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NEWS CLIPPINGS

16 April 2017

Sunday

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


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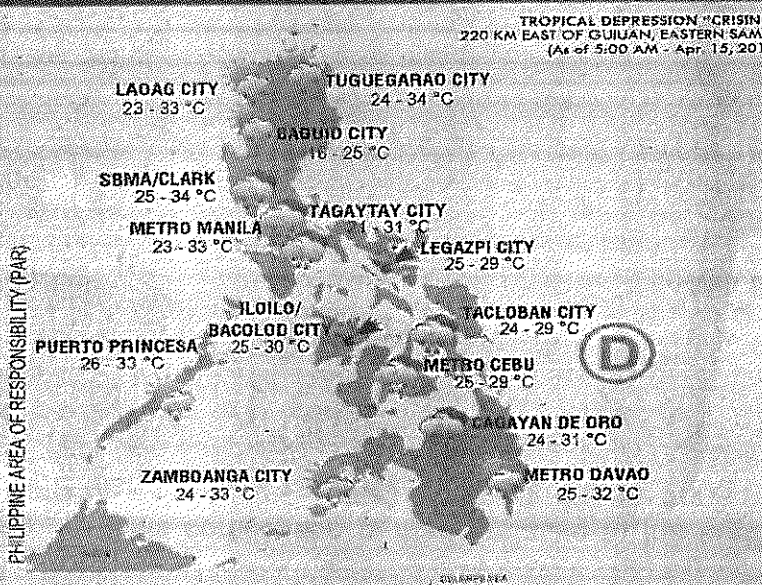












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BALANCED NEWS • FEARLESS VIEWS




TODAY'S WEATHER FORECAST | APRIL 16, 2017 | SUNDAY









































TROPICAL DEPRESSION "CRISING"
220 KM EAST OF GUIUAN, EASTERN SAMAR
(As of 5:00 AM - Apr. 15, 2017)




PHILIPPINE AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY (PAR)

SUNRISE	SUNSET
 5:42 AM	 6:10 PM
MOONRISE	MOONSET
 9:30 PM	 8:29 AM
FULL MOON	LAST QUARTER
 APR 11 2:08 AM	 APR 19 5:57 PM
LOW TIDE	HIGH TIDE
 8:38 PM -0.01 Meter	 12:30 PM 0.89 Meter




 Partly cloudy to at times cloudy with rainshowers and/or thunderstorms
 Cloudy skies with rainshowers and/or thunderstorms
 Rains with gusty winds

	APR 15	APR 16	APR 17	APR 18
METRO MANILA	 23 - 32 °C	 25 - 33 °C	 21 - 30 °C	 20 - 31 °C
TUGUEGARAO	 24 - 34 °C	 24 - 35 °C	 25 - 29 °C	 25 - 32 °C
LAOAG	 24 - 33 °C	 23 - 32 °C	 26 - 32 °C	 26 - 33 °C
BAGUIO	 17 - 25 °C	 16 - 25 °C	 25 - 29 °C	 26 - 31 °C
SBMA/CLARK	 24 - 33 °C	 25 - 34 °C	 24 - 30 °C	 25 - 32 °C
TAGAYTAY	 24 - 34 °C	 24 - 34 °C	 24 - 31 °C	 24 - 31 °C
LEGAZPI	 25 - 29 °C	 25 - 29 °C	 24 - 31 °C	 24 - 31 °C
PUERTO PRINCESA	 26 - 32 °C	 26 - 32 °C	 25 - 33 °C	 25 - 33 °C
ILOILO/BACOLOD	 25 - 29 °C	 26 - 31 °C	 24 - 34 °C	 24 - 34 °C
METRO CEBU	 24 - 30 °C	 25 - 32 °C	 24 - 31 °C	 24 - 31 °C

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SAGOT KO, PADALA MOY

16 April 2017



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Pyongyang

shows off military strength

Dictator Kim Jong-un dares US to make good threat of military strike vs North Korea nuke program

PYONGYANG—North Korea's military forces were massed in Pyongyang on Saturday for a show of strength by dictator Kim Jong-un as tensions mounted over his nuclear ambitions.

Hundreds of flatbed trucks packed with soldiers lined the banks of the Taedong River ahead of a parade through the North Korean capital.

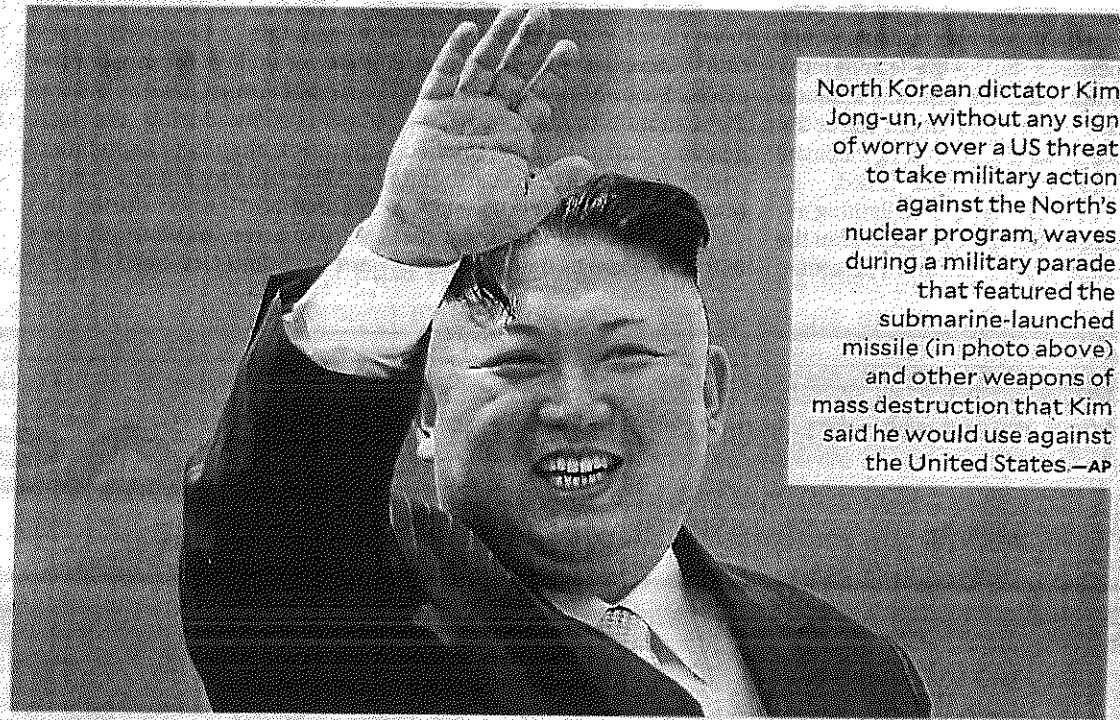
Ostensibly, the event was to mark the 105th anniversary of the birth of Kim's grandfather, the North's founder Kim Il-sung—a date known as the Day of the Sun in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the country's official name.

But it was also intended to send an unmistakable message to Washington, Seoul, Tokyo and other capitals about the isolated, nuclear-armed North's military might.

Pyongyang is under multiple sets of United Nations sanctions over its atomic and ballistic missile programs, and has ambitions to build a rocket capable of delivering a warhead to the US mainland—something US President Donald Trump has vowed "won't happen."

It has carried out five nuclear tests—two of them last year—and multiple missile launches, one of which saw three rockets come down in waters provocatively close to Japan last month.

Speculation that it could conduct a sixth blast in the com-



North Korean dictator Kim Jong-un, without any sign of worry over a US threat to take military action against the North's nuclear program, waves during a military parade that featured the submarine-launched missile (in photo above) and other weapons of mass destruction that Kim said he would use against the United States.—AP

ing days to coincide with the anniversary reached fever pitch, with specialist US website 38North describing the North's Punggye-ri test site as "primed and ready" and White House officials saying military options were "already being assessed."

US 'armada'

Trump has dispatched the aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson and an accompanying battle group to the Korean peninsula.

"We are sending an armada.

Very powerful," Trump told the Fox Business Network.

"He is doing the wrong thing," he added of Kim. "He's making a big mistake."

China, the North's sole major ally, and Russia have both urged restraint, with Beijing's foreign minister Wang Yi warning on Friday that "conflict could break out at any moment."

The North has reiterated its constant refrain that it is ready for "war" with the United States.

Its Army vowed on Friday a

"merciless" response to any US provocation but diplomats in Pyongyang were more sanguine, pointing out that the North raises its rhetoric every spring, when Washington and Seoul hold annual joint exercises that it views as preparations for invasion.

None of the North's five previous nuclear tests have taken place in the month of April.

New ICBM

In the past, the parade saw

Kim watch ranks of goose-stepping soldiers marching through Kim Il-sung Square in the center of Pyongyang, accompanied by tanks, missiles on trailers and other materiel.

Military specialists keep a close eye on such events for clues about developments in the North's capabilities.

Jeffrey Lewis, of the Middlebury Institute of International Studies, said he was looking out for "the possibility of a new ICBM (intercontinental ballistic missile)," adding: "There may be some surprises."

The 1950-53 Korean War ended in an armistice rather than a peace treaty and Pyongyang said it needed nuclear weapons to defend itself against a possible US invasion.

The US cruise missile strike on Syria vindicated its stance, it said last weekend.

According to diplomats, North Korean officials have described the US president as "unpredictable" and been unnerved by his comments and actions.

Pyongyang could use the parade as a show of strength in preference to a nuclear test, analysts said.

It wanted to send "a tough message to the United States in response to the Trump administration's recent rhetoric and the military steps the United States has taken," said Evans Revere of the Brookings Institu-

tion in Washington.

US threat

Another missile launch or nuclear test "can't be ruled out," he said, but the Syria strike and Washington's implied threats "may give Pyongyang some pause."

"A parade is a highly visible but nonkinetic way of showing off capabilities," he told Agence France-Presse (AFP).

The North was aiming its message at China as well as the United States, analysts said.

Beijing has made clear its frustration with Pyongyang's stubbornness but its priority remains preventing any instability on its doorstep, and it has been unnerved by the saber-rattling.

The state-run Global Times newspaper, which sometimes reflects the thinking of China's leadership, issued an unequivocal warning to Pyongyang in an editorial this week that it "should avoid making mistakes at this time."

Pyongyang was "upset with all of its neighbors," said Bruce Bennett of the Rand Organisation and Kim needs to "demonstrate defiance."

North Korean culture is that its leaders "are supposed to reign by power," he said. "He cannot back down without looking weak and thereby facing the prospect of a coup."—AFP

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Page. 3

PA sarge, 2 women collared in drug busts

By **JEFFREY C. TIANGCO**

SIX persons including a Philippine Army sergeant and two women were arrested in separate drug-bust operations in Taguig and Pasay Cities.

Arrested were Sgt Carlos Erne, Josephine Bajador, Reynaldo Bechayda, Benson Gierza all of Ranger St., Purok 1A, Barangay New Lower Bicutan, Taguig City; Aira Nunez, 37, and Ronald Navarra, 36, both of Barangay 145, Zone 16, Pasay City.

Police report showed that Erne, Bajador, Bechayda, and Gierza, were arrested at 1 a.m. in a buy-bust operation in the suspects' given address.

Police said a tip from an informant told police that the suspects were into drug peddling activities, prompting police to conduct surveillance operations.

After confirming the information, the law enforcers conducted a buy-bust operation that led to the arrest of the suspects.

Police said five plastic sachets containing suspected shabu, illegal drugs paraphernalia and P1,000 marked money were recovered from the suspects.

Pasay police, on the other hand, said Nunez and Navarra were arrested following a drug-bust operation inside their house.

Police said neighbors of the suspects informed police that they were into illegal drug activities, prompting the operation.

Police added that the suspects were caught in the act holding shabu session when arrested.

Meanwhile, operatives of Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) arrested four suspected illegal recruiters in Pasay City.

Report reaching Pasay police headquarters showed that the arrested suspects, who were taken to Camp Crame for investigation and proper filing of charges, managed to dupe some 25 persons of more than P1 million in exchange for a job deployment abroad.

The suspects, whose

identities were not immediately disclosed, allegedly recruited the complainants for jobs in New Zealand and Malaysia requiring them to pay P90,000 as placement fee and P40,000 for training and accommodation in a dairy farm in Baguio.

However, after paying the said amounts, the suspects failed to make good their promises of deployment for jobs abroad prompting the victims to file complaints.

In Makati City, police arrested Ben Richard Reyes, 28, of No. 11 St. West Rembo, at 11 p.m. for possession of a replica of .45 caliber pistol gun and a plastic sachet containing suspected shabu along West Rembo.

Police said they were on patrol when they spotted the suspect acting suspiciously, prompting them to accost him.

When frisked, a toy gun was found tucked in his right waist while a sachet of suspected illegal drugs was found in his right pants' pocket.

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THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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Gov't troops overrun NPA camp in Agusan del Sur

By **MIKE D. CRISMUNDO**

CAMP BANCASI, Butuan City —
Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP)

troops overran a New People's Army (NPA) encampment in the hinterland Mahagsay area, San Luis, Agusan del Sur on Maundy Thursday.

Capt. Jasper T. Gacayan, Civil Military Operations (CMO) Officer of the Army's 401st Infantry (Unity) Brigade yesterday said the seized NPA encampment had an estimated two-hectare area with 70 bunkers and outposts, make-shift huts and kitchen and guerilla listening posts.

"The NPA camp was captured when our troops from the Army's 26th Infantry battalion made a surprise attack on Maundy Thursday that lasted for almost 30 minutes," Gacayan said, in an exclusive interview with The Manila Bulletin.

He said that the camp belonged to guerilla-Front Committee 88 of the CPP-NPA North-Central Mindanao Regional Committee.

The camp can accommodate 70 to 80 persons, he said.

Aside from two NPAs killed during the gunbattle, about 10 other rebels were believed wounded as bloodstains were seen by the troops inside the camp, and on the escape route taken by the withdrawing rebels. Villagers said they also saw the fleeing rebels dragging their wounded comrades-in-arms, according to Gacayan.

The seized camp is about 40 kilome-

ters away from the town proper of San Luis in Agusan del Sur province.

"The recovery of the encampment was due to the villagers' request following the alleged forced revolutionary taxation imposed by the NPAs," Gacayan said.

Soldiers under Lt. Col. Rommel Pagayon also seized several war materials inside the camp, including a CZ 550 caliber .30 sniper rifle with a scope, 10 backpacks containing personal belongings, 34 sacks of rice, canned goods and assorted documents with high intelligence value, the 401st CMO Officer added.

During the operation, Col. Cristobal N. Zaragoza, commanding officer of the 401st Brigade, requested air support from the Tactical Operations group of the Philippine Air Force (PAF) Strike Wing to back up the ground forces of the 26th IB.

Maj. Gen. Benjamin G. Madrigal, commanding general of the Army's Northeastern and Northern Mindanao 4th Infantry (Diamond) Division (4th ID) congratulated the 26th IB troopers and thanked them for the sacrifices made on a Holy Week just to protect the communities from NPA threats and extortions.

He reminded the troopers to continue to pressure the terrorists but emphasized that they should welcome those who want to go back to the folds of the law and lead normal lives.

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AFP says Abu Sayyaf leader plans to surrender

ZAMBOANGA CITY (PNA) — A top military official disclosed that the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) one-armed senior leader Radullan Sahiron already has plans to surrender to the government.

“Radullan Sahiron is contemplating to surrender because he is old,” Lt. Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr., Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom) said.

Galvez told the Philippines News Agency that one of the conditions of Sahiron was for the government “not to turn him over to the U.S. government” when he surrenders.

Sahiron is the leading figurehead of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in the province of Sulu after most of the founding leaders of the ASG were killed.

The U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has set a \$1-million reward for the capture of Sahiron.

“We see that not only those in the lower ranks of the ASG are expressing their desire to surrender because they’re already feeling the heat of the military operation. And they also feel the sincerity of the President to accept people who wanted to surrender,” Galvez said.

Galvez said the military was already employing a “non-lethal” approach in ad-

ressing the problem of the Abu Sayyaf. Included in this approach is a plan to open a rehabilitation program for ex-ASG members.

He said they were replicating the approach from military counterparts in Indonesia and Malaysia.

Galvez said the same tactic was used in “decimating” the networks of the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI).

He said the rehabilitation for the Abu Sayyaf will not just be open to the least of its members.

“Even hardcore members are allowed to be rehabilitated. Alternative options are open to them. We might resolve the problem of the Abu Sayyaf Group peacefully,” he said.

“We know the story of the prodigal son. We should not close the door for those who want to have a new beginning,” Galvez said.

The total number of surrendered Abu Sayyaf members has reached 16, following the order of President Rodrigo Duterte to finish off the Abu Sayyaf in six-month period. The deadline will lapse on June 30.

There are over 40 Abu Sayyaf members who have been killed in the island provinces of Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi since January.

On Thursday, April 13, Galvez presented to the local media the 11 Abu Sayyaf bandits, including two sub-leaders, who surrendered to the government in Bongao, Tawi-Tawi.

Ben Saudi Sariol, one of the 11 surrenderers, said they decided to surrender to the military as the offensive against the Abu Sayyaf have intensified in recent months.

“We just want a peaceful life. We want our children to go to school, and earn a decent living. We feel much safer now,” Sariol said in Tausug dialect.

Ben, along with his father Berong Sariol and nine other relatives, surrendered to the troops under the Joint Task Force Tawi-Tawi at the Marine Barracks Domingo Deluana in Barangay Sanga-Sanga, Bongao, Tawi-Tawi on Tuesday night.

They also surrendered their firearms to the military.

“The rehabilitation of the ASG is open. We know there also people who are ready to surrender,” Galvez said.

Galvez said the military was coordinating with other government agencies to come up with a program to rehabilitate the surrendered members of the Abu Sayyaf.

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The Manila Times

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11 Sayyaf bandits surrender in Tawi-Tawi

BY JULMUNIR I. JANNARAL AND AL JACINTO

SHARIFF AGUAK, Maguindanao: Two notorious sub-leaders of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and nine other ASG bandits suspected in cross-border kidnappings and other heinous activities surrendered in Tawi-Tawi as all-out military offensives continue in Mindanao.

Abu Sayyaf sub-leaders Berong Sariol, alias Boy Master and Ben Saudi Dambong, alias, Boy Pangit – commanders of the ISIS-affiliated group – and nine other ASG members turned over their firearms to the Joint Task Forces Tawi-Tawi led by Brigadier General Custodio Parcon Jr., at the Marine Barracks Domingo Deluna in Bongao town recently.

The nine other surrenderers were: Jasim and Mujil Dambong; Magelan Langel; Kael, Nurhamin, Alhan, Amnisain, Akmad, and Benasil Sariol; all of Sitio Gigipan, Barangay Baldata in Sapa-Sapa, Tawi-Tawi.

Capt. Jo-ann Petinglay, spokesperson of the Western Mindanao Command (WestMinCom), said Berong Sariol, 39, is a known ASG/KFRG (kidnap-for-ransom gang)

leader operating in Tawi-Tawi.

In May 2009 both sub-leaders were arrested in Bongao but were released in Zamboanga City because there was no warrant for their arrest.

Petinglay also said the group was involved in the beheading of Father Reynaldo Roda, OMI, in South Ubian, Tawi-Tawi; abduction of Mayor Hji KuyohPajiji of Sibuto town; kidnapping of Filipino Marc Dayawan and Chinese Gao Hua Yun at the Singamata Resort in Sampurnah, Sabah and the abduction of Chulhong Park and Glen Alendajao in Tawi-Tawi on October 23, 2016.

She added that the Sariol group is also wanted in Sabah for various piracy and kidnapping offenses.

The surrendered ASG members were turned over to the Tawi-Tawi police.

From January 1 to April 12, about

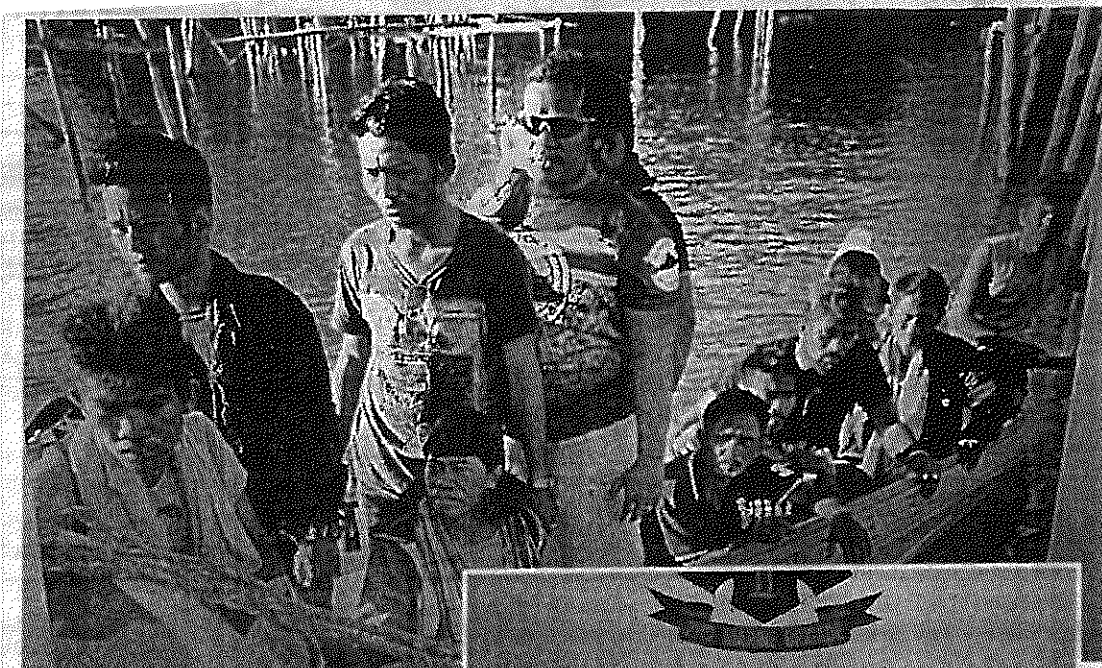
16 ASG bandits have surrendered to the Joint Task Forces of Westmincom – four to the troops in Basilan, one in Sulu and 11 in Tawi-Tawi.

On April 8, ASG member Ferdauz Asgari, alia Mammong, a known follower of sub-leader Nurhassan Jamiri, also surrendered to the troops of the 74th Infantry Battalion in Tipo-Tipo, Basilan.

“Your armed forces remain committed in maintaining internal security in Mindanao with the all-out offensives being launched by the Joint Task Forces of the Western Mindanao Command. Our troops on the ground will continue to work with the local governments and the Mindanaoans in suppressing the Abu Sayyaf and thwarting the perpetration of atrocities within our joint area of operations. This has borne fruit with the surrender of 16 members in a short span of time,” Lt. General Carlito Galvez Jr., Westmincom chief, said.

The government has not offered amnesty to the ASG and other jihadist groups.

On Tuesday, security forces killed at least 11 ASG fighters in fierce clashes that left three soldiers dead and two more injured in Bohol. Among those killed was notorious jihadist



MILITARY Military photo shows two Abu Sayyaf Group sub-leaders and their members after their surrender with their firearms (inset photo) to the Western Mindanao Command.

leader Muammar Askali alias Abu Rami, who was implicated in the beheadings of several ASG foreign hostages in Sulu.

The fighting erupted in the village of Ilaya in Inabanga town after civilians reported the presence of

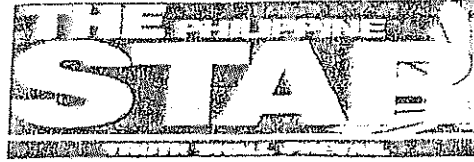
heavily-armed jihadists who arrived in several speedboats.

The Westmincom said it provided intelligence data to its counterpart in the Visayas on the movement of the Abu Sayyaf.

It said continuous military

operations against the bandits in Basilan and Sulu constricted the group's capability to mount kidnappings for ransom or terrorist activities in the region and forced the jihadists to strike in other areas.

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AFP exec: Abu leader mulls surrender

By ROEL PAREÑO

ZAMBOANGA CITY – The most senior Sulu-based Abu Sayyaf leader Radullan Sahiron is planning to surrender, a ranking military official said.

“Radullan Sahiron is contemplating to surrender because he is already old,” according to Lt. Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr., commander of Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom).

Galvez said elderly Muslim leaders have relayed to him the surrender plan of Sahiron.

Sahiron, a one-armed bandit leader, is the most senior Abu Sayyaf leader based in Sulu. He is wanted by the US government, which has offered a \$1-million bounty, for the kidnapping and killing of American Jeffrey Schilling in the late 1990's in Sulu.

Galvez said Sahiron reportedly set some conditions for his surrender, including that he not be handed over to the US government.

“Sahiron wants to surrender provided he will not be turned over to the US or other countries,” he said.

Sahiron reportedly wanted the Philippine government to handle the cases against him.

Galvez believed Sahiron wanted to surrender due to old age and has gotten tired of being on the run from government forces.

The planned surrender of Sahiron cropped up after some 50 Abu Sayyaf militants

from Basilan and Tawi-Tawi surrendered to the military since late last year. The most recent surrender, which happened last Tuesday night, was a batch of 11 Abu Sayyaf from Tawi-Tawi.

Galvez said another one also yielded last month in Sulu.

“For the first time one of them surrendered from Sulu. Ever since no one from the Abu Sayyaf from Sulu has surrendered,” Galvez said.

Succession

Even as Sahiron is planning to give up, the rebel forces are reportedly looking for a new leader following the killing of Muamar Askali, alias Abu Rami, by government forces.

Galvez said there are a number of Abu Sayyaf sub-leaders who are eyeing to succeed Askali, among them sub-leader Alhabsy Misaya.

“We see Alhabsy Misaya and other rising second liners. That's why we are looking on neutralizing prominent figures like them,” Galvez said.

Aside from Sahiron and other top bandit leaders, Galvez said they will neutralize those who will be rising as next line in the Abu Sayyaf leadership.

“The Abu Sayyaf is not safe anywhere. The message is they will be hunted anywhere,” he said.

Askali was among the 11 militants killed by government troops during operations in Inabanga, Bohol.

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CPP calls Bohol clash a CIA job

By **ANTONIO L. COLINA IV**

DAVAO CITY — The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) is accusing the United States government of allegedly having a hand in the military operations against the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in Inabangan, Bohol last April 11.

"The news stories regarding the supposed arrival and presence of members of the Abu Sayyaf criminal bandit group in Bohol island smacks of a US yarn. The Filipino people find most of the press statements released by the military, police and local government officials as highly suspect," a statement issued by the CPP on April 14 said.

Contrary to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) report that six ASG members were killed, along with a policeman and three soldiers, the CPP contends that two of the fatalities counted among the Abu Sayyaf were actually a civilian couple.

The CPP said it turned out later that two among the so-called bandits were a 65-year-old couple identified by the barangay officials as Constancio and Crisente Petalco, residents of Barangay Napo.

The CPP condemned the military

operation in Bohol as "overkill," claiming it endangered the lives of the residents and forced at least 1,200 local residents to flee their homes after the Philippines Air Force dropped nine bombs in Barangays Napo, Calenti and Banahao in Inabangan town.

"The AFP media office, known for spinning fake news stories, has produced a highly dubious story of no less than 60 fully-armed men who traveled three hundred kilometers by boat from Sulu to Bohol, unhampered by the whole AFP establishment, then upstream to a place unknown to them with only a general plan to 'target tourists,'" it said.

"This story is a typical of the tall tales spun by the US Central Intelligence Agency and their conspirators within the Philippine defense and security establishment," it said.

The CPP also questioned the timing of the travel advisory warning issued by the US Embassy prior to Bohol clash against travelling to Cebu and Bohol, "which the AFP and PNP (Philippine National Police) had no idea of."

The US Embassy issued on April 9 a travel advisory, which claimed it received "unsubstantiated yet credible information that terrorist groups may attempt to conduct kidnappings in Central Visayas, which included both

Cebu and Bohol provinces. US citizens are advised to carefully consider this information as you make travel plans, and to review personal security plans, avoid large crowds and gatherings, and remain vigilant at all times."

The communists alleged the "tall tale of the presence of the Abu Sayyaf in Bohol likely forms part of a US plot to strengthen its foothold and increase the presence of its troops in the Central Visayas region."

It added this shows the interest of the US military to establish facilities at the Mactan airfield.

"The US military also aims to establish itself more firmly in the Eastern Visayas region having established US facilities in Guian, Samar under the guise of post-Yolanda rescue operations. The annual Balikatan exercises are set to be carried out starting April 24 in Leyte, just north of Bohol," it said.

It accused the AFP and the US military of collaborating with the operators of the ASG.

"Recall that the Abu Sayyaf was originally formed in the 1980s by a group of armed men recruited by the US military to join the Taliban group which waged a CIA-hatched 'jihad' against the then Soviet-supported Afghanistan government," it said.

It added the US and AFP have used the ASG as multi-tool to discredit the Moro people's struggle for self-determination.

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The Manila Times

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VACC calls for military upgrade to fight Sayyaf

THE Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption (VACC) has called on the government to upgrade military equipment following last week's clash with members of the Abu Sayyaf group in Bohol.

In a statement, VACC founding chairman and president Dante Jimenez said the Abu Sayyaf terrorists "had gone that bold" as to pursue terrorism outside of their bases and usual areas of operation in Basilan and Sulu, targeting areas where local and foreign tourists thrive.

"This bold maneuver is alarming. Reports have it that they have reached as far as Manila to sow terror," Jimenez said.

He noted that Abu Sayyaf bandits are known to use powerful speedboats in crossing the sea from Western Mindanao to kidnap local and foreign tourists.

"Based on reports on the firefight incident in Bohol, the bandits numbered about around 60 Abu Sayyaf terrorists who arrived in the town of Inabanga on board three speedboats before they were intercepted and neutralized upon the tips provided by local residents," Jimenez said.

"The pump boats used by the ASG reportedly have a speed of 40 kilometers per hour (kph) against the Philippine Coast Guard's patrol craft that allegedly have maximum speed of 20 kph only. This is a wake-up call to upgrade our watercraft and weaponry," he added.

Jimenez lauded the "heroic display of courage and effective intelligence" by the Philippine military, police, and Coast Guard operatives, who killed the Abu Sayyaf members in a fierce battle in Barangay Napo, Inabanga town, Bohol province on April 11.

The incident left three soldiers, a policeman and five Abu Sayyaf bandits killed.

"We commend the government troops for their display of courage and military capability in successfully thwarting the threat posed by the Abu Sayyaf elements, who are poised to sow terroristic activities like kidnap-for-ransom in Cebu, Bohol and other parts of the Visayas, according to the intelligence reports," Jimenez said.

"Without the information from the residents of Barangay Napo, Inabangan town, Bohol and the timely interception by the government troops, the Abu Sayyaf bandits could have perpetrated incalculable terror and destruction on human lives against the innocent public and local and foreign tourists," he added.

The clash came after the United States and Australian embassies warned their citizens about possible kidnappings by "terrorist groups" in the central Philippines.

Bohol is a major tourist destination, where foreign tourists swim with whale sharks and marvel at tiny primates called tarsiers, go on cruises aboard boats on crystal-clear rivers and frolic at white-sand beaches.

CATHERINE S. VALENTE

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• **AFP allocates 5%
to Muslim recruits**

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) said yesterday that it will allocate five percent of the total number of its recruits for Muslim Filipinos. "The AFP Chief of Staff, General Eduardo Ano ordered the allocation of a maximum of five percent of the total number of aspirants in the AFP either as Officers, Cadets, or Enlisted Personnel for our Muslim brothers and sisters," Marine Colonel Edgard Arevalo, AFP Public Affairs Office (PAO) chief, said. At present, all recruitment quotas in the AFP have a 10 percent allocated to female soldiers while five percent are allotted for Indigenous People (IP), reinstatement, and special enlistment. "If the new allocation will be implemented, another 180 will be dedicated to Muslim applicants," Arevalo said. "The Muslim soldiers will comprise the units best deployable to Muslim communities because of their being abreast of the culture and knowledgeable of the sensitivities of the Islam religion," he added. (Francis T. Wakefield)

16 April 2017

The Manila Times

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AFP SETS 5% RECRUITMENT FOR MUSLIMS

THE Armed Forces of the Philippines is set to allocate five percent of the total number of applicants for Filipino Muslims, an AFP official said on Saturday.

Marine Colonel Edgard Arevalo, chief of the AFP Public Affairs, disclosed in a statement that it was Chief of Staff General Eduardo Año who ordered the maximum 5 percent allocation of the total number of aspirants in the military, whether officers, cadets or enlisted personnel, "for our Muslim brothers and sisters."

At present, recruitment quotas in the AFP are 10 percent for female soldiers and 5 percent indigenous people, reinstatement

and special enlistment.

The Philippine Army alone has a quota of 3,600 for regular enlistment, of which 360 are for female applicants while 180 for indigenous people this year.

Arevalo said that if the new allocation will be implemented, another 180 slots in the military force will be for the applicants coming from the Muslim communities in the Philippines.

On the other hand, the Philippine Air Force has a quota of 600 for enlisted personnel and 80 for military officers while the Philippine Navy has 1,660 for enlisted personnel and 140 for officers.

"With the specific number of

recruits to be sourced among Muslim applicants, we hope to be able to organize a battalion of Muslim soldiers," Arevalo said.

"[In] the long run, a brigade or division [will be] composed of Muslims. They will be appropriately deployed to areas where Islam is the predominant religion," he added.

Arevalo also stated that Muslim Filipinos who will be recruited as soldiers will "comprise the units best deployable to Muslim communities because of their being abreast" of their knowledge of Islamic culture and sensitivities of the Islam religion.

"Most of our Muslim brothers and sisters perceive the deploy-

ment of almost [100 percent] Christian soldiers in their communities as invading or occupational forces. We hope to avoid this through the deployment of pure Muslim units in their communities," he added.

However, Año said a military force shall represent a cross-section of society and also assured that the focus will also be turned in empowering specific sectors.

"We would like to ensure that as we modernize, we would not be focusing our attention only in armaments and equipment but in empowering specific sectors within the AFP like women, indigenous [people] and Muslims," he said. **DEMPSEY REYES**

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Navy's warship to patrol Benham, says AFP chief

By JAIME LAUDE

The Navy's Strategic Sealift Vessel (SSV) *BRP Davao del Sur* will be deployed to patrol Benham Rise once the vessel is delivered by the Indonesian defense contractor next month, Armed Forces chief Gen. Eduardo Año said.

The *BRP Davao del Sur* will be the second SSV of the Navy. The military is also expecting the delivery of two missile-firing Multi-Purpose Attack Craft (MPAC) by November.

"*BRB Lanao del Sur* will also be deployed in Benham Rise. With our naval assets we could now conduct regular maritime security patrols," Año said.

Aside from the two ships, additional fast crafts and other assets are being planned for the Navy, part of the ongoing AFP Modernization Program.

The *BRP Davao Del Sur* is now undergoing sea trial.

The vessel is the sister ship of the *BRP Tarlac* that is currently the Navy's largest operational warship.

The *BRP Tarlac*, which was commissioned last June 1, is currently serving as the landing platform of the military's ongoing anti-terror operations in the Sulu Sea.

She arrived in the Philippines last May 14 after a five-day journey from PT PAL shipyard in Surabaya, Indonesia.

Just like the *BRP Tarlac*, the Navy's latest SSV will serve as a floating command-and-control ship, especially in the conduct of humanitarian assistance and disaster response and will also serve as a military sealift and transport vessel.

The ship has an overall length of 120 meters, breadth of 21 meters, draft of five meters and can carry a payload of 2,800 tons.

She has a cruising speed of 13 knots and maximum speed of 16 knots and a minimum

operating range of 7,500 nautical miles.

BRP Davao Del Sur could carry 500 troops, two rigid-hull inflatable boats, two landing craft units and three helicopters.

Meanwhile, construction of the country's first two MPACs, with missile armament provisions are now ongoing at the Propmech Corp. shipyard in Subic Bay, Zambales.

"They are now being constructed at the Propmech facility in Subic Bay but we don't yet have the timelines for the sea trials," defense public affairs office chief Arsenio Andolong said.

He said the missile armaments and other weapons of the MPACs would be fitted at a later time.

Meanwhile, the Air Force has allocated P30.2 million for the maintenance of its three brand-new airbus military C-295 medium-lift cargo plane.

In a bid bulletin posted at the Philippine Government Electronic Procurement System website, Air Force bids and awards chairman Brig. Gen. Nicolas Parilla said the fund would be used to procure spare parts for the C-295 planes with tail numbers 129, 140 and 142.

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Pre-bid conference is on April 21, 1 p.m. at the Air Force Procurement Center Conference Room, Villamor Air Base, Pasay City, while submission and opening of bids is on May 5, 9 a.m. at the same venue.

The three C-295 planes are assigned to the 220th Airlift Wing in Mactan, Cebu. The medium-lift planes are used for tactical airlift requirements and are essential to internal security operations in ferrying personnel and logistical requirements of different line-combat units to any part of the country.

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16 April 2017

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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PNP, AFP fortify security in southern Cebu coast

By MARS W. MOSQUEDA JR.

OSLOB, Cebu – Amid unconfirmed reports of a possible retaliation by the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) following the encounter in Inabanga, Bohol, the Police Regional Office (PRO) 7 has intensified its monitoring of Cebu's coastal areas and other public places.

The focus of the security operation is the southern towns of Cebu, where several beach resorts and tourist destinations, including the whale shark viewing in Boljoon, are located.

"The PNP has maintained its full alert status to ensure the maximum presence of our policemen on the streets and places of convergence, particularly hotels and resorts. The coastal areas are well guarded," the PRO 7 said.

PRO 7 director Chief Superintendent Noli Taliño has already directed the provincial and city police directors to maximize police presence and intensify security operations in the places of convergence and on the streets.

Yesterday, the PRO 7 and the Central Command of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) summoned all chiefs of police in southern Cebu for a command conference in Oslob.

Municipal mayors, as well as resort

owners and tour operators were also invited.

The PRO 7 has also urged the public that any information pertaining to suspicious looking persons or any unusual activities in their area be reported promptly to the nearest police station for appropriate and immediate action.

It assured that any information received by the PNP will not be taken for granted and that security advisories will immediately be posted if deemed necessary.

"Such information will be validated and verified first, such that it is not advised to be published or posted on social media sites to avoid casting fear and panic among our citizen," the advisory from the PRO 7 stated.

The alleged terror threat in southern Cebu surfaced last year following reports that the ASG was planning to kidnap tourists.

Last week, the US Embassy in Manila issued a travel advisory, warning their citizens of a terror threat in Central Visayas.

The travel advisory was issued days after ASG members and government troops clashed in Inabanga, Bohol, which resulted in the death of ASG leader Abu Rami, four of his followers, three soldiers and a police officer.

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IN DEFERENCE TO CHINA

DUTERTE WON'T PLANT FLAG ON PAG-ASA ISLAND, AFTER ALL

RIYADH—President Duterte had taken back a statement boldly promising to commemorate Philippine Independence Day by planting the country's flag on an island in waters that China, the Asian giant which Mr. Duterte now favors over traditional Philippine ally United States, is laying claim to.

"Because of our friendship with China and because we value your friendship, I will not go there to raise the Philippine flag," he told some 2,000 Filipinos during an official visit here.

"I will not go to any of the islands," Mr. Duterte said to applause by his audience.

"They said, do not go there in the meantime, just do not go there please," said Mr. Duterte, apparently citing China.

"I will correct myself because we value our friendship with China," he said.

"Maybe I will send my son, just to show that our claim is clearly good for all generations of Filipinos," he added, without identifying who among his sons he would send—Davao City Vice Mayor Paolo Duterte or his bachelor son, Baste.

Mr. Duterte first made the

bold declaration on April 6 when he told reporters: "I have ordered the armed forces to occupy all these so many islands, I think nine or 10, put up structures and the Philippine flag."

Bravado

"And in the coming Independence Day of ours (June 12), I might, I may go to Pag-asa island to raise the flag there. Even those that are vacant, let us habitate there," he said.

Pag-asa (Hope) is the Philippine name for "Thitu Island" in the Spratlys, the largest of the islands occupied by the Philippines in the disputed part of the South China Sea.

Duterte's initial declaration confused many.

His spokesperson and the military later insisted that what the President really wanted to say was that the military should upgrade facilities on about nine of the islands and outcroppings that the Philippines already occupies.

Duterte's declaration also apparently surprised China, which he has been wooing for funds since he took office last

June. —AFP AND REUTERS

16 April 2017



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BABE'S EYE VIEW

BABE ROMUALDEZ

Easter gift from the Abu Sayyaf

VANCOUVER, Canada – A number of Canadians who have been planning to travel to the Philippines are putting their vacation plans on hold. This is due to the Canadian government's travel advisory urging its citizens to refrain from going to certain parts of the Philippines because of the "serious threat of terror attacks and kidnapping." The advisory came in the wake of the clash between members of the AFP and the terrorist group Abu Sayyaf in the province of Bohol.



Other governments like France, the United Kingdom and New Zealand have also issued similar advisories, with the United States and Australia issuing travel warnings even before the terrorist group's "excursion" to Inabanga, a municipality in Bohol. It was obvious the Americans and the Australians received credible intelligence information beforehand. The fight between government troops and the Abu Sayyaf resulted in the death of six terrorists including the notorious Muamar Askali, a sub-commander who also served as spokesperson for the terrorist group.

Askali – a hardliner who was mostly involved in kidnap-for-ransom activities and the beheading of foreign hostages – was high on the most wanted list not only of the AFP but the Malaysian forces as well. Apparently, about 60 ASG members under the command of Askali had been planning to give the government an Easter "gift" by staging attacks today on several tourist spots located in Cebu and the Visayas. Riding in three motorboats, the extremist group had slipped into Bohol, but their plans to abduct foreigners were foiled when civilians reported about their presence to the military, intelligence reports said.

The clash in Bohol – a popular tourist destination – has revived the fears of people that the terrorist group could spread their activities to areas outside Mindanao and possibly even Metro Manila. We all remember the 2001 kidnappings in Dos Palmas resort in Palawan – supposedly a safe tourist spot – where 20 people including American missionary couple Martin and Gracia Burnham were taken.

Over the years, the activities of the ASG had become more and more grisly, with foreign hostages beheaded when ransom demands are not met. In April last year, Canadian John Ridsdel was beheaded. This was followed by the beheading of Robert Hall – another Canadian – in June shortly before President Rodrigo Duterte formally assumed office, with the group saying the beheading of the Canadian was their response to Duterte's statement that he will do everything he can to get Hall alive.

The Communist Party of the Philippines made the ridiculous claim that the Bohol clash was the handiwork of the Americans, pointing to the travel warning issued by the US government several days earlier. Actually, it seemed more like the Abu Sayyaf's Easter gift for President Duterte in response to his call for an all-out war against the terrorist group.

Hatred for the ASG is articulated by Malaysian Mohd Ridzuan Ismail who said he wanted the group "wiped out" so no one else will experience the trauma he suffered as a captive in the jungles of Jolo – just waiting for the time when he would be beheaded like fellow Malaysian captive Robert Then who was beheaded in November. Ridzuan, who was released last month, had begged the Malaysian government to negotiate for their release, saying they are starved, beaten up and constantly threatened with death.

Contrary to the CCP's assertions, the operation against Askali's group was not an "overkill." Askali, also known as Abu Ram, was a vicious man who had been profiting from the ransom paid by hostages. He was trained in bomb making by Zulkifli bin Hir alias Marwan, the Malaysian bomb maker killed during the Mamasapano encounter in January 2015.

Actually, anti-terrorism experts and security analysts have been warning that the Philippines could become a new "vilayet" (official province) or regional sanctuary of ISIS (Islamic State of Syria and Iraq), a global jihadist terror group. According to intelligence information, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi – the self-proclaimed "caliph of ISIS," is looking for a new territory because of their weakening hold in key cities like Ramadi, Raqqa and Mosul in Afghanistan where the "mother of all bombs" dropped by the US two days ago killed 36 militants and destroyed a network of tunnels and caves used by the terrorist group.

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Apparently, the caliph of ISIS is looking towards East Asia and he considers Mindanao – more specifically Basilan – a good “incubator” since it is the birthplace of the Abu Sayyaf group whose top commanders including Isnilon Hapilon pledged allegiance to ISIS and al Baghdadi in 2014. The recruitment and propaganda video released by the ISIS last year was also shot at an ISIS-supervised training facility in Mindanao. This has resulted in several Mindanao-based terror sub-groups as well as the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters or BIFF pledging their allegiance to the Islamic State.

At the recent homeland security conference in Singapore, experts warned that ISIS veterans could regroup and turn Southern Philippines into their sanctuary. Earlier, ISIS declared the formation of an East Asia Division with the Philippines as its base. Singaporean counter-terrorism analyst Rohan Gunaratna had also warned that the terrorist threat in Asia could grow with the establishment of an ISIS nucleus in Mindanao.

No doubt the Philippines should remain in the same wavelength as other nations in the war against terrorism that has reached alarming proportions. More than ever, we should continue to strengthen our cooperation and intelligence sharing activities with allies like Canada, Australia and the United States in fighting these barbarians. The fight against illegal drugs is an international problem just like terrorism is. We must fight this evil scourge with the same intensity.

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ONLINE NEWS

16 APRIL 2017

PAF in the market for C-295 communication, navigation spares

From the Philippine News Agency (Apr 15): PAF in the market for C-295 communication, navigation spares PAF in the market for C-295 communication, navigation spares

The Philippine Air Force (PAF) is allocating the sum of PHP30.31 million for the acquisition of spare parts needed for the maintenance of the communication and navigation system of its three brand-new Airbus Military C-295 medium transport aircraft.

In a bid bulletin posted at the Philippine Government Electronic Procurement System website, PAF bids and awards chair, Brig. Gen. Nicolas Parilla, said the parts are for C-295 with tail numbers 129, 140 and 142.

Pre-bid conference is at 1 p.m. on April 21 at the PAF Procurement Center Conference Room, Villamor Air Base, Pasay City, while submission and opening of bids is at 9 a.m. on May 5 at the same venue.

The PAF has three C-295 in its inventory. All three are assigned to the 220th Airlift Wing, which is based in Mactan, Cebu. All three planes are worth PHP5.3 billion.

It uses the medium lift aircraft for tactical and medium airlift requirements, and are essential to internal security operations in ferrying personnel and logistical requirements of different line/combat units to any part of the country.

The timely deployment of troops and supplies is vital to ensure the success of any military operation.

The Airbus Military C-295 is a new generation, very robust and reliable, highly versatile tactical airlifter able to carry up to nine tons of payload or up to 71 personnel, at a maximum cruise speed of 260 kt/480 km/h.

Fitted with a retractable landing gear and a pressurized cabin, it can cruise at altitudes up to 25,000 ft., while retaining remarkable short take-off and landing (STOL) performance from unprepared short, soft and rough airstrips, as well as low-level flight characteristics.

<http://www.pna.gov.ph/index.php?idn=1&sid=&nid=1&rid=979980>

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More assets in the pipeline for PHL Navy: AFP chief

From the Philippine News Agency (Apr 15): **More assets in the pipeline for PHL Navy: AFP chief**

The Philippine Navy (PN) will have more naval assets to patrol the country's vast maritime domains with the arrival of the BRP Davao Del Sur (LD-602), its second strategic sealift vessel (SSV), by May, and two missile-armed MPACs by November.

Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief-of-staff, Gen. Eduardo Año, made the statement when asked what efforts are being undertaken to further secure the country's seas.

This is in the wake of the failed Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) infiltration in Inabanga, Bohol, which resulted in the death of six bandits, including sub-leader Muamar Askali alias "Abu Rami", and three soldiers and a police officer last April 11.

He added that the second SSV, along with the two MPACs, will provide the Navy more assets to patrol the country's waters, especially those in Basilan and Sulu, deterring ASG bandits against making similar attacks in the future.

Aside from these ships, additional fast craft and other assets are being earmarked for the Navy, which Año said is the primary beneficiary of the ongoing AFP Modernization Program.

The BRP Davao Del Sur is expected to be delivered by May 17.

As of this posting, the vessel is 98 percent complete.

The BRP Davao Del Sur, launched on Sept. 29 last year, is the sister ship of the BRP Tarlac (LD-601), currently the largest Filipino warship in commission.

The BRP Tarlac, commissioned on June 1 last year, arrived in the Philippines on May 14, 2016 after a five-day journey from PT PAL's shipyard in Surabaya, Indonesia.

The BRP Davao Del Sur is also a Makassar-class landing platform dock, like her sister ship, the BRP Tarlac.

Its delivery to the Philippines, tentatively scheduled this May, will complete the two-unit SSV procurement project with an approved budget contract of PHP4 billion sourced from the AFP Modernization Act Trust Fund.

Just like the BRP Tarlac, the Navy's latest SSV will serve as a floating command-and-control ship, especially in the conduct of humanitarian assistance and disaster response, and will also serve as a military sealift and transport vessel.

The ship, which has an overall length of 120 meters, breadth of 21 meters, and draft of 5 meters, can carry a payload of 2,800 tons.

She has a cruising speed of 13 knots and maximum speed of 16 knots and a minimum operating range of 7,500 nautical miles.

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The BRP Davao Del Sur can carry 500 troops, two rigid-hull inflatable boats, two landing craft units and three helicopters.

Meanwhile, the construction of the country's first two MPACs, with missile armament provisions, is ongoing at the Propmech Corp. shipyard in Subic Bay, Zambales.

MPAC is short for multi-purpose assault craft, a small, maneuverable and highly fast naval vessel.

This was confirmed by Defense public affairs office chief, Arsenio Andolong, in an interview with the Philippine News Agency (PNA) last April 11.

"They are now being constructed at the Propmech Corp. facility in Subic Bay but we do not yet have the timeline for the sea trials," he said.

Andolong added that the missile armaments and other weapons of the MPACs will be fitted at a later time.

The Navy earlier said that these MPACs will be delivered by the third quarter of this year.

These MPACs, the so-called Mark IIIs, are far more advanced and capable than the Mark Is and IIs currently in service.

The PN is operating six gun-armed MPACs as of this posting.

They will be armed with the Israel's Rafael Advanced Defense Systems Ltd.'s Spike ER (extended range) in anti-ship mode, which is capable of penetrating 1,000 mm. (39 inches) of rolled homogeneous armor and has a maximum range of five miles.

The PN's missile-armed MPACs, three of which are in the pipeline, have a budget of PHP270 million.

The money will be sourced from the AFP Modernization Act Trust Fund of 2000.

The contract covers mission essential equipment, which includes day/night electronic navigation systems, communication suites, safety-of-life-at-sea, propulsion system, and seamanship and ship-handling gears.

<http://www.pna.gov.ph/index.php?idn=1&sid=&nid=1&rid=979979>

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