

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



TEAM ARMY

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OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

NEWS CLIPPINGS

17 April 2017

Monday

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

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PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS • FEARLESS VIEWS

TODAY'S WEATHER FORECAST | APRIL 17, 2017 | MONDAY

PHILIPPINE AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY (PAR)

LOW PRESSURE AREA
85 KM-EAST SOUTHEAST OF ROXAS CITY
(As of 5:00 AM - Apr. 16, 2017)

LADAG CITY 23 - 32 °C	TUGUEGARAO CITY 24 - 36 °C
BAGUID CITY 16 - 26 °C	SBMA/CLARK 26 - 34 °C
METRO MANILA 25 - 34 °C	TAGAYTAY CITY 23 - 30 °C
ILOILO/BACOLOD CITY 23 - 31 °C	LEGAZPI CITY 24 - 30 °C
PUERTO PRINCESA 25 - 32 °C	TACLOBAN CITY 23 - 31 °C
ZAMBOANGA CITY 23 - 32 °C	METRO CEBU 23 - 31 °C
	CAGAYAN DE ORO 24 - 31 °C
	METRO DAVAO 25 - 33 °C

SUNRISE 5:41 AM	SUNSET 6:10 PM
MOONRISE 11:07 PM	MOONSET 10:00 AM
FULL MOON APR 11 2:08 AM	LAST QUARTER APR 19 5:57 PM
LOW TIDE 9:39 PM 0.00 Meter	HIGH TIDE 1:04 PM 0.89 Meter

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

Cloudy skies with rainshowers and/or thunderstorms

	APR 18	APR 19	APR 18	APR 19	APR 18	APR 19		
METRO MANILA	25 - 34 °C	24 - 34 °C	TAGAYTAY	21 - 31 °C	20 - 31 °C	TACLOBAN	24 - 31 °C	24 - 31 °C
TUGUEGARAO	23 - 35 °C	24 - 36 °C	LEGAZPI	26 - 32 °C	26 - 33 °C	CAGAYAN DE ORO	24 - 31 °C	24 - 31 °C
LADAG	23 - 32 °C	23 - 33 °C	PUERTO PRINCESA	26 - 33 °C	26 - 33 °C	METRO DAVAO	25 - 33 °C	25 - 34 °C
BAGUID	16 - 26 °C	16 - 26 °C	ILOILO/BACOLOD	26 - 32 °C	25 - 32 °C	ZAMBOANGA	24 - 33 °C	24 - 33 °C
SBMA/CLARK	26 - 35 °C	25 - 36 °C	METRO CEBU	25 - 32 °C	25 - 32 °C			

SAGOT NG PADALA MO!

PILIPINAS HD

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NoKor missile explodes on launch

SEOUL—A North Korean missile exploded during launch on Sunday, US and South Korean officials said, a high-profile failure that comes as a powerful US aircraft supercarrier approaches the Korean Peninsula in a show of force.

It was not immediately clear what kind of missile was test-fired from the east coast city of Sinpo.

But the failure will sting in Pyongyang because it comes a day after one of the biggest North Korean propaganda events of the year—celebrations of the 105th birthday of late North Korea founder Kim Il-sung, the current leader's grandfather.

The North's test firing can be seen as a message of defiance to the Trump administration in Washington, coming as it did on the day US Vice President Mike Pence arrived in Seoul for talks on North Korea as part of his 10-day trip to Asia.

Pence said North Korea's "provocation" was another reminder of the risks that US and South Korean service members faced every day "in the defense of the freedom of the people of South Korea and the defense of America in this part of the world."

At a fellowship dinner at US Army Garrison Yongsan in Seoul, Pence said that the willingness of military members "to stand firm without fear [inspired] the nation and [inspired] the world."

US President Donald Trump was uncharacteristically quiet about the failed launch.

In a statement, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said Trump and his military team were "aware of North Korea's most recent unsuccessful missile launch. The president has no further comment."

The failure, which is likely to be seen as a public embarrassment for the regime, came amid soaring tensions in the region over the North's nuclear weapons ambitions.

"The missile blew up almost immediately," the US Defense Department said of the early morning launch, which was also

detected by the South Korean military.

Missiles

Washington and Seoul will try hard to figure out what exactly North Korea fired.

This matters because while North Korea regularly launches short-range missiles, it is also developing mid-range and long-range missiles meant to target US troops in Asia and, eventually, the US mainland.

It came after North Korea displayed nearly 60 missiles—including what is suspected to be a new intercontinental ballistic missile—at the Saturday parade.

The ultimate goal is to have a full array of nuclear-tipped missiles in response to what Pyongyang said was hostility by Washington and Seoul meant to topple its government.

North Korea is thought to have a small arsenal of atomic bombs and an impressive array of short- and medium-range missiles.

Many outside analysts believed that North Korea had not yet mastered the technology to build warheads small enough to place on long-range missiles, though some civilian experts said it could already build nu-

clear-tipped shorter range missiles that have South Korea and Japan within its striking range.

South Korea's defense ministry said it was analyzing exactly how the North Korean launch failed.

High animosity

In Seoul, South Korea's presidential office convened a national security council meeting to examine security postures.

High animosity has risen on the Korean Peninsula in recent months, as the United States and South Korea conduct its annual war games which North Korea claimed were preparations for an invasion.

A US aircraft carrier, the USS Carl Vinson, is headed to waters off Korea in a show of force.

Analysts warned that even failed missile launches could provide valuable knowledge to North Korea as it tried to build its weapons program.

The country launched a long-range rocket and conducted two nuclear tests last year, including its most powerful to date.

Aside from improving the technology, North Korean missile and nuclear tests are seen by outside analysts partly as efforts to bolster the domestic im-

age of leader Kim Jong-un and apply political pressure on Seoul and Washington.

Kim Jong-un has overseen three nuclear tests and a string of missile and rocket launches since taking over after the death of his father, dictator Kim Jong Il, in late 2011.

Another missile test from Sinpo failed earlier this month, when the rocket spun out of control and plunged into the ocean.

That launch came shortly before Trump's first meeting with Chinese leader Xi Jinping.

China is North Korea's only major ally.

The extended-range Scud missile in that earlier launch suffered an in-flight failure and fell into the sea off North Korea's east coast, according to US imagery and assessments.

Despite Sunday's failure, the North's previous claim to have used "standardized" warheads has led to worries that it was making headway in its push to develop small and sophisticated warheads to be topped on long-range missiles.

Washington sees North Korea's pursuit of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles as a threat to world security and to its Asian allies, Japan and

South Korea.

The United States, South Korea and other countries have vowed to apply more pressure on the North, but so far nothing has worked to stop Pyongyang's nuclear program.

Six-nation negotiations on dismantling North Korea's nuclear program in exchange for aid fell apart in early 2009.

Provocation

"It is likely that this launch is a test for a new type of missile or an upgrade so the possibility is high for further provocation in the near future," Kim Dong-yub, a military expert at Kyungnam University's Institute of Far Eastern Studies in Seoul, said.

In August last year, a submarine-launched ballistic missile tested from Sinpo flew 500 kilometers (300 miles) towards Japan.

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un hailed that test as its "greatest success" and said it brought the US mainland within range of a mobile delivery system.

Pyongyang's rogue atomic ambitions have come into sharp focus in recent weeks, with Trump vowing a tough stance against the North and threaten-

ing unilateral action if China failed to help curb its neighbor's nuclear program.

With speculation mounting that the North is preparing to conduct a sixth nuclear test, he sent an aircraft carrier-led strike group to the Korean peninsula—a pointed gesture in the wake of the recent US missile strike on Syria.

But the defiant regime has reiterated it was ready for war with the United States, and its army vowed a "merciless" response to any US provocation.

Recent satellite images suggested that the North's main nuclear site was "primed and ready," according to specialist US website 38North, and White House officials said military options are "already being assessed."

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

The UN Security Council has imposed six sets of sanctions against the North since its first nuclear test in 2006 — all of which have failed to halt its drive for what it insists are defensive weapons. —REPORTS FROM

AP AND AFP

17 April 2017



Page: 1

Abu Sayyaf beheads Filipino hostage

By MICHAEL PUNONGBAYAN

The Abu Sayyaf has beheaded one of its Filipino captives in Patikul, Sulu, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) confirmed yesterday.
Noel Besconde, one of the crewmem-

bers of *F/B Remona* seized in the Celebes Sea in December, was executed at around 2:30 p.m. on April 13, according to Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, chief of Joint Task Force Sulu (JTFS).

Sobejana said they received the information on the same day, but did not

confirm it until the AFP secured a copy of a video of the killing allegedly perpetrated by the group of Abu Sayyaf leader Hatib Sawadjaan.

The search and retrieval operation for the victim's body is ongoing in the western

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part of Patikul.

"We have confirmed it because we have seen the video and we have reports on the ground. We are now doing our best to locate the cadaver and bring the body to the family," Sobejana said.

The military said the beheading was more of a necessity on the part of the bandit group, as the victim was reportedly getting sickly.

Sobejana said dragging a sick captive hampers the movement of the bandits, who have constantly been on the run to evade pursuing soldiers.

He said the group had probably contacted the victim's family to ask for P3 million as ransom, which they failed to obtain as the Bescondes are not rich and the military is firm on the no-ransom policy.

Initially, the AFP did not believe the information, thinking it was just propaganda.

Sobejana said the video showed scenes not similar with previous beheadings wherein the terrorists appeared first to be doing some rituals.

"This one showed the killing was done in haste," he said.

In February, the Abu Sayyaf beheaded the 70-year-old German, Jurgen Kantner, for failure to pay P30-million ransom.

Pursuit operation

Pursuit operation against the Abu Sayyaf bandits who stormed Bohol last week is ongoing, even as AFP chief Gen. Eduardo Año declared that the terror threat in the province is over.

"Our assault team continues scouring the area," he said, noting Army soldiers are hunting down the remaining bandits including Joselito Melloria, alias Alih, whose photographs are being distributed in the island.

Melloria allegedly served as a guide for Abu Sayyaf in Inabanga, where an encounter broke out last Tuesday and resulted in the death of four bandits, three soldiers and a police officer.

Año said the swift military and police action resulted in the killing of Mumar Askali, alias Abu Rami, leader and spokesman for the bandit group.

Año earlier expressed confidence that the military could eliminate the Abu Sayyaf by June 30.

'Show must go on'

The Bohol clash between the military and the bandits will not deter a scheduled conference of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in the province on April 19-20.

The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) gave assurance that security measures are in place to protect the participants and delegates and secure the event.

"The military and the police are on top of the situation. We assure delegates, tourists and residents we are exerting our best efforts for Bohol," DILG officer-in-charge Catalino Cuy said.

– With Cecille Suerte Felipe

17 April 2017

The
Standard
DEFINING THE NEWS

Page: A1

Du30 orders troops to finish them off

By John Paolo Bencito

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte told security forces Sunday to finish off the Abu Sayyaf as another of the terrorist group's sub-leaders was sighted in Negros Oriental province, and as the bandits beheaded another kidnap victim.

"Same instruction: Finish them off ASAP," said Defense Secretary Delfin Lazaro after Duterte received a briefing from security officials.

Last week, Abu Sayyaf bandits planning a terrorist attack clashed with police and troops in Inaban-

ga, Bohol, leaving nine people dead, including the leader of the operation, Abu Rami.

Intelligence officers, however, said another sub-leader of the group, Alhabisi Misaya, was spotted in Negros Oriental, con-

stituting a threat to nearby Apo Island, Sumilon Island and Siquijor.

A spokesman for the Armed Forces, Brig. Gen. Resty Padilla Jr., said the all-out war on the Abu Sayyaf would continue.

In an interview, Padilla said the AFP's Joint Task Force Sulu commanded by newly promoted Army Brig. Gen. Cirilito E. Sobejana, is the main unit tasked to track down some 300 Abu Sayyaf terrorists in Mindanao, mostly on the island of Sulu and nearby islets.

Contacted by telephone, Sobejana confirmed the directive of AFP chief of staff Gen. Eduardo Año

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ASG...

From A1

on the unrelenting war against the Abu Sayyaf, which is still holding about 30 hostages.

Ground forces are supported by artillery of the Army, and planes and helicopter gunships of the Air Force.

The Navy has also intensified its sea patrol around Sulu and nearby Tawi-Tawi islands to prevent the terrorists from escaping.

Aside from kidnapping, the Abu Sayyaf is also engaged in drug trafficking to raise funds for their terroristic activities which must be stopped, Sobejana said.

He also said that Muammar Askali, alias Abu Rahmi, who was killed in Bohol last week following a gun battle with government forces, was the most notorious Abu Sayyaf member and is believed to have led the recent beheading of foreign hostages.

Rahmi slipped out of Sulu because of the intensified military offensive on the island and went to Bohol together with some of his henchmen but five of them, including Rahmi was killed.

Amid the Abu Sayyaf incursions into provinces with popular tourist destinations, National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon said the government is ready to thwart possible attacks by the bandits, who typically abduct tourists and behead them if no ransom is paid.

During the President's meetings Arab leaders, Duterte discussed counter-terrorism efforts

against threats such as the Islamic State, Esperon said.

In recent speeches, Duterte warned that ISIS could spread to Southeast Asia, particularly to the Philippines, if the jihadist movement falls in the Middle East.

On Sunday, military officials confirmed the beheading of another Abu Sayyaf kidnap victim.

Reports said Noel Besconde, a crew member of the FB Ramona, was beheaded by Abu Sayyaf sub-leader Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan near Patikul, Sulu.

Besconde was abducted with three other crew members along the waters of the Celebes Sea late last year. Military sources said Besconde was "very sick" before he was beheaded.

On Saturday, the Interior Department assured participants in the scheduled Association of Southeast Asian Nations activity on April 19-20 in Bohol would proceed as planned, despite the recent clash between the Abu Sayyaf and security forces in the province that left three soldiers, a policeman and six bandits dead.

Among those killed in the firefight was Abu Sayyaf leader Moammar Askali, an emerging hard-line leader who had pledged allegiance to the Islamic State group.

In a statement, Interior Secretary and officer-in-charge Catalino Cuy said Bohol "might as well be considered a well-fortified and most secure place in the country right now."

Cuy, a retired police general, added that the "military and the police are on top of the situation."

"We would like to assure the delegates, tourists and residents

alike that we are exerting our best efforts for Bohol," he said.

Officials said that about 4,000 personnel from the Philippine National Police, AFP, emergency response units and various agencies will be deployed during the Asean Summit meetings, which are expected to draw around 200 delegates.

The Bohol meetings, which will include trade-related sessions, will be held at the Hennan Resort in Panglao town.

The province will be hosting many ministerial, senior official and technical working group meetings throughout the year.

Cuy echoed the sentiments of Bohol Gov. Edgar Chatto that the situation in Inabanga would not affect the rest of Bohol or the rest of the country.

Inabanga is about 80 kilometers away from the venue, Panglao Island, which is close to the capital Tagbilaran City.

Earlier, the Bohol governor assured the public that law enforcers have the province's security under control and that the situation in Inabanga, where the intense firefight took place, had gone back to normal.

On April 26 to 29, Metro Manila will play host to the 30th Asean Summit, with the major summit on the last day to be held at the Philippine International Convention Center.

The Philippines currently chairs the Asean Summit 2017 and will also host the 31st Asean Summit on Nov. 10 to 14 in Clark, Pampanga. The country's chairmanship coincides with 50th Anniversary of the 10-nation bloc. With PNA

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MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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Army seeks release of two soldiers as promised by Reds

DAVAO CITY (PNA) – The Philippine Army's 10th Infantry (Agila) Division (ID) urged Sunday the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA), to make good their promise to release two soldiers they abducted in Sultan Kudarat province last February.

"We denounce the CPP-NPA for its 'double-faced lie' in not releasing the two soldiers of the 39th Infantry Battalion they abducted at the height of the unilateral ceasefire last February 2," said Capt. Rhyan Batchar, chief information officer of 10th ID.

The soldiers who are still being held by the communist rebels are Sgt. Solaiman Calucop and PFC Samuel Garay.

Batchar said there was "no more hindrance to the release of the soldiers."

As part of a joint statement issued last April 6 after the fourth round of its talks with the Philippine Government (GRP) in Noordwijk, The Netherlands, the National Democratic Front (NDF), political arm of the Communist group, agreed to release government security personnel under NPA custody – two on Easter Sunday, and another two after.

But a day after, the NDF accused the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) of refusing to suspend military operations to pave the way for the release of abducted soldiers in Mindanao, including Calucop and Garay.

But Batchar said the 10th ID and the

39th IB have already suspended their military operations against the NPA rebels responsible for the abduction of Calucop and Garay.

"We demand that the NPA immediately release our soldiers without any condition, as this is the only way to rectify the "treacherous and insincere act" of abducting our soldiers while the unilateral ceasefires are still in effect," Batchar said.

In an interview last week, AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Eduardo Año said there was no need for a SOMO (suspension of military operations), noting that the NPA already released two abducted government troops in Davao Oriental last March even if there was no SOMO in the area.

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The Manila Times

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Army 'not sure' of Sayyaf sightings

BY EUGENE Y. ADIONG

BACOLOD CITY, Negros Occidental: The military here said it cannot confirm that armed men reportedly sighted in Cauayan town, Negros Occidental, on Friday night are members of the terrorist Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG).

According to 1st Lt. John Tumamao, commander of the Philippine Army 79th Infantry Battalion's Bravo company, some residents claimed to have seen armed men passing by a river in Sitio Capaclan, while others said they were not sure whether the men they saw were carrying firearms or just backpacks.

Tumamao said his men have been hearing different stories from the locals.

Some residents reportedly heard gunshots in Barangay Inayawan that "may have come from New People's Army rebels," he added, referring to the communist guerrillas.

What concerned many residents most was the white pump boat found near the shore in Inayawan.

On board the boat were an American, Frank Blaskis, 74, and his 12-year-old daughter.

Blaskis allowed the Coast Guard

to check his boat and cargo.

But suspicion that armed men boarded his boat or that they were on two other boats believed to have arrived at the same time as he did angered the American.

He explained that he and his daughter were from Bacong in Negros Oriental and that they were traveling to Iloilo but were forced to seek shelter in Cauayan because of huge waves.

Blaskis denied hearing gunshots and seeing armed men upon arriving in the area.

Barangay (village) chief Sanderson Sumugot Jr. said village officials could not establish a link between Blaskis and the two other boats reportedly used by the armed men.

Blaskis said they only carried one bag with them and that their boat cannot carry 10 persons.

"I want to know who spread the

rumors," he told a local radio station.

Coast Guard personnel who inspected the pump boat did not see anything suspicious.

Blaskis and his daughter later returned to Negros Oriental.

Chief Insp. Ruben Pajarito, Cauayan municipal police chief, assured residents that "what happened in Bohol last week will not happen" in his watch.

On Friday, many residents in the area were not able to sleep after reports that members of the Abu Sayyaf who clashed with government forces in Bohol may have reached their place.

Government forces continued to patrol Cauayan and the neighboring areas while intelligence reports are being validated.

Authorities advised residents to remain calm and to cooperate and coordinate with local police and the military.

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3 NPA rebels killed in Masbate clash

Three New People's Army rebels were killed while an undetermined number of rebels were wounded in an encounter with government troopers in Milagros, Masbate on Holy Saturday, an Army official said in a belated report yesterday.

Col. Greg Almerol, commanding officer of the 2nd Infantry Battalion, added that four high-powered firearms were recovered during the hour-long "intense firefight" that occurred in Barangay San Antonio, Milagros town between elements of the 2nd IB and some 50 communist rebels.

He said the three communist rebels, who have yet to be identified, were killed during the firefight while three M-16 rifles, an M-14 rifle and a shotgun were recovered from the rebels.

"In addition, there were 28 improvised explosives taken from the rebels," he added.

Almerol said a generator set, ammunition for M-16 and M-14 rifles, communist propaganda materials and personal belongings of the rebels were left behind in the clash site.

He said villagers in Barangay San Antonio had tipped off authorities about the presence of the NPA guerrillas because they "resented the extortion (of the rebels) through the so-called revolutionary taxation."

Almerol said he immediately organized a team from the Scout platoon of the Alpha and Bravo companies of the 2nd IB under

Capt. Jessie Cabangcala to check the information but the government troops were immediately fired upon around 7:30 a.m. on Saturday when they reached the area.

He said the NPA rebels were under the command of Ruel Ibañez alias "Gemo."

"Our troops in the area are still conducting hot pursuit operation against the fleeing rebels," he said.

It was the second encounter between 2nd IB troops and NPA rebels this year. On February 13, four top NPA rebels were killed in a clash in Barangay Pangle in Aroroy town.

Meanwhile, the Philippine Army's 10th Infantry (Agila) Division (ID) urged yesterday the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA), to make good their promise to release two soldiers they abducted in Sultan Kudarat province last February.

"We denounce the CPP-NPA for its "double-faced lie" in not releasing the two soldiers of the 39th Infantry Battalion they abducted at the height of the unilateral ceasefire last February 2," said Captain Rhyen Batchar, chief information officer of 10th ID.

The soldiers held by the communist rebels are Sgt. Solaiman Calucop and PFC Samuel Garay.

Batchar said there is "no more hindrance to the release of the soldiers."

DPAA

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

www.retiredanalyst.blogspot.com

Army denies accusations of having abusive members

From the Sun Star-Davao: Army denies accusations of having abusive members

THE Army's 10th Infantry Division belied allegations by a militant organization attributing the deaths of several people in Davao Region to their soldiers.

Captain Alexandre Cabales, acting chief of the 10th Infantry Division Public Affairs Office, said the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), particularly the 10th Infantry Division, do not condone any misbehavior and abuses of its members.

He said the division urged the organizations, like Karapatan, to file complaints against suspects of those killings—soldiers or not—before the appropriate government investigating or judicial bodies so justice will be served.

"If the suspects are members of the division, we will welcome, cooperate and support the investigations and judicial process. We will be grateful to those who will help us purge our ranks of misfits and abusive members," Cabales said.

Cabales also urged the organizations to go beyond their usual communist propaganda lines and seek justice for those victims through the rule of law and not through press releases and statements.

"The police likewise called upon the community or anyone who has information to help them in their investigations. The allegations against our soldiers are therefore unfounded without any basis," he added.

Cabales said based on their initial investigations and research of police reports, the deaths of the couple Ramon and Leonila Pesadilla in Compostela, the couple Arlene and Arman Alcominar, Cora Lina in Laak, Pedro Pandagay in Mabini, Danilo Nadal and Edwin Catog in Pantukan, and Elias Pureza in San Isidro in Davao del Norte are still under investigation and that there is still no suspect.

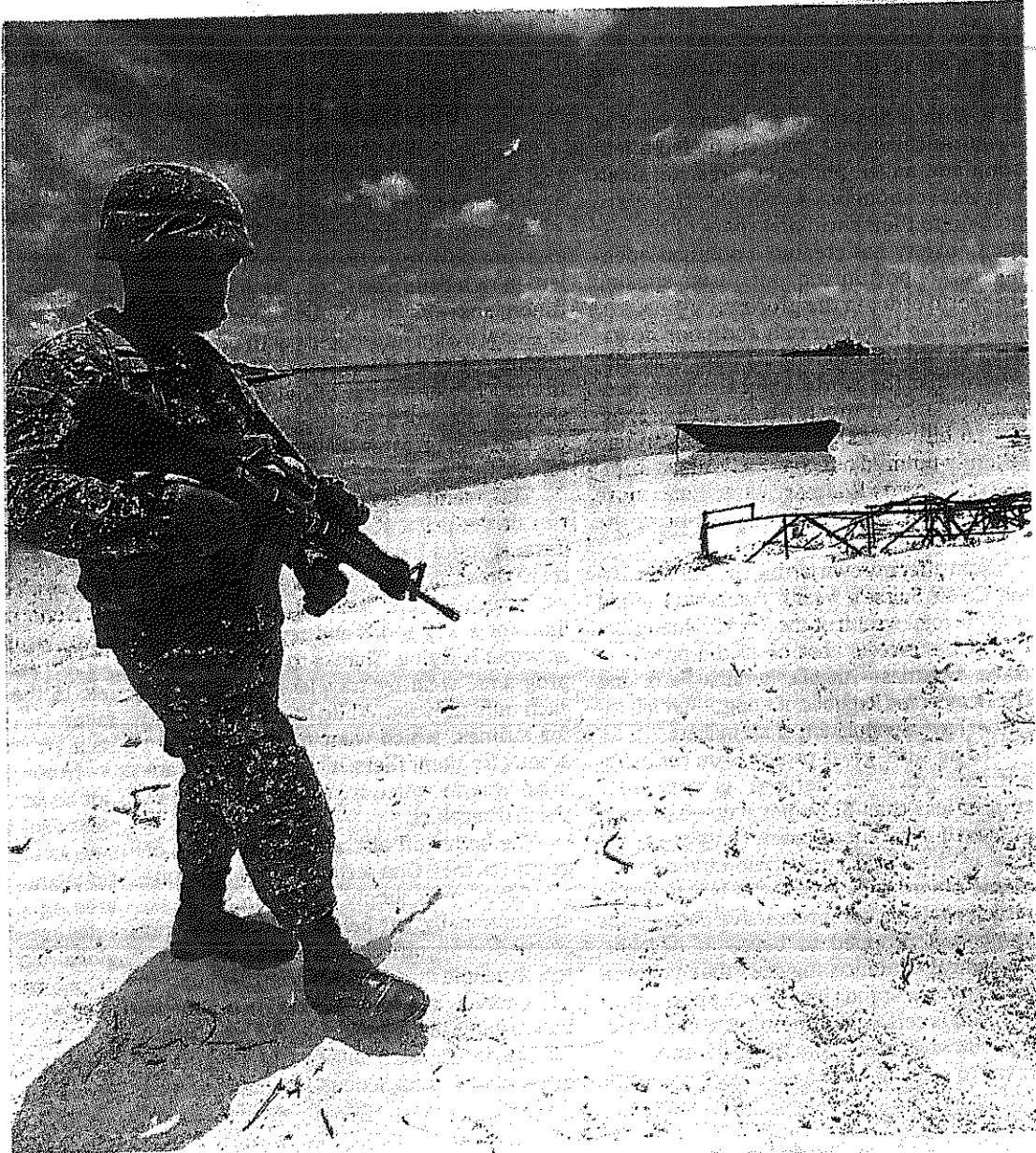
<http://www.sunstar.com.ph/davao/local-news/2017/04/12/army-denies-accusations-having-abusive-members-536433>

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

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INQUIRER

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A Filipino soldier in Pagasa—FILE PHOTO

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CIA OPERATION?

LORENZANA SAYS CPP DELUSIONAL ON BOHOL ATTACK

By Philip C. Tubeza
@pctubezaINQ

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana on Sunday lashed out at the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) for claiming that the United States was behind the Abu Sayyaf attack in Bohol last week.

Lorenzana said the CPP had become "delusional" and had become "the victim of its own propaganda" when it claimed that the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was behind the bandits' incursion in Central Visayas.

"The CPP, as before, has become delusional and can no longer distinguish between what is fact and what is fantasy," Lorenzana said.

"It has clearly become a victim of its own propagandizing and has rendered itself inutile and an unreliable source of the truth. It is not and has never been credible," he said.

Last week, Abu Sayyaf members arrived in Bohol but were cornered by the military and the police.

The ensuing firefight killed six rebel gunmen as well as three soldiers and one policeman.

However, the CPP on Friday accused the United States of being behind the Abu Sayyaf attack, which Lorenzana denied.

"Definitely, transparency is not a value they have. Just like the Plaza Miranda bombing which they hatched, executed, denied, and eventually admitted, the CPP is likely to create scenarios and will pass off these lies as the truth in order to push its selfish, antipeople and antigovernment motives, such as extortion, kidnapping and intimidation," Lorenzana said.

"If there is a fake organization composed of individuals pretending to be patriots and nationalists, it is these communist terrorists," he said.

In its statement, the CPP questioned statements from the Philippine government and called the military operations "overkill."

"The news stories regarding the supposed arrival and presence of members of the Abu Sayyaf criminal bandit group in Bohol island smacks of US yarn," the CPP said.

It said the Philippine Air Force dropped nine bombs in Barangays Napo, Calenti and Banahao in Inabanga, Bohol, forcing at least 1,200 local residents to evacuate.

"The Armed Forces of the Philippines 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,'" the CPP said. INQ

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Defense chief brushes aside CPP claims on Bohol ops

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

Department of National Defense (DND) Secretary Delfin Lorenzana on Sunday said that the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) has become delusional and can no longer distinguish between what is fact and

what is fantasy.

Lorenzana made the remark as his reply to the CPP's statement accusing the United States government of having a hand in the military operations against the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in Inabanga, Bohol last week.

According to the CPP, the news

stories regarding the supposed arrival and presence of members of the Abu Sayyaf terrorist group in Bohol 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," the CPP said in a statement released on Friday.

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

Lorenzana said the CPP has clearly become a victim of its own propagandizing and has rendered itself inutile and an unreliable source of the truth.

"It is not and has never been credible. Definitely, transparency is not a value they have," Lorenzana said.

"Just like the Plaza Miranda bombing which they hatched, executed, denied, and eventually admitted, the CPP is likely to create scenarios and will pass off these lies as the truth in order to push its selfish, anti-people and anti-government motives, such as extortion, kidnapping and intimidation," he added.

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ABU SAYYAF BANDITS BEHEAD BOAT CAPTAIN ABDUCTED IN CELEBES SEA

By Philip C. Tubeza
@pctubezaINQ

Abu Sayyaf bandits beheaded a Filipino fishing boat captain abducted last December in the Celebes Sea, a ranking military

official said yesterday.

Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, head of Joint Task Force Sulu, confirmed that Noel Besconde, captain of FB Ramona 2, had been beheaded by the bandits.

Sobejana said the military

was able to confirm Besconde's death after getting hold of the video showing his beheading and after getting more details from military sources on the ground.

He said the group of Abu Sayyaf sub-leader Hatib Hajan

Sawadjaan beheaded Besconde at around 2:30 p.m. on April 13.

"Now, we are looking hard for his cadaver so that we could return him to his family and he could be given a decent burial," Sobejana said.

The FB Ramona 2 was found empty on Dec. 19, 2016, in the Celebes Sea near Sulu province.

Besconde and his three crewmen, all residents of Tukuran, Zamboanga del Sur province, were also missing.

Sobejana said the bandits might have beheaded the captain because he was already "sickly."

He added that the bandits had called the victim's family but the latter could not raise the ransom money of P3 million. INQ

7 April 2017



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DND chief slams 'terrorist, delusional' CPP

By MICHAEL PUNONGBAYAN

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana yesterday branded members of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) as terrorists for claiming that last week's military operation against the Abu Sayyaf in Bohol was overkill.

"If there is a fake organization composed of individuals pretending to be patriots and nationalists, it is these communist terrorists," Lorenzana said in a statement.

The CPP has become delusional and could no longer distinguish between fact and fantasy, he said.

"It has clearly become a victim of its own propagandizing and has rendered itself inutile and an unreliable source of the truth. It is not and has never been credible."

Lorenzana said transparency is definitely not among the values of the CPP, which on Friday accused the US of having a hand in the attack in Bohol.

"The news stories regarding the supposed arrival and presence of members of the Abu Sayaff bandit group on Bohol island smack of a US yarn," the CPP said.

"The Philippine Air Force dropped nine bombs in barangays Napo, Calenti and Banahao in Inabanga, forcing at least 1,200 local residents to evacuate," it added.

The communist group contradicted a report of the Armed Forces that six bandits, three soldiers and a police officer were killed in the encounter.

It said two of the casualties were actually civilians.

Before the bandits were spotted in Bohol, the US embassy warned its citizens against visiting central Philippines due to threats of kidnappings.

With the help of residents, the military repelled the bandits.

One of the slain terrorists was identified as Maumar Askali, alias Abu Rami, commander and spokesman for the bandit group.

Askali had taken part in the kidnap-

ping and beheading of two Canadians and a German in the past year.

The defense department slammed the CPP for questioning the military operation against

the Abu Sayyaf in Barangay Napo, Inabanga.

"Just like the Plaza Miranda bombing which they hatched, executed, denied and eventually admitted - the CPP is likely to create

scenarios and will pass off these lies as truth in order to push its selfish, anti-people and anti-government motives such as extortion, kidnapping and intimidation," Lorenzana said.

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The Manila Times

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Sayyaf beheads Pinoy hostage

BY AL JACINTO

ZAMBOANGA CITY:
The Abu Sayyaf
Group (ASG) has
beheaded a Filipino
hostage in Sulu.

Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana Jr. commander of Joint Task Force Sulu, identified the victim as Noel Besconde, the captain of F/B Ramona who was abducted along with three others in the Celebes Sea in December last year.

Besconde was reportedly sick, prompting the bandits to behead him because he was delaying their

➤ Beheads A2

■ **BEHEADS FROM A1**

Sayyaf

movement, Sobejana said.

Sobejana said that troops "are currently in the area where the incident transpired" to retrieve the remains of the executed hostage.

The other crewmen who were kidnapped along with Besconde were Reyjim Rocabo, Roy Ramos and Roel Liones, all residents of Tukuran, Zamboanga del Sur. Other reports said the hostage was beheaded to avenge the recent killing of Abu Sayyaf leader Muamar Askali alias Abu Rami who died in a clash with security forces in Bohol province.

Besconde was among a group of four fishermen kidnapped in December last year off Sulu archipelago.

The Abu Sayyaf, which is still

holding about two dozen Asian sailors kidnapped off Basilan and Tawi-Tawi provinces in the Muslim autonomous region, has not released a statement on the execution of Besconde.

Besconde was reportedly beheaded by the group of ASG sub-leader Almujeer Yadah in Patikul, Sulu.

A senior Abu Sayyaf leader, Radulan Sahiron, was also reported to have sent surrender feelers to the military and is willing to help authorities capture or convince other commanders to surrender in exchange for amnesty. He allegedly wanted a cut in the bounties offered by government for other Abu Sayyaf leaders.

Sahiron is wanted by the Philippines and the United States on terrorism charges. The US has offered up to \$1 million bounty for Sahiron's capture.

"Many innocent men, women

and children have died or have been seriously injured as a result of Sahiron's actions. Sahiron played a role in the May 2001 Dos Palmas kidnapping of three US citizens, including Martin and Gracia Burnham, and 17 Filipinos from a tourist resort in Palawan, Philippines. Several of the hostages, including U.S. citizen Guillermo Sobero, were murdered," according to information posted by the US Reward for Justice.

"Sahiron is believed to be hiding in southern Mindanao where he continues to plot terror schemes that impact many communities. Because of his leadership position within the ASG, whose terrorist attacks have resulted in the deaths of US and Filipino citizens, US authorities consider Sahiron to be a threat to US and Filipino citizens and interests," it added. **WITH PNA**

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IT'S ON AGAIN

PH, US TO HOLD WAR GAMES NEXT MONTH

The military said on Sunday that it would hold annual exercises with US troops next month, reaffirming its commitment to the alliance despite cooling relations under President Duterte.

The 10-day exercises will be the first held under Mr. Duterte, who has suggested canceling the drills and called for the withdrawal of American troops, putting into question Manila's 70-year-old alliance with Washington as he looks instead to court China.

The outspoken Filipino leader, who has earned international censure for a war on drugs that has seen thousands killed, has since softened his stance on working with the US military.

The annual military exercises, known as "Balikatan" (Shoulder-to-Shoulder), will now go ahead in May, focusing on counter-terrorism and disaster response as the Philippines battles Islamic militants in their lawless southern strongholds.

"It will be scenario-based like [preparing for] a big storm hitting the Philippines or the possibility of terrorism," Balikatan spokesperson Major Celeste Frank Sayson told Agence France-Presse (AFP). "We are safe to say there will be no more live-fire exercises. We [will] focus on humanitarian and civil assistance."

In previous years Balikatan had evolved from counter-terrorism maneuvers against Islamic militants to simulations of protecting or retaking territory, as a dispute with Beijing over islands in the South China Sea escalated.

But Mr. Duterte, who took office last year, has sought improved relations with China and has set aside the maritime row in favor of economic concessions. -AFP

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Phil, US to hold military drills

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But Duterte, who took office last year, has sought improved relations with China and has set aside the maritime row in favor of economic concessions.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana had said the exercises would refocus on fighting terrorism, which he described as the country's top security problem.

The country is battling Islamic militants and pirates in the conflict-torn south, where several groups have pledged allegiance to Islamic State fighters in Iraq and Syria.

– AFP

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The Manila Times

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Group hits killing of MILF vice chairman's brother

BY JULMUNIR JANNARAL

SHARIFF AGUAK, Maguindanao: A civil society organization on Sunday condemned the killing of the brother of Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) vice chairperson Gadzali Jaafar, labelling it as a move aimed at sabotaging talks between the government and the rebel group.

Philippine National Police (PNP) operatives on Tuesday last week shot dead Jaafar's brother, Mohaimen Abo, in what the former claimed to be a legitimate police operation.

However, Alan Balangi-Amer, president of 1-Bangsamoro Movement (1-Bangsa), said the operation against Abo violated a security agreement between the MILF and the government where the latter conceded to the former the author-

ity to arrest MILF members facing criminal charges.

Abo was also known in MILF circles as Commander Falcon or Ustadz Mohaimen.

Senior Superintendent Agustin Tello, director of the Maguindanao provincial police, claimed that Abo was facing arrest for criminal charges including kidnapping with homicide, kidnapping for ransom, murder, and frustrated murder.

"He was facing criminal cases

in courts in Midsayap, North Cotabato and in Surallah, South Cotabato," Tello said.

Citing a report from the municipal police office of Sultan Kudarat, Tello related that when PNP operatives sought to arrest Abo, the latter pulled out a pistol, triggering a shootout that resulted in his death.

Jaafar, for his part, clarified that under the 1997 Agreement on General Cessation of Hostilities (AGCH) between the MILF and the government, the arrest of MILF members may only be carried out in coordination with the ceasefire committee and Ad-Hoc Joint Action Group formed by both panels.

Balangi-Amer said the PNP operatives should have respected the provisions of the 1997 AGCH.

He likened the PNP operation against Abo to the Mamasapano

incident during the administration of former president Benigno Aquino 3rd that resulted in the killing of 44 police commandos.

He said that like the Mamasapano incident, no proper coordination with the government-MILF ceasefire committee and Ad-Hoc Joint Action Group was made by the PNP when it sought to arrest Abo.

"We in the 1-Bangsa are calling on all stakeholders of peace not to allow the spoilers of peace to succeed in their grand design to drive away the elusive peace, since the Bangsamoro people in general whether Muslims, Christians, and Lumads are now feeling tired of war in Mindanao," the 1-Bangsa president told The Manila Times.

"What we need is a genuine peace for everyone to enjoy and not the peace and tranquility of a graveyard," he said.

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THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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Duterte: PH is fundamentally peaceful

By GENALYN D. KABILING



DOHA, Qatar - The Philippines is "fundamentally peaceful" despite the lingering threat from the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) linked with the Islamic State, President Duterte affirmed last Saturday.

The President highlighted the progress in the government's efforts to forge peace with communist rebels and Muslim separatists as he tried to attract investments back home.

"The Philippines today is fundamentally peaceful," the President said during the Philippine-Qatar business forum last Saturday.

"The MI the MN are talking to me now and even the Communists. We do not have any trouble with the rebellions now," he said, referring to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, Moro National Liberation Front, and the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army.

On the peace efforts with the Muslim groups, the President said both sides are trying reach a consensus on the proposed framework of the Bangsamoro Basic Law.

"We are trying to figure the infrastructure of how we should proceed and by what manner should be the historical injustice corrected. That is the most important thing there," he said.

The government's peace initiatives to end the decades-old Communist insurgency are also ongoing, according to the President.

"I have to talk to the Communists because we are friends," he said.

The President, however, admitted the country has to deal with threats posedn by ASG bandits in Mindanao.

"What we have inherited, all of us in this world, is the violent ideology of the ISIS. They are here, they are in Mindanao," he said.

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The
Standard
DEFINING THE NEWS

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MILF hits out at govt for ceasefire violation

By Nash B. Maulana

COTABATO CITY—The Moro Islamic Liberation Front was set to file a protest for violation of its standing ceasefire agreement with the government, following the killing of one of its members in a police operation on Tuesday.

Ghadzali Jaafar, MILF first vice chairman, said the police operation against his brother Mohaimen Abo, was yet another instance of a failure of coordination, as provided under a 19-year-old peace agreement with the government.

The Philippine National Po-

lice in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (PNP-ARMM) said authorities were serving arrest warrants on Abo at his house in Barangay Crossing Simuay, Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao Tuesday.

Senior Insp. Marcille Manzano, spokesperson of the PNP-ARMM, said Abo, also known as Boy Bangsamoro, resisted arrest and was killed in the ensuing exchange of fire.

But Jaafar said the proper channel should have been the bilateral Ad Hoc Joint Action Group, since his brother was a member of the MILF's Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces. *Next page*

Police arrested two other members during the operation.

"You know if the government should conduct a law enforcement operation, there is a ceasefire mechanism [in place as a channel] for it, as bilaterally agreed by the government and the MILF," Jaafar said, referring to AHJAG.

Jaafar said a failure in bilateral

coordination for law enforcement operations was an obstacle to peace.

Manzano, however, said the arresting officers were compelled to fire back when Abo shot at them.

Police said he had a .45 pistol.

The Regional Trial Court of Sultan Kudarat Branch 12 has ordered the arrest of Abo, and a certain Kumander Falcon, for a string of criminal cases, including murder, robbery, frustrated murder, kidnapping-for-ransom and kidnapping with homicide.

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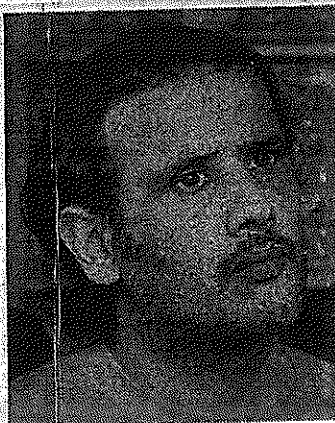
ISIS bomber deported to Kuwait

By Julius Leonen

Philippine state security forces have deported suspected terrorist Hissein Aldhafiri, who is feared to be a bomb expert working for the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), back to Kuwait where he will be facing charges for plotting terror operations.

Aldhafiri and his wife Rahaf Zina were suspected to be active members of the notorious Middle Eastern terrorist group based on information from American investigating authorities and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

Department of Justice (DoJ) Undersecretary Erickson Balmes,



ALDHAFIRI

citing a spot report from the Bureau of Immigration (BI) Fugitive Search Unit (FSU), said that

Aldhafiri was transported to the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) last Friday noon for his deportation.

According to the spot report, BI FSU agents transported the suspected ISIS bomb expert from the AFP Intelligence Service Group (ISG) headquarters in Fort Bonifacio in Taguig City.

Hussein was then escorted by FSU agents, together with personnel from the BI Warden Facility and the Manila International Airport Authority-Airport Police Department to NAIA Terminal 1 for his deportation.

Aldhafiri was deported following the request of the Kuwaiti Embassy for the Philippine government to

assist its security services personnel in processing the suspected bomber's deportation.

In a letter to the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), the Kuwaiti Embassy said that evidences obtained by Kuwaiti's state security agencies showed that Aldhafiri is planning to carry out terroristic attacks against Kuwait.

The Kuwaiti Embassy added that Aldhafiri has a standing warrant of arrest issued against him by the Kuwaiti Prosecutor General in relation to crimes against the state.

Meanwhile, Aldhafiri's wife, Zina, is believed to be the widow of Abu Jandal Al-Kuwaiti, ISIS' former number two military

commander operating in Syria.

Immigration authorities are also set to deport Zina back to Syria.

"Wherefore, finding the charge to be sufficient and well substantiated, we hereby order the deportation of Rahaf Zina to Syria, subject to the submission of her National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) clearance," read the BI department order.

The BI has also blacklisted Zina under the remarks "undocumented" and "undesirable." The deportation order also stated that Zina's presence in the country "poses risk to public interest."

Aldhafiri and Zina were arrested in Taguig City after the United States Federal Bureau of

Investigation (FBI) tipped Philippine authorities that the couple are ISIS members.

The FBI also informed state security forces that Aldhafiri and Zina are believed to be involved in explosives manufacturing.

DoJ Secretary Vitaliano Aguirre also bared that the nabbed terrorists had entered and exited the country several times. He added that Aldhafiri and Zina had visited Cebu and Davao last January.

But Aguirre said that they are still investigating why the suspected terrorists visited the country. The Justice chief said Aldhafiri and Zina were only charged for violation of immigration laws for failing to produce proper immigration documents.

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DND probes Phl role in Indonesian ship bribery case

By EDITH REGALADO

DAVAO CITY – Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana has ordered an investigation on the possible involvement of Philippine officials in the alleged bribery case over the sale of two strategic sealift vessels

Navy bought two SSVs worth at least P4 billion: the *BRP Tarlac*, which was delivered in May 2016, and *BRP Davao del Sur*, expected to be delivered next month.

The alleged bribery case involving PT. PAL officials does not affect the on-time delivery

(SSV) to the Philippines that has so far seen the arrest of 17 people in Indonesia.

“We are looking into it, if any Filipino official is involved in the bribery case. Definitely, there will be an investigation,” Lorenzana said.

Manila-based Indonesian broker Ashanti Sales allegedly agreed with PT. PAL officials on a cash back deal from the sale that amounted to about 4.7 percent of the contract value.

PT. PAL is an Indonesian state-owned shipbuilding company, from which the Philippine

of the second warship, according to the defense chief.

Philippine Navy Flag-Officer-in-Command Rear Admiral Ronald Mercado likewise told **The STAR** that a technical team has been sent to Surabaya to check on *BRP Davao del Sur*.

“We have to check it when it comes to the technical aspect before *BRP Davao del Sur* can be delivered here,” Mercado said.

Last March 30, elements of Indonesia’s Corruption Eradication Commission (Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi or KPK) picked up PT.

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AFP to create all-Muslim fighting units

The military has announced plans to create all-Muslim fighting units, with quotas from the Catholic country's largest religious minority, as it looks to bolster efforts to tackle Islamic insurgents.

Five percent of all new applications will be allocated for Muslims under the new order, military spokesman Col. Edgard Arevalo said in a statement on Saturday, adding the eventual aim was to have a dedicated brigade or division to be deployed in the country's troubled south.

The country is battling Muslim extremist militants in lawless southern regions, some of whom have pledged allegiance to the Islamic State group.

Arevalo said the Muslim quota, which roughly reflects the proportion of the religious minority in the population, would help the army operate in areas where it has been previously viewed with suspicion by local people.

"Most of our Muslim brothers and sisters perceive the deployment of almost 100 percent Christian soldiers in their

communities as invading or occupational forces," he said, adding that fellow Muslims would be more aware of religious or cultural "sensitivities."

The statement did not give details of the existing numbers of Muslims in the military.

The southern region of Mindanao, the ancestral homeland of the country's Muslim minority, has been locked in a separatist insurgency since the 1970s, with the conflict claiming more than 120,000 lives.

While the major rebel organizations have for years observed a ceasefire with the government as part of peace efforts, there are breakaway factions opposed to compromise and other gangs that have declared allegiance to the IS.

Earlier this week, security forces clashed with suspected Islamic militants from the Abu Sayyaf kidnap group on a popular resort island, the first attack on a key tourist destination in recent years.

- AFP

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INQUIRER

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AN EVENT TO WATCH OUT FOR

President Duterte ordered the military to occupy and fortify all Philippine-held islands in the disputed West Philippine Sea to assert the country's territorial claims amid what he says is a race to control territory in the area. "We try to be friends with everybody, but we have to maintain our jurisdiction now, at least over the areas under our control," he said during a visit to a military camp in western Palawan ("Philippines to fortify Spratly islands it occupies," *Inquirer.net*, 4/7/17). Mr. Duterte said he ordered the armed forces to occupy and place Philippine flags on all islands, reefs and shoals controlled by the Philippines.

We can see that although there's a new development warning of or indicating Chinese intrusions into Philippine territory, the President continues to mend ties with China,

which were strained during the previous administration.

The recent order to occupy Philippine-held West Philippine Sea islands, reefs, shoals and the like is one good move that may be cited to dispute the impeachment complaint filed against Mr. Duterte for his failure to protest China's intrusions into the West Philippine Sea, among other allegations. It looks now like there's a race to grab possession of islands. Indeed, what is ours is ours and on this we must emphatically make a point by holding on to what is ours.

Meanwhile, he said he will rename Benham Rise, a resource-rich undersea region off the country's northeast coast, into Philippine Ridge.

But what matters right now is the military positioning in those contested areas. The government can do this by prepositioning infrastructure—that is by building

bunkers or houses for habitation, with provisions. If this is approved by the President, the Department of National Defense and the Armed Forces of the Philippines should put up barracks for soldiers, water (desalination) and sewage systems, power (conventional and renewable) generators, lighthouses, and shelters for fishermen.

The President said he may visit one of the islands, Pagasa, and raise the Philippine flag there on Independence Day. He said a budget has been set aside to repair the runway on Pagasa, home to a small fishing community and Filipino troops. The DND and AFP are just waiting for the President's order regarding the flag-raising or any show of jurisdiction.

There is a good story to watch out for. Will this happen or not?

VIOLET PEACHY E. SIUAGAN,
vpesiuagan@gmail.com

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

ONLINE NEWS

17 APRIL 2017

www.retiredanalyst.blogspot.com

Palace counters Karapatan's claims of political executions

From the Sun Star-Manila (Apr 12): **Palace counters Karapatan's claims of political executions**

MALACANANG on Wednesday denied that there have been political executions under the watch of President Rodrigo Duterte.

Presidential Spokesperson Ernesto Abella belied the accusation of rights advocacy group Karapatan Alliance for the Advancement of People's Right that there are 47 alleged killings of peasants, indigenous peoples and workers considered as human rights defenders under the Duterte administration.

Abella said the latest allegation negates the President's "long-standing principle" to address problems through a peaceful approach.

"It is not the policy of the Duterte administration to violate citizens' human rights," Abella said in a statement.

Abella's statement came on the heels of Karapatan's plea to United Nations special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary of arbitrary executions Agnes Callamard to "consider, investigate, make recommendations and take any appropriate actions" on the supposed political executions in the Philippines.

In a letter by Karapatan secretary general Cristina Palabay addressed to Callamard, a total of 47 cases of political killings have reportedly been documented by the rights advocacy group from July 2016 to March 31, 2017, in line with the government's continuing counter-insurgency program.

"These killings are all in the context of the counter-insurgency programs implemented from one regime to another that supposedly seek to end the armed rebellion of revolutionary movements in the Philippines," Palabay said in a letter sent to Callamard on Tuesday.

"These counter-insurgency programs have victimized thousands of Filipinos, including struggling communities, tagged as 'enemies of the state,'" she added.

Kadamay pinned hope that Callamard could convince Duterte to "completely junk counterinsurgency programs; issue strong warnings to and prosecute EJK (extrajudicial killing) perpetrators; and continue to pursue efforts at attaining just and lasting peace with the NDFP (National Democratic Front) and the Moro liberation movements."

Abella questioned the latest move by Karapatan, citing that the country's justice system and domestic institutions "are more than adequate to judge the matter."

He said Duterte welcomes international probers to "sovereign and democratic" Philippines but certain conditions must be met before they could be able to "come in and interfere with its domestic affairs."

"Despite the initial setbacks, the [government] and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines continue to pursue peace and seek solutions to the root problems of the age-old armed conflict," the presidential spokesperson said.

<http://www.sunstar.com.ph/manila/local-news/2017/04/12/palace-counters-karapatans-claims-political-executions-536348>

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

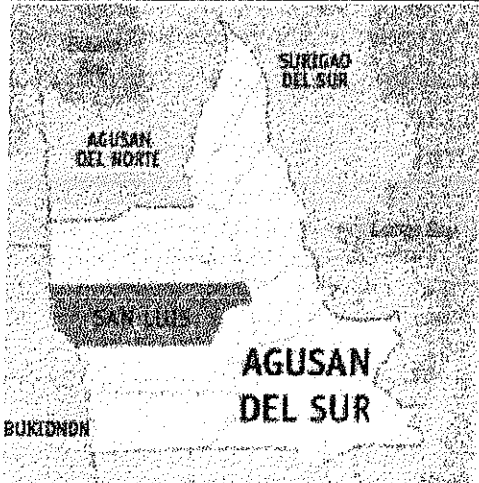
Army vision: By 2028, a world-class Army that is a source of national pride.

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Operation against NPA's stepped up in Agusan del Sur

From the Manila Bulletin (Apr 16): Operation against NPA's stepped up in Agusan del Sur

A wide pursuit operation against the fleeing New People's Army (NPA) rebels, the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), was stepped up on Sunday in the hinterland area of Mahagsay, 40 kilometers from San Luis town in Agusan del Sur province.



(Wikimedia / MANILA BULLETIN)

The operation of the 26th Infantry Battalion (26th IB), which is being closely monitored and supervised by the command group of 401st Infantry (Unity) Brigade (401st IB) based in New Leyte, Prosperidad town of that same province, is currently being supported by the Tactical Operations Group (TOG) of the Philippine Air Force (PAF) Strike Wing.

The 26th IB has been pursuing the main body of Guerrilla-Front Committee 88 of the North-Central Mindanao Regional Committee, which abandoned their camp during gun battle on Maundy Thursday in Mahagsay area, said 401st Brigade Civil Military Operations Officer Capt. Jasper T. Gacayan.

The 401st CMO Officer said that the fleeing rebels had dragged along with them their wounded comrades-in-arms as they fled towards the border of Agusan and Bukidnon.

"We want to bring their wounded to the hospital for medical treatment," he said.

The command is also open for the other rebels who wanted to return to the folds of the law and avail of the government's peace and development program, Capt. Gacayan said.

"The Maundy Thursday gun battle with communist insurgents led to the capture of the estimated two hectares NPA encampment in Mahagsay area," he said.

No one on the government side was hurt during that gun battle, he said.

The CMO officer said that Col. Cristobal N. Zaragoza, commanding officer of the 401st Brigade deployed more combat maneuvering troops in San Luis town to beef up the forces of 26th IB Commander Lt. Col. Rommel Pagayon who continuously pursued without let up the fleeing rebels.

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