Visayas because they have "unsubstantiated" reports that a potential kidnapping group may cause terror in either Cebu or Bohol. Mind you, we've have had many travel advisories issued by foreign embassies but we usually take them with a grain of salt because usually, nothing untoward happens. Yet we published that US embassy travel advisory and requested our fellow Cebuanos to be on the alert this Holy Week when Filipinos would troop to the bus terminals, seaports or airports to return to their home province.

Unfortunately, this time around the US embassy's travel advisory was right on the nail when early dawn last Tuesday four government soldiers and five alleged Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) rebels were killed in an encounter in Sitio Ibaya, Barangay Napo in Inabanga town, Bohol. According to reports the ASG is led by a certain Abu Rami whom we have not heard before.

The ASG apparently used fast running "Kumpits" which they used to sail from either Basilan or Sulu and right into the Inabanga River, moving upwards to some 10 kilometers inland. Lt. Dodie Belloga, commander of the 47th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army based in Bohol disclosed in a presscon 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.

This brings us to ask this million-peso question, did the Philippine Navy or Coast Guard not get the same intelligence report? I mean if they got this same intelligence report, they could have patrolled the seas between Mindanao and Bohol or the Cebu Straits and they could have intercepted those fast running Kumpits and it would have been the end of the ASG right there. But since the Philippine Navy or Coast Guard was not on the alert, the ASG was able to move inland into Bohol via the Inabanga River.

I salute Bohol Governor Edgar Chatto and Mayor Jumamoy of Inabanga, Bohol for immediately ordering the evacuation of civilians in the area where the ASG was located so they would not get in the middle of the firefight between government troops and the ASG or worse, either they get kidnapped or used as human shields, which could complicate things for the military. The 47th Infantry Battalion conducted hot pursuit operations well into the evening of Tuesday with the Philippine Air Force gunships conducting aerial support for the ground troops.

What the ASG does not know is that the terrain in Bohol is not the same as what they have in Basilan or in Jolo, which is heavily forested. In short the ASG cannot seek refuge in places like Inabanga because it is not forested. Also, the ASG doesn't know that Inabanga is just a five-minute helicopter flight from the Mactan Airbase. So when aerial support is requested, helicopter gunships can immediately respond to the ground troops and conduct suppression fire on the ASG rebels. The New People's Army (NPA) found this out, which is why Bohol was declared insurgency free.

I have no doubt that this incident would damage whatever gains in tourism Bohol has earned because tourists have found out how peaceful Bohol is. If the US embassy had the intelligence that a kidnapping group was on its way to attack Bohol or Cebu, it just made me wonder why this Intel report only alerted the 47th Infantry Battalion, but not the Philippine Navy or the Coast Guard? Surely, the Navy or Coast Guard already knew that the ASG would be using Kumpits in trying to reach Bohol. So why didn't they patrol the seas between Mindanao and Bohol? What good is it for the Filipino people that the Navy and Coast Guard received new vessels, which they cannot use in the West Philippine Sea or Benham Rise against China?

I'm not being harsh with the Navy or Coast Guard, but if Lt. Dodie Belloga, commander of the 47th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army was able to use that intelligence report and moved quickly to intercept the ASG where four of his men got killed in the initial firefight, that encounter could have been avoided if the Navy or Coast Guard were able to intercept the ASG while they were still in the high seas on their way to Bohol.

Unfortunately not all Armed Services of the Phil-

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ippine government take seriously those travel advisories. While this incident maybe an isolated one, however the ASG has proven that they are far from being vanquished and can conduct an operation far from their bases in Basilan or in Sulu.

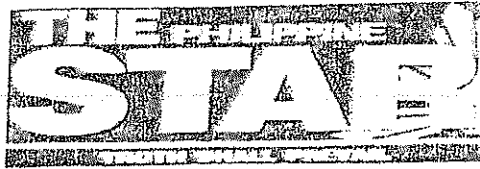
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FIRST PERSON

ALEX MAGNO

Expeditionary

Ten armed men sailed up the quiet river to the peaceful town of Inabanga in Bohol. As of this writing six of them are dead, including the alleged leader of the band.



Apparently, the Abu Sayyaf unit had a daring plan to kidnap tourists way beyond their usual theater of operations. This was going to be a daring raid, undertaken during what is normally a tourist intensive season. The target could have been Mactan, which is just an hour away by small boat.

The man leading the unit reportedly participated in that daring raid on a Samal Island resort where Canadians and Germans were taken hostage. Muammar Askali alias Abu Ramil is said to be among the more colorful commanders of the bandit group. He is apparently also among the more audacious.

Although we are not told the full story, the dispatch of a bandit unit was detected days before. This is the reason why several embassies issued advisories to their nationals, warning of danger in Cebu and Bohol. We do not know why this expeditionary force was not intercepted at sea.

At any rate, the bandit group had already sailed upriver when detected by residents. Soldiers and policemen were quickly deployed to confront the armed unit.

Evidently, the bandits were not only heavily armed. They were combat-tested as well. Three soldiers and a policeman were killed in the initial skirmish. Among the government casualties was a freshly commissioned officer.

There are many theories about why the Abu Sayyaf ventured to Bohol this time. One says the pickings have become lean as tourists have avoided Western Mindanao. Another theory says the bandits, facing intense pressure from sustained military offensives in Sulu and Basilan, are attempting to outflank the government forces and hit a basically soft target.

Recall that over a decade ago the same bandit group conducted a raid on Dos Palmas resort in Puerto Princesa. Samal Island, Puerto Princesa and Bohol are nearly equidistant from Sulu. All are accessible to the fast boats the bandits use.

The bandits also raided nearby Malaysian and Indonesian tourist resorts for hostages. More intensive joint patrols could have made raids across the common border less attractive. That is the peril this attempted raid on Bohol signals.

Taking hostages is virtually the only way for this bandit group to raise funds to support itself. The poor Indonesian fishermen they took hostage apparently yielded little by way of ransom. They need to develop the capacity to reach out farther to find richer hostages. Bohol, on hindsight, was ideal hunting ground for the bandits.

There are drawbacks for the bandits, however. The local populations in areas such as Bohol are not at all sympathetic to the bandits. We saw how residents of Inabanga quickly reported sightings of the armed group sailing upriver.

The bandits must have scouted the area before mounting their expedition. They were able to find a suitable place to establish camp the same day they landed. Police investigation will probably tell us later if the bandits used local contacts to set up their raid.

The AFP has a rather hopeful reading of the situation. AFP chief Eduardo Ano notes that the Abu Sayyaf group has been attempting to cross from Sulu to Basilan but have been prevented from doing so by heavy military patrolling. They could not shift operations to central Mindanao because, being Tausug, they will find little support there. Basically trapped in Sulu, the bandits face a grueling war of attrition mounted by the military.

The raid on Bohol, by the AFP's reading, is like a hand reaching out from the grave. It is a desperate attempt by the Abu Sayyaf to raise money for their operations as well as extend the scope of their threat.

We surely hope the AFP's reading of the status of this bandit group is true. If the AFP is wrong, then the Abu Sayyaf becomes a serious menace to the rich tourist stomping grounds in the Visayas. That is not a scenario to be relished.

Besides taking hostages, the Abu Sayyaf could mount bombing attacks further afield. Bombing attacks, however, will produce no revenue for the bandits. At this point, it seems they need money more than propaganda.

The Abu Sayyafs are imaginably seriously depleted. It has been weeks now since military offensives kept them on the run. This was since the bandits, unable to wring ransoms, decided to behead a German hostage. With the bandit group constantly on the run, hostages of lesser value to them have been abandoned on the trail.

It is hard to imagine how bandits nearly reduced to stragglers could put together another long-distance adventure such as the flustered Bohol operation. They would have to find another commander as capable as Abu Rami. They will have to assemble a fleet of fast craft and try to slip out of Sulu undetected.

By now, the bandits must have realized there are electronic eyes on them. They could not send out their boats to sea without being detected. They will just have to keep running around in small units, hoping to outlast the military offensive.

We should get a full account of the aborted Inabanga operation. The site they chose is too far from tourist areas in Bohol Island. It is a site likely dictated by the availability of local contacts more than anything else. This does not seem an operation easily duplicated.

★

13 April 2017

INQUIRER

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Fire Lorenzana and Esperon next

If President Digong plans to fire more Cabinet members after Interior Secretary Mike Sueno, he should axe Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana and National Secretary Adviser Hermogenes Esperon next.

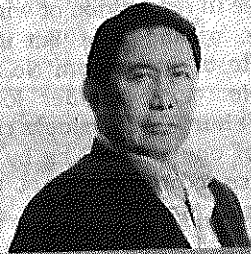
Although not accused of corruption like Sueno, Lorenzana and Esperon are very incompetent.

They did not know beforehand the attack on the island province of Bohol, a tourist destination, by the Abu Sayyaf group.

A firefight between government troops and the Abu Sayyaf has been ongoing in the coastal town of Inabanga since Tuesday, resulting in many deaths on both sides.

The officials should have taken heed of the advisories issued by the United States and Australia to their citizens.

Apparently based on information given by their respective intelligence agencies, they



ON TARGET

RAMON TULFO

warned against visiting Central Visayas, including Bohol, because of threats from terror groups.

Our country's military intelligence should have known well in advance the Abu Sayyaf's plan to land in Bohol or other parts of Central Visayas.

If our military intelligence was just as efficient as those of the US and Australia, the bandits who rode in three boats would have been dead in the

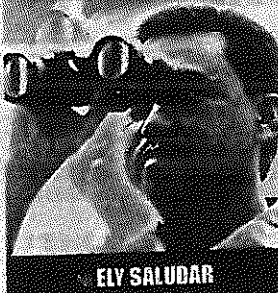
water before they could land.

B April 2017



Pahina. 3

Kuwentong Palasyo
LARGABISTO



Ely SALUDAR

AFP at PNP, nalusutan ng Abu Sayyaf

MALAKING katanungan kung paano nakarating sa Central Visayas ang bandidong Abu Sayyaf

Bagamat naging matagumpay ang AFP at PNP sa pakikipagsagupaan sa Sayyaf at napatay umano ang sub-leader nito na si Abu Rami ay nakapagdulot naman ng pangamba sa publiko ang pagkakalusot ng mga ito sa Central Visayas

Imbes na maubos ang Sayyaf na nakabase sa Mindanao partikular sa Sulu at Basilan ay nakapagtangka pa ito na manggulo at posibleng makapangidnap sa Central Visayas

Lumilitaw na nalusutan na naman ng Sayyaf ang AFP at PNP na nakalabas pa ng Mindanao area na kilalang kuta ng mga bandidong ito

Kampante ang publiko sa naunang pangako ng AFP na tatapusin daw ang problema sa Sayyaf hanggang sa Hunyo ng taong ito

Pero sa halip na matapos sa Hunyo ay nakaalpas pa sa Palawan ang Sayyaf at napunta sa Bohol

Mabilis din talaga at matalas ang US dahil natunugan agad nito ang presensiya ng Sayyaf kaya naman agad nakapagpalabas ng travel advisory na nagbibigay babala sa kanilang mamamayan na iwasang magtungo sa Central Visayas

Hindi pala dapat paniwalaan ang deklarasyon ng gobyerno na napulbos at nauubos na ang Sayyaf dahil sa matinding operasyon at pagtugis ng militar sa bandidong grupo

(Sundan sa page 4)

LARGABISTO ...
Samantala, inaasahan na grupo
mayroong epekto sa turismo sa Bohol at iba pang lugar sa Central Visayas dahil sa pangyayaring ito na pagpasok ng bandidong grupo
Inaasahan na dobleng pagsisikap ang gagawin ng AFP at PNP upang bantayan ang anumang banta sa seguridad ng publiko

13 April 2017

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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METRO CORNER

Gaming the 'peace talks'



By ERIK ESPINA

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte's shift in approach dealing with the CPP-NPA is a step in the right direction in setting the "barest conditionalities" before the resumption of "peace talks": 1) No extortion or collection of "Revolutionary Tax." In street parlance, "tong"; 2) Stopping ambushes on AFP and police units, the burning of vehicles, e.g., buses and private property 3) Communist groups should not claim any territory in the country – to counter NDF citing government forces "encroaching" into alleged rebel areas, 4) Release of hostages by the CPP

The DU30 strategy focuses the spotlight on the CPP-NPA's sincerity for keeping and achieving an enduring peace, pending validation of their willingness to observe terms set by the President. The government position – or call it "red line" – leaves no room for misinterpretation as it by defines the limits of government forbearance in this protracted process. This will

be a litmus test on the following questions. Is there any future to the talks as currently structured? Or is government actually being set up by hard-nosed ideologues of the "left," with artificial deadlines and intermittent ceasefires in the hostilities, but all strategically and tactically designed in their timeline for ultimate failure? For the nth time, what is the calibrated end-state of the CPP vis-à-vis a democratically elected government? Should government begin to reformulate policies and localize peace initiatives instead? Does the NDF control the CPP/NPA? Or should we demand a reversal of roles? The real administrators of the NPA, and the war, required to talk and negotiate directly with government.

If truth be told, long-drawn-out skirmishes benefit Communist armed and political revolution. While talk is better than war, it can never be the instrument for unbridled blood-letting at a time, place, and opportunity of the enemy's choosing, and over several decades. Such benevolence by previous administrations, is criminal and poses

the following: 1) It questions the resolve of government to enforce law and order 2) It questions its competence to put an end to the terrorist insurgency 3) It confirms the strategic cycle of "Talk, talk and fight, fight," as a working formula for the CPP strengthening armed and political fronts. The communists, true to form, are buying time and gaming the peace talks to its advantage, e.g., interim ceasefire? This is a play of words written in blood over the lives of our soldiers, policemen, their widows and orphans.

The latest pronouncements of the CPP Central Committee 2nd National Congress states: "The party program, reaffirms the necessity for waging armed revolution in order to counter the armed violence employed by US imperialists and the local reactionary ruling classes and end the oppressive and semi-colonial and semi-federal system."

So, should we expect, as I previously wrote, for tigers to change their stripes? I don't think so. It is what it is. Time for a reality check. The Maoist CPP will grab power from the barrel of the gun.

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SWIMMING AGAINST THE CURRENT

Other governance elements to put in place



By JESUS P. ESTANISLAO

IT may be easy to demand and give orders, but it is difficult to get substantive and meaningful results, unless other elements are put in place to help ensure that the desired outcomes get delivered. In the case of the Navy's 2nd and 3rd level units, it would have been difficult for them to come up with their respective support strategy maps, with corresponding performance scorecards, unless they were given clear guidance and useful assistance to come up with the "right stuff."

Commodore Bacordo continues: "To provide momentum and clearer guidance to all PN units, we needed to conduct leadership forums/seminars at all levels. The first of these leadership forums was conducted in May, 2009. CNLE now conducts 10 forums annually. It is now known as the PN Governance Forum and is conducted in Manila, while being broadcast in real time to all naval forces all over the country."

"There was also an absolute need to look at internal core processes

and to bring them up to modern standards. Thus, we had 'IMO standards certified', in addition, we wanted to 'establish PN certification standards,' and the Navy has now managed to have 14 PN office units 'ISO-certified.' The first ISO certification was obtained in February 2012 by the PN Finance Center: This constituted a real breakthrough result for the PN, with 13 other PN units following suit."

Another breakthrough result was the establishment and convening of the PN Board of Advisers. "This was created in 2009 with Dr. Jesus P. Estanislao as its first chairman. The board is composed of stakeholders occupying key positions in government, media, business sector, academe and civil society." It meets quarterly, and upon receiving the latest performance assessment reports, it provides advice and other suggestions for the PN FOIC to consider. It gives a varied and much richer perspective in looking at the different strategic issues that the Navy is regularly confronted with: It gives encouragement to units that are

meeting their performance targets, and it notes the red flags raised to those units that need to catch up in delivering performance relative to their targets.

Upon instance of the PN Board of Advisers, the Navy "conducted a study on the establishment of a PN Foundation or Trust Fund. Subsequently, the Support Your Navy Foundation was created in 2010, with the PN Board of Advisers serving as its trustees. Through this foundation, the civilian sector may contribute resources and other support mechanisms to help enable the PN attain its performance targets, as it pursues its different strategic objectives laid out in the PN Sail Plan."

Commdore Bacordo concludes: "What amazes me — in looking back to the initial November, 2006, workshop in Tagaytay, when we first sat down to consider the broad parameters of the PN Sail Plan — is how much the PN has actually accomplished. I recall writing all those "strategic initiatives" down, so full of hope, but not really believing that those "initiatives" would be imple-

mented and sustained. After all, we had many previous experiences in AFP and PN workshops, where we did so much planning, without actually seeing those plans come to fruition. But this time, with the PN Sail Plan for 2020, our hopes were realized and sustained. Let me give the credit to the successive Navy leadership, from 2006 to date, for adopting the PN

Strategic Sail Plan 2020 as our enterprise strategy."

And a final word: "Let me also give the credit to the Navy's roadmap, by which we charted our course towards the attainment of our vision, that by 2020, we shall be a strong and credible Navy that our maritime nation can be proud of. HOOYAAH!"

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ONLINE NEWS

13 APRIL 2017

www.pna.gov.ph

Clearing ops vs ASG enclave in Bohol ongoing, reinforcements now on ground

By Priam F. Nepomuceno

MANILA, April 12 (PNA) -- Government security forces are still conducting clearing operations in Sitio Ilaya, Barangay Napo, Inabanga town, Bohol where an estimated 60 Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) bandits have landed Monday night.

This was said by 3rd Infantry Division public affairs office chief Lt. Col. Ericson Rosana in a message to the PNA Wednesday.

"Clearing operations are still ongoing. The body count is still the same, five ASG dead, three soldiers and one police officer killed," he added.

And when asked what is keeping government forces from completely overrunning the ASG enclave, Rosana said the area is heavily "forested" making it difficult for troops to spot their targets.

As this develops, units from the Light Reaction Regiment, troopers from 83rd Special Action Company and Naval Special Operation Group arrived in Tagbilaran Airport to augment security personnel conducting clearing operations against the ASG.

They were aboard a Lockheed C-130 "Hercules" cargo plane with tail number 4704 which flew from Villamor Air Base, Pasay City.

These specialized troops arrived around 4:30 p.m. Around five ASG bandits, three soldiers and one police officer were killed in the 7 a.m. clash with the bandits who were earlier spotted aboard three pumpboats entering the riverside in Sitio Ilaya Monday night. (PNA)

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Military in Sulu shows Abu Rami's movements until fateful Bohol clash

General explains why he believes Rami is among the dead in Bohol and names other fallen Abu Sayyaf bandits

By: Julie S. Alipala - Reporter / @alipalajulieINQ

Inquirer Mindanao / 08:26 PM April 12, 2017

ZAMBOANGA CITY — The military in Sulu confirmed that Abu Sayyaf leader Muammar Askali alias Abu Rami was one of those killed in Inabanga, Bohol.

Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, commander of Joint Task Group Sulu, told the Philippine Daily Inquirer that they had monitored Askali and his group leaving Sulu on April 6.

"He and his followers left Sulu for a safer place, but it appears that there's no safe place for the Abu Sayyaf anymore," Sobejana said.

A Philippine Daily Inquirer source said government intelligence observed the "absence" of Askali and Alhabshi Misaya, another Abu Sayyaf leader, following the heavy clashes in the province the past weeks.

Askali's absence was strongly observed after the beheading of kidnap victim German national Gustav Jurgen Kantner on February 26, while there was no report on Misaya since April 8.

"Allegedly, Askali and Misaya disappeared in Sulu and reportedly went to an unknown direction using two speedboats," the source said.

The source added that government intelligence later got information that Askali's group went to Bohol to link up with Alden Yusup, an Abu Sayyaf sub-leader operating in that area.

The group allegedly was planning to kidnap tourists in Loboc and Panglao, both known for having foreign visitors

Askali's group met their end when villagers noticed the unusual design of their boats. The villagers reported their presence to authorities.

The source identified one of the slain bandits as Jubail Umar alias Umayr, a follower of slain regional terrorist Julkifli bin Hir alias Marwan who was killed in Mamasapano, Maguindanao two years ago.

The other slain bandits were Edimar Isnain, allegedly a trained bomber from Barangay Lab in Patikul, Sulu; Alpin Abbis Muharani, a relative of Sulu-based Abu Sayyaf leader Radulan Sahiron; Hajan Astig, also a relative Sahiron; and Husain Padog of Patikul, Sulu.

The source said the bandits left Sulu via Mamanok Island in Tongkil town.

"They went to Bohol using the two fishing pump boats and pretended to be fishermen," the source said. **SFM**

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House Speaker to push for tougher security measures in wake of Bohol clash

MANILA, April 12 (PNA) -- House of Representatives Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez has vowed to beef up security measures through major boosts in military and police spending in next year's national budget following Tuesday's firefight between government troops and suspected Abu Sayyaf bandits in Bohol province.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, Alvarez cited the need to step up security operations to ward off terror threats in major Philippine tourist spots, including Bohol.

He said the "threat of terrorism and criminality" could have dire consequences on the potential economic success of Philippine tourism, including job creation and income opportunities for Filipinos.

"The Bohol incident highlights the imperative of further reinforcing our security measures to safeguard top tourist destinations in the country from criminal and terrorist threats," he said.

Alvarez pledged to strengthen the defense capabilities and counterterrorism performance of police and military forces by including investments in the 2018 budget for essential infrastructure and equipment.

"For this purpose, I have requested the AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines), PNP (Philippine National Police), our Philippine Coast Guard and other law enforcement and national security agencies to determine the essential equipment and infrastructure to accomplish this all-important objective," he said.

"As Speaker of the House, I will make sure that these will be adequately funded under the 2018 national budget."

Alvarez also paid tribute to the three soldiers and one policeman killed in a gun battle against suspected Abu Sayyaf members in Inabanga, Bohol on Tuesday, resulting in the neutralization of at least five bandits.

"Our Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police deserve our praise and commendation for their vigilance and bravery in preventing the Abu Sayyaf Group from expanding its criminal operations in unleashing terror in the Visayas, particularly in the prime tourist destination, Bohol," Alvarez said.

"We salute the three gallant soldiers and a policeman who were killed in the line of duty to protect our people." Alvarez further assured that the families of the fallen troops will receive adequate assistance from the government.

"We assure our people that the House of Representatives will do all that is necessary to ensure that our military and law enforcement agencies will always be formidable, fully equipped, and adequately funded to secure our shores against any and all threats, and guarantee the protection not only of our citizenry, but of our visitors as well," he said. (PNA)

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Army installs new heads for its three key offices

Posted by Lui Claudio on April 12, 2017 at 12:32 PM

FORT BONIFACIO, Metro Manila – Three key army offices in the Philippine Army were installed with new leaders during a joint change of chiefs of office ceremony held here Monday, April 10, 2017.

The offices of the Army Internal Auditor, the Assistant Chief of Staff for Reservist and Retiree Affairs G9, and the Army Chief Public Affairs now have their new heads after the promotions and retirement of their former chiefs.

The Acting Army Internal Auditor Col. Edgar F. Nigos replaced Col. Jose Ely D. Alberto. Alberto has been promoted as the chief of the Office of the Defense Reforms of the Department of National Defense.

Nigos is a member of Philippine Military Academy (PMA) class of 1988. He has a master's degree in Management major in Public Administration. He also served as the commanding officer of the 84th Infantry Battalion of the 7th Infantry Division in 2012 to 2013. Prior to his post, he was formerly the Deputy Army Internal Auditor.

Assistant Chief of Staff for Reservist and Retiree Affairs Col. Alexis Noel C. Bravo replaced Col. Nicolas V. Pasion who will be retiring from the service on May 7, 2017.

Bravo is a member of the PMA class of 1990. He also has a master's degree in Public Management major in International Development and Security. He was the commander of the 72nd Infantry Battalion, 10th Infantry Division in 2013.

Lastly, Acting Army Chief of Public Affairs Lt. Col. Ray C. Tiongson replaced Col. Benjamin L. Hao. Hao has been promoted as the Chief of Staff of the Training and Doctrine Command of the Philippine Army based in Camp O'Donnell, Capas, Tarlac.

Tiongson is a member of the PMA class of 1997. He obtained a master's degree in Business Administration. Prior to his post, he was the Deputy Chief, Army Public Affairs. He also served as the chief of the Division Public Affairs Office of the 3rd Infantry Division from 2013 to 2016.

The joint change of chiefs of office ceremony was led by Maj. Gen. Robert M. Arevalo, Army Chief of Staff. Arevalo congratulated the newly appointed chiefs and wished all the best for the outgoing officers with their new assignments.

The officers, non-commissioned officers and civilian employees from the said offices stood as spectators during the event

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