

*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**

**23 April 2017**

**Sunday**

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

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**PANAHON TV**

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PHILIPPINE DAILY

# INQUIRER

BALANCED NEWS • FEARLESS VIEWS

**TODAY'S WEATHER FORECAST | APRIL 23, 2017 | SUNDAY**

RIDGE OF HIGH PRESSURE AREA  
EXTENDING ACROSS LUZON AND VISAYAS  
EASTERLIES  
AFFECTING THE EASTERN  
SECTIONS OF MINDANAO  
(As of 5:00 AM - Apr. 22, 2017)

PHILIPPINE AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY (PAR)

CELEBES SEA

<b>SUNRISE</b> 5:38 AM	<b>SUNSET</b> 6:11 PM
<b>MOONRISE</b> 2:59 AM	<b>MOONSET</b> 3:09 PM
<b>LAST QUARTER</b> APR 19 5:57 AM	<b>NEW MOON</b> APR 26 6:16 PM
<b>LOW TIDE</b> 1:09 AM 0.40 Meter	<b>HIGH TIDE</b> 7:43 PM 0.77 Meter

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

	APR 24	APR 25	APR 24	APR 25	APR 24	APR 25		
<b>METRO MANILA</b>	25 - 35 °C	24 - 35 °C	<b>TAGAYTAY</b>	22 - 32 °C	21 - 32 °C	<b>TACLOBAN</b>	24 - 31 °C	24 - 31 °C
<b>TUGUEGARAO</b>	24 - 34 °C	24 - 35 °C	<b>LEGAZPI</b>	26 - 32 °C	26 - 32 °C	<b>CAGAYAN DE ORO</b>	24 - 32 °C	24 - 32 °C
<b>LAOAG</b>	23 - 31 °C	23 - 32 °C	<b>PUERTO PRINCESA</b>	26 - 33 °C	26 - 33 °C	<b>METRO DAVAO</b>	26 - 34 °C	26 - 34 °C
<b>BAGUIO</b>	16 - 26 °C	16 - 26 °C	<b>ILOILO/ BACOLOD</b>	26 - 32 °C	26 - 32 °C	<b>ZAMBOANGA</b>	24 - 33 °C	24 - 33 °C
<b>SBMA/ CLARK</b>	25 - 35 °C	25 - 35 °C	<b>METRO CEBU</b>	25 - 32 °C	25 - 32 °C	<p style="font-size: x-small;">SRGOT NO. PADALA MO!</p>		

Watch PanahonTV on DZRH News Television from Monday to Friday at 11:00 AM and 5:00 PM, and via Pilipinas HD at 6:00 AM, 6:30 PM and 9:00 PM.

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# GOV'T TROOPS KILL BOHOLANO 'ABU'

STORY BY LEO UDTOHAN

Government forces caught up with a group of fleeing Abu Sayyaf members on Saturday, triggering a gun battle that left one of the militants—a Bohol native—dead. The clash erupted when a motorcycle-taxi driver grew suspicious of his smelly passenger and tipped off the police about the Abu Sayyaf rebels in Clarin town in Bohol.

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Lawmen have cordoned a cave in Clarin town where 7 other Abu Sayyaf members are believed to be in hiding

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By Leo Udtohan  
@leoudtohanINQ

CLARIN, BOHOL—A joint team of soldiers and police caught up with a group of fleeing Abu Sayyaf members on Saturday, triggering a gun battle that left one of the militants—a Bohol native—dead.

The clash erupted shortly after a motorcycle-taxi driver became suspicious of his smelly passenger and tipped off the police about the possible presence of the members of the Abu Sayyaf in the town of Clarin in Bohol.

Slain in the clash was Joselito Melloria, a native of Inabanga town who had left his village to marry the daughter of a leader of the bandit group.

Last week, five Abu Sayyaf gunmen and four security forces were killed when security forces foiled an attempt by the gunmen to set up a base in nearby Inabanga town.

One of those slain was identified by the military as Abu Rami, a young Abu Sayyaf leader blamed for the beheadings last year of two Canadian hostages and a German in February.

A joint contingent of police and military troops secured a cave and its surroundings in Barangay Bacani where they believed the remaining seven others had been hit.

The cave has a narrow entrance of just about a meter wide, but is believed to be at least 7 meters deep. According to the military officials, the cave doesn't connect to other caves in the municipality.

The gunmen were allegedly planning to set up a base and conduct terror activities in nearby provinces from Inabanga last week.

They were reportedly planning to disrupt Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) meetings in the tourist area of Panglao town, which ended on Saturday.

Melloria was a local Christian villager who converted to Islam and later married the daughter of an Abu Sayyaf leader a few years ago. Security analysts said he later became associated with Abu Rami and the two subsequently planned the foray into Bohol.

But security forces and the US and Australian embassies were warned of the Abu Sayyaf plan after receiving intelligence reports.

President Duterte visited Bohol last week and offered a

P1-million peso reward for any information that would lead to the arrest or neutralization each of the Abu Sayyaf stragglers. He also said he intended to "arm the civilians" to protect themselves from the militants, a controversial statement that did not sit well with rights groups.

The subsequent pursuit operation forced the bandit group to move to Clarin, a coastal municipality which is about 11 kilometers from the adjacent town of Inabanga.

Military sources told the Inquirer that an Abu Sayyaf member rode a "habal-habal," or a motorcycle-taxi, to take him back to Barangay Bacani, a distance of about 3 km, past noon on Saturday. He had come from the village of Centro to buy bread.

The driver noticed that his passenger was disheveled and smelly as if he had not taken a bath for a long time.

"The passenger didn't also speak Bol-anon, but in a different dialect," said a military officer who asked not to be identified.

The driver dropped off his passenger at the barangay proper of Bacani and proceeded to the police station to report what he noticed. The police then alerted the military and formed a joint team to go to Bacani.

The team chanced upon the Abu Sayyaf member who immediately ran toward the cave, which was about 150 meters away.

Bursts of gunfire from the cornered gunmen then followed. A firefight followed but the militants ran to the forested mountains.

Melloria was hit in the left shoulder, right chest and left temple, killing him on the spot. Pursuit operations were ongoing as of Saturday evening.

In the meantime, at least 1,000 residents were evacuated mostly from Bacani and the adjacent Barangay Nahawan to the Clarin Cultural Center.

SPO4 Romel Petecio, the local police chief, said personnel from the municipality came with several vehicles to evacuate fearful civilians.

Authorities also barred private vehicles from entering Barangay Nahawan.

The municipal government of Inabanga warned motorists coming from the town of Talibon and were bound for Tagbilaran City via Inabanga not to proceed. The desperate Abu Sayyaf gunmen could hijack their vehicle and take as human shields, it said. —WITH A REPORT FROM JHUNNEX NAPALLACAN INQ

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# DND chief's island visit alarms China

Lu said China's President Xi Jinping and President Duterte had reached a consensus "to properly deal with the South China Sea issue."

"We hope that the Philippine side could cherish the hard-won sound momentum of development the bilateral relations are experiencing, faithfully follow the consensus reached between the two leaderships, maintain general peace and stability in the South China Sea, and promote the sound and steady development of China-Philippine relations," he added.

But Lu said they are still verifying the facts regarding the visit, and that Manila and Beijing have been in constant

**Turn to Page 6**

By JANVIC MATEO

China has expressed alarm over the visit of Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana and Armed Forces chief Gen. Eduardo Año to Pag-Asa Island last Friday, saying it ran counter to an "important consensus" reached between the leaders of the two countries.

"Gravely concerned about and dissatisfied with this, China has lodged representations with the Philippine side," Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Lu Kang said in a press briefing before the weekend.

## DND From Page 1

communication on how to manage maritime issues since Duterte's visit to China last year.

"We hope that this momentum can continue. We hope that the Philippines can work with China to jointly maintain regional peace and stability as well as the sound momentum of moving bilateral relations forward," said the Chinese official.

On Friday, Lorenzana and Año – along with other military officials and several members of the media – flew to Pag-Asa Island in the disputed Spratlys.

They attended a flag ceremony with the defense chief assuring government troops that the Duterte administration is looking after their welfare amid the tension over the conflicting

territorial claims in the region. He also revealed the allocation of P1.6 billion for the development of the island community.

En route to Pag-Asa, the plane carrying Lorenzana and Año received a warning from Chinese forces to leave the area.

The pilot of the C-130 transport plane carrying the officials responded that they were in Philippine airspace.

Lorenzana downplayed the incident, saying Philippine aircraft in resupply operations normally receive warnings from Chinese forces.

But in a separate statement, National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr. said the administration is taking the challenge seriously.

"A challenge is not some-

thing that is really positive. But a challenge could just be to identify yourself but it could also mean that you're challenging because you think that's your territory," he was quoted as saying.

### Part of mandate

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), for its part, defended the Philippine officials' visit to Pag-Asa, saying it was part of government's mandate to ensure the welfare of citizens in the island community.

DFA spokesman Robespierre Bolivar has already lodged a protest against the visit.

"The Chinese have conveyed their sentiments. We have already stated our position that Pag-Asa, and the larger Kalayaan Group, is a municipality of Palawan and that our visits there are part of

the government mandate to ensure the safety, well-being livelihood and personal security of our citizens there," Bolivar said in a text message to **The STAR**.

Meanwhile, Año said the Chinese forces deployed near Pag-Asa were just doing their job when they challenged a military aircraft flying top defense and military officials to the island.

"They were just doing their job. If they will not, they will be answerable to their superiors," Año said.

The Chinese forces told the pilots of the C-130 plane that they were straying into China's airspace and that they should leave at once to avoid miscalculations.

Filipino aviators and sailors also described last Friday's incident as routine as Chinese forces would normally com-

municate with any aircraft or vessels not their own, while flying or sailing over or near their occupied controlled areas in the disputed region.

Of the six claimant countries in the West Philippine Sea, only the Philippines has strictly observed a moratorium on development activities on land features in disputed waters. Brunei has no military presence in the areas it claims as its own. Aside from the Philippines, China and Brunei, the other countries with claims in the South China Sea are Malaysia, Taiwan and Vietnam.

China has already built artificial island fortresses over reefs and shoals in disputed waters.

While Beijing has kept on assuring concerned neighbors that its infrastructure development on land features in the area is for civilian purposes,

it has remained mum on reports that many of them have sophisticated weapons system.

Vietnam, for its part, has been pursuing infrastructure development on all its 23 occupied outposts.

The Taiwanese, who control Itu Aba, the biggest island in the region, have also been continuously conducting developments in areas they occupy.

Developments on Itu Aba include expansion of an airfield as well as installation of water, power and communication facilities. The Taiwanese government has also set up heavy armaments in the island.

For its part, Malaysia has put up a diving resort, with hotel and swimming pool, on its Layang-Layang outposts. It has also expanded its presence in the region by occupying two more reefs nearby.

– With Jaime Laude

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**MANILA BULLETIN**  
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# Pagasa visit alarms China

## Beijing to probe reported harassment of Filipino fishers

**B**EIJING (PNA) - China has expressed grave concern over the visit of Philippine Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana and military officials to the disputed Pagasa Island. "We are gravely concerned about and dissatisfied with this, China has lodged representations with the Philippine side," Lu Kang said in **▶15**

a press statement posted on China's Foreign Ministry Affairs website.

As this developed, Lu said China will also look into reports that Filipino fishermen have been driven away allegedly by the Chinese Coast Guard from Union Bank in the South China Sea.

"I honestly do not know anything about what you said. You yourself mentioned that the vessels are unidentified, and all sides are in the process of verifying the situation. China also needs to check on that," Lu said during a press conference.

Lorenzana and Armed Forces Chief Gen. Eduardo Año, along with other military officials, visited Pagasa Island, a Philippine-occupied territory that is part of the disputed Spratly

Group of Islands in the West Philippine Sea (South China Sea).

Lu said the move of the Philippines defense and military officials has negated the important consensus reached between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte.

"This move runs counter to the important consensus reached between the two leadership, which is to properly deal with the South China Sea issue," Lu said.

Lu said China is hoping that the Philippine government would continue to cherish a five-decade China-Philippines bilateral relations, which rejuvenated under the leadership of President Duterte.

"We hope that the Philippine side

could faithfully follow the consensus reached between the two leadership, maintain general peace and stability in the South China Sea, and promote the sound and steady development of China-Philippines relations," he said.

Since President Duterte's visit in China last year, Lu said China and the Philippines have been keeping good communication to properly manage and resolve the maritime disputes in the South China Sea.

"We hope that this momentum can continue," the Chinese Foreign Ministry official said.

In media reports, Lorenzana described the trip to Pagasa Island as a "normal visit within our territory."

"We believe and we know that this is our territory and I am just visiting to look at the conditions of our people here," the top Filipino defense official said.



Pagasa Island was occupied by the Philippines in the late 1960s and is categorized as a fifth-class municipality of Palawan province.

Lorenza has revealed a plan to set aside at least ₱1.6 billion to develop Pagasa Island and a proposal by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) to build a fish port in the area.

He said specialized construction and engineering troops from the Philippine Navy and Air Force will play a key role in the upgrading of various facilities on Pagasa Island.

“We must first construct the so-called beaching ramp because if that facility is not yet ready, then we cannot bring in LSTs (landing ship tanks) to bring in building materiel due to lack of docking facilities. So the beaching ramp is the first priority. The Navy already has a plan to build that and

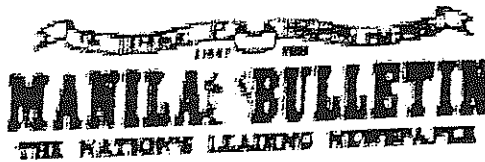
use their Seabees (Naval Construction Brigade) in constructing and completing that project before July,” Lorenzana added in Filipino.

Engineering battalions from the Air Force could be deployed if needed.

He disclosed that once the beaching ramp is completed, construction activities can continue even in the most adverse weather as building supplies and engineering equipment can be stockpiled safely and easily.

Construction projects eyed for Pagasa Island include the concreting of the 1.2-km. Rancudo Airstrip, development of ports, installation of additional solar panels and generator sets, desalination plants, new quarters for military personnel, the establishment of a BFAR marine research and shelter center, and an ice plant for storing fish caught by the islanders.

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## Trooper killed in Surigao encounter with NPAs

**BUTUAN CITY** - A government trooper was killed in a gun battle with the communist insurgents in Pongon area, San Agustin town, Surigao del Sur.

A sketchy report reaching the police regional headquarters here yesterday said an undetermined number of New People's Army (NPA) rebels were believed either killed or wounded in the encounter with the government forces.

A flash report received by the operation center of Northeastern Mindanao Police Regional Office 13 (PRO 13) based at Camp Rafael C. Rodriguez from Surigao del Sur Police Provincial Office (PPO) also said that elements of Seventh Special Forces Company (7th SFC) were still in hot pursuit of the fleeing NPA rebels, armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP).

Killed in the gunbattle was Cpl.

Augusto D. Rigor.

The Surigao del Sur PPO said elements of 7th SFC, led by Cpl. Allan G. Gabanit, were conducting security and combat patrol when they engaged an undetermined number of NPA rebels at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday.

The rebels were believed members of CPP-NPA Northeastern Mindanao Regional Committee whose commander was still unknown, the report said. (Mike U. Crismundo)

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[www.retiredanalyst.blogspot.com](http://www.retiredanalyst.blogspot.com)

## **2ID army top brass host '1st Media Fellowship 2017'**

From the Philippine News Agency (Apr 22): 2ID army top brass host '1st Media Fellowship 2017'

Around 40 journalists from the Calabarzon Region and Mindoro were feted to the two-day 1st Media Fellowship 2017 and fun shoot fest which culminated Saturday by top brass of the Philippine Army (PA) 2nd Infantry Division (2ID) at the military army camp here.

In his message at Friday's media fellowship dinner, Major General Rhoderick M. Parayno, 2ID commander said they have hosted the first media fellowship as "our gesture of appreciation to the media for helping us in serving the communities and peoples of the region."

Brigadier General Glorivine R. Dida, the 2ID assistant division commander also thanked the camp's defense press corps and regional media whom he referred to as "the windows of our house for the people to see out there".

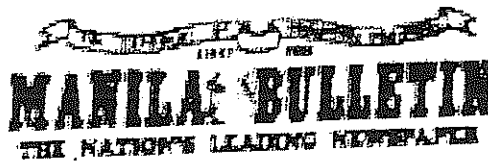
The 2ID officials and military personnel treated the region's working press to basic rules of gun safety, firing and shooting techniques.

They also engaged media to fun shoot fest by the contending teams of Tanay (2ID HQ) which romped off with the championship, 85th IB, 202nd Brigade and Team PNA at the camp's firing range.

<http://www.pna.gov.ph/index.php?idn=2&sid=&nid=2&rid=981810>

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## Retired soldier charged with killing own brother

By JOSEPH JUBELAG

GENERAL SANTOS CITY - Police have filed charges on Friday against a retired Army soldier who shot and killed his younger brother in Santo Niño, South Cotabato.

Chief Insp. Richel Cabuslay, Santo Niño police chief, said the suspect, Edgar Benal, 61, has been charged with murder for shooting to death his brother, Eden, 54 following a heated altercation last Thursday.

Investigation showed that the victim and the suspect figured in a heated argument wherein the suspect shot the victim with a .45 caliber pistol.

The misunderstanding stemmed from the complaint filed by the victim against the suspect before the barangay over the shared use of their water supply.

Cabuslay said the suspect tried to confront the victim to settle the case, but this led to a heated altercation.

The victim succumbed to bullet wounds in the head and body.

The suspect, together with his firearm, surrendered immediately to the police after the incident.

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**PH PRESENCE** – Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana (standing fifth from left) is shown with his contingent of military and government officials when they visited Pagasa Island in the Spratly Group of Islands in the South China Sea, Friday. According to reports, President Rodrigo Roa Duterte has ordered the military to occupy all the islands that belong to the Philippines in the disputed South China Sea. (EPA)



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# Sayyaf leader slain in Bohol encounter

By EMMANUEL TUPAS

**An alleged leader of Abu Sayyaf bandits who stormed Bohol early this month was killed in an encounter with government troops yesterday.**

The group of Joselito Melloria clashed with police and military operatives in Barangay Bacani in Clarin town at around 12:45 p.m., Senior Superintendent Felipe Natividad, Bohol police director, said.

Clarin, the next town to Inabanga, where soldiers clashed with the bandits on April 11, is around seven kilometers away from the town proper.

Natividad said Melloria, a native of Bohol, yielded an

M203 grenade launcher and an M16 rifle.

There was no reported casualty on the government side. Authorities are verifying the number of bandits involved in the clash.

In an interview over *dzBB*, Bohol Gov. Edgar Chatto said no civilian was affected in the incident, which was contained in an area. "There is no cause for alarm. Bohol is normal," he said.

Brig. Gen. Restituto Pa-

dilla, Armed Forces of the Philippines spokesman, said pursuit operations for six other Abu Sayyaf "stragglers" were ongoing as of yesterday afternoon.

Five bandits, including sub-commander Muammar Askali, alias Abu Rami, as well as three soldiers and a policeman were slain in the encounters in Inabanga.

Rami was reportedly involved in the beheading of a German and two Canadian hostages.

President Duterte offered a reward of P1 million for each Abu Sayyaf bandit who attacked troops in Bohol. He said security forces should

produce the bandits "dead or alive"

Meanwhile, the military set up checkpoints in Zamboanga peninsula, Basilan and Sulu to intercept bandits who might slip into their strongholds in Mindanao to escape from the military offensive in Bohol.

"We are on heightened alert...while pursuit operations continue," said Capt. Jo-Ann Petinglay, Western Mindanao spokesperson.

Petinglay said government troops are monitoring coastal areas in Mindanao in coordination with local officials. – With Jaime Laude, Roel Pareño

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# The Standard

DEFINING THE NEWS

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## ANOTHER SAYYAF MAN KILLED IN BOHOL CLASH

**By Francisco Tuyay  
and Florante Solmerin**

A SUB-LEADER of the Abu Sayyaf Group, who served as guide during the ASG's first incursion into Bohol last April 11, was killed during a firefight with government security forces in the hinterlands of Clarin, Bohol on Saturday.

Joselito Melloria, the alleged local contact of the ASG bandits who landed on Inabanga town, was identified by Bohol Provincial Police office Chief Supt. Felipe Natividad.

The firefight was ongoing at press time and started around 12 noon in Sitio Lagising, Barangay Bacane, Clarin town, police and military officials said.

Melloria, also a member of the IS-linked terror group Ansar Khalifa Philippines who had converted to Islam, joined the ASG in infiltrating Inabanga, Bohol, police and military officials said.

Police were also probing the possible ties between the ASG and an elderly couple, Constancio and Crisanta Petalco, who were killed during the Clarin firefight.

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Armed Forces of the Philippines spokesman Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla confirmed the death of Melloria.

However, Padilla said "We could not yet provide other details of Melloria's killing as the gunbattle is still raging with six other ASG members who are on the run."

Padilla said the troops recovered the M16 (folding stock) rifle of Melloria.

The April 11 Inabanga fireight also known as the botched Bohol raid resulted in the death of five ASG members, three soldiers and a policeman.

Among those killed in the April 11 encounter was Abu Sayyaf sub-leader Maumar Askali, alias Abu Rami, Chief Supt. Noli Talino, Police Regional Office (PRO) 7 director, said.

Abu Rami, the military claimed was behind the beheading of two Canadian nationals--John Ridsdel and Robert Hall last year and German hostage Jurgen Kantner in Febuary this year.

Three soldiers and a cop were also killed during the bloody encounter that triggered security alarm for visiting

foreign dignitaries attending the forthcoming Asean Summit in the country next week.

Foreign government, including the United States and Canada, had issued travel warning on their citizens to avoid visiting Bohol and other areas in Central Visayas following the gunbattle.

Padilla said the distribution of ASG photos among the residents of Inabanga and nearby towns could have facilitated the quick tracking down of the movement of the fleeing ASG members.

Earlier, President Rodrigo Duterte offered P1 million for the capture dead or alive of each ASG terrorists.

The military, meanwhile, said there was no failure of intelligence about the ASG incursion into Bohol.

"We knew where they [ASG] were. We knew they were coming," Padilla said.

ASG, who keeps 20 foreigners and seven locals as hostages, are also believed to be targetting Cebu and Siquijor Island, both tourism spots, intelligence sources said. **With PNA**

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## Troops to upgrade Kalayaan facilities

By JAIME LAUDE

Specialized military units will undertake the construction of new facilities on Kalayaan Island in the disputed Spratlys archipelago, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said on Friday.

In response to President Duterte's directive that facilities on Kalayaan be upgraded, Lorenzana said the Philippine Navy's Seabees as well as engineering and construction personnel from the Philippine Air Force would be tapped to lead the repair of existing facilities and the construction of new ones – including a dock for larger vessels.

"We must first construct the so-called beaching ramp because if that facility is not yet ready, then we cannot bring in LST (Landing Ship Tank) to bring building materials due to lack of docking facilities,"

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Lorenzana said. He said he hopes such facility would be ready before the onset of the rainy season.

Actual construction work, the defense chief said, is set to begin next week. Included in the upgrading work is the concreting of – and possibly extending – the island's 1,300-meter runway. He said earlier P1.6 billion has been earmarked for the project.

When told that China might protest the action, Lorenzana said he didn't think so pointing to the massive infrastructure development on an artificial island built by the Chinese over Zamora (Subi) Reef.

"You've seen Subi Reef. We're lagging far behind," Lorenzana said. Subi is some 12 nautical miles from Pag-Asa.

"We should have done this before but we did not because

we have to observe a moratorium, so as not to affect the case that we filed before the Permanent Court of Arbitration," he said. The arbitral court issued a ruling in July last year reaffirming the Philippines' entitlements in the West Philippine Sea and invalidating China's expansive maritime claims.

Supplies brought in by Navy ships to Pag-Asa have to be transferred to smaller boats as there is no safe harbor in the island-community. The same procedure has to be followed for supplying the Philippines' eight other outposts in the West Philippine Sea.

Also being eyed for the island are solar panels, power generators, desalination plants, an ice storage plant, new quarters for the troops, and a research and shelter center for the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources.

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## FVR backs Noy on SCS complaint vs China

By RHODINA VILLANUEVA  
and DELON PORCALLA

Former president Fidel Ramos has expressed support to former president Benigno Aquino III in relation to the latter's stand to bring to international court the complaint against China concerning the West Philippine Sea (South China Sea) dispute.

"This submission to the international tribunal under the United Nations to me is a correct step. We must protest not only directly to the

country involved but also to the (UN) for any violations of (the) United Nations Covenant on international law," Ramos said following the launch of his commemorative book in Quezon City Friday afternoon.

Earlier, former president Gloria Arroyo said that Aquino's arbitration suit had provoked China, which in a show of protest began building structures on islets and outcrops in the disputed Spratlys.

Though Ramos agreed with Arroyo that the submission of the case might have actually

provoked China, he stressed: "The submission of the Philippine position on the West Philippine Sea is correct and, well, it may have provoked actions by China to reclaim that, and the protest must be addressed to China. I agree with her. She is correct but that is not the proper target," Ramos said.

The former chief executive likewise referred to China's "challenge" last Friday to a Philippine aircraft en route to Pag-Asa Island in the Spratlys, as a "test" worth ignoring.

The aircraft, which was

reportedly challenged four times, carried Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, military officials and members of the media.

"Do not forget that the Chinese are experts in diplomacy, but double speaking. It was not the counterpart of Secretary Lorenzana or the defense chief of China talking. It's just a minor junior spokesman," he said.

"That's the way they are because that is what we call leadership — the 'deniability.' In this case, *tine-test lang tayo*.

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kaya (we are just being tested, that's why) ignore it. *Mabuhay ka* (Long live you,) Mr. Delfin Lorenzana, *kaya natin ito* (we can do this)," he added.

Lorenzana, however, said that it was a standard move by China.

President Duterte had appointed Ramos as a special envoy tasked to address Philippines-China relations amid tensions brought by overlapping territorial claims in the South China Sea.

Ramos soon resigned, saying he had done his job, including helping restore the ties of goodwill and friendship between the two nations.

### Aid to 'harassed' fishermen

In a related South China Sea incident, an opposition congressman yesterday said the Duterte administration should try to help and assist the Filipino fishermen who were reported to have been harassed by a Chinese coast guard recently.

"It's true we have an obligation under international law to exert all efforts to settle territorial disputes peacefully, but the government also has an international legal obligation as a sovereign nation to protect the interests of its nationals," Kabayan Rep. Harry Roque said in a statement following reports of an alleged attack by Chinese coast guard elements on the *Princess Johann* in the disputed Union Bank of the Spratly Islands on March 27.

The first-term party-list congressman and former University of the Philippines law professor said the "use of force by the Chinese coast guard against an unarmed Filipino-owned fishing vessel, if true, is a violation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea."

The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) said the Filipino-owned vessel was fishing in waters belonging to the country's

200-mile exclusive economic zone when the Chinese coast guard fired warning shots to drive away the fishermen from Mariveles, Bataan as per television reports. No one was reported injured.

On Thursday, Lorenzana said they were validating the reports. "If true, we will file a protest," he was quoted as saying.

"International law has always recognized that States, in the recognition by the international legal system of sovereign and territorial rights of states, have concomitant obligations to the protection of the rights of people subject to its jurisdiction," Roque maintained.

"(*Princess Johann*) was reportedly fired upon seven times by a Chinese speedboat with seven Chinese coast guards on board," the PCG statement read.

Quoting Max Huber, the Dutch arbitrator in the landmark 1928 Las Palmas arbitration, Roque said: "Territorial sovereignty, as has already been said, involves the exclusive right to display the activities of a State.

"This right has a corollary, a duty: the obligation to protect within the territory the rights of other States, in particular their right to integrity and inviolability in peace and in war, together with the rights which each State may claim for its nationals in foreign territory."

Ironically, this was the case where the Philippines lost to Indonesia the island of Las Palmas.

In recent years, Indonesia has used the island to plot the reaches of its own EEZ, eating up large swathes of fishing ground for Philippine fishing vessels.

Roque said the Philippines has the exclusive right to the use of marine resources found in its EEZ. "At the very least, the Philippines should file a

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diplomatic protest with the Chinese embassy in Manila for the attack," he said.

"We have a constitutional duty to protect these resources for the future generation of Filipinos," he added.

### **Pledge of cooperation**

Meanwhile, Chinese authorities have pledged to work with the Philippine government over the reported incident.

"I honestly do not know anything about what you said. You yourself mentioned that the vessels are unidentified, and all sides are in the process of verifying the situation," Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang said in a press briefing on Friday when asked by a reporter about the matter.

"China also need(s) to check on that. But our position on the

South China Sea issue is consistent and clear. We would go on working with the Philippine side to properly deal with relevant maritime issues and create favorable conditions for the sound and steady development of bilateral relations," he added.

Malacañang said it will leave the matter to the defense department and the national security adviser.

Since assuming office, Duterte has sought to improve ties with Beijing following strained and tense relations between China and the Philippines under Aquino, his predecessor.

After a visit to China last year, Chinese forces have allowed Filipino fisherman access to the resource-rich waters of Scarborough Shoal, a feature inside the Philippine EEZ that was occupied by China in 2012 after a tense standoff.

Armed Forces of the Philippines spokesman Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla said that the military leadership

### **DND, AFP welcome China's move**

Now that China is also conducting its own investigation over the reported harassment, the truth will finally come out, the defense and the military said yesterday.

Defense spokesman Arsenio Andolong said that China's move is a welcome development, as this will be a big help to the ongoing investigation being conducted by the department on the incident.

"While we are investigating the incident, we also welcome the move of the Chinese government to conduct its own probe on the reported harassment of Chinese coast guards against Filipino fishermen at Union Bank," Andolong said.

He added that it is highly important for both parties to find out the truth behind the incident, as this will accordingly determine the next course of actions to be taken by both Manila and Beijing.

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is looking forward to receiving feedback from their Chinese counterparts.

"We welcome this move and look forward to their feedback," Padilla said.

– With Janvic Mateo, Jaime Laude

24 April 2017

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# CHINA PROTESTS 'VISIT' TO PAGASA

**B**EIJING—China has lodged representations with the Philippine side following a visit by the Filipino defense and military officials in Pagasa Island, according to the spokesman of the Chinese Foreign Ministry.

"Gravely concerned about and dissatisfied with this, China has lodged representations with the Philippine side," Lu Kang said in a press statement posted on China's Foreign Ministry Affairs website.

Last Friday, Philippines Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana and Armed Forces Chief Gen. Eduardo Año, along with other military officials, visited Pagasa Island, a Philippine-occupied territory that is part of the disputed Spratly Islands in the South China Sea or West Philippine Sea.

Lu said the move of the Philippine defense and military officials had negated the important consensus reached between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte.

"This move runs counter to the important consensus reached between the two leadership, which is to properly deal with the South China Sea issue," Lu said.

Lu said China was hoping the Philippine government would continue to cherish a 42-year-old China-Philippines bilateral rela-

tions which rejuvenated under the leadership of President Duterte.

The Philippines and China forged diplomatic ties in 1975 during the term of President Ferdinand Marcos, who opened formal links a year later with at the time the Soviet Union and other socialist countries.

"We hope that the Philippine side could faithfully follow the consensus reached between the two leadership, maintain general peace and stability in the South China Sea, and promote the sound and steady development of China-Philippine relations," Lu said.

Since President Duterte's China visit last year, Lu said China and the Philippines had been keeping good communication to properly manage and resolve the maritime disputes in the South China Sea.

"We hope that this momentum can continue," the Chinese Foreign Ministry official said.

In media reports, Lorenzana described the trip to Pagasa Island as a "normal visit within our territory."

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"We believe and we know that this is our territory and I am just visiting to look at the conditions of our people here," the top Filipino defense official said.

Pagasa Island was occupied by the Philippines in the late 1960s and is categorized as a fifth-class municipality of Palawan province.

Lorenzana has revealed a plan to set aside at least P1.6 billion to develop Pagasa Island and a proposal by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources to build a fish port in the area.

Meanwhile, specialized construction and engineering troops from the Philippine Navy and Air Force will play a key role in upgrading various facilities in Pagasa Island, Lorenzana said Friday.

This is especially true when it comes to building facilities involving ship docking and unloading of cargoes.

"We must first construct the so-called beaching ramp because if that facility is not yet ready, then we cannot bring in LSTs [landing ship tanks]

to bring in building material due to lack of docking facilities. So the beaching ramp is the first priority. The Navy already has a plan to build that and use their Seabees [Naval Construction Brigade] in constructing and completing that project before July," Lorenzana added in Filipino.

Engineering battalions from the Air Force could be deployed if needed.

He disclosed that once the beaching ramp was completed, construction activities could continue even in the most adverse weather as building supplies and engineering equipment could be stockpiled safely and easily.

Construction projects eyed for Pagasa Island include concreting the 1.2-km. Rancudo Airstrip, development of ports, installation of additional solar panels and generator sets, desalination plants, new quarters for military personnel, the establishment of a Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources marine research and shelter center, and an ice plant for storing fish caught by the islanders. **PNA**

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A US Navy handout photo shows an F/A-18C Hornet as it takes off from the aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson on April 12. AFP

## US fighter jet crashes off Phi; pilot safe

A US Navy pilot ejected safely from his fighter jet while attempting to land on aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson in Celebes Sea in southern Philippines.

In a statement on Friday, the US Navy said a helicopter

recovered the pilot after ejecting from an F/A-18E Super Hornet while conducting routine flight operations over Celebes Sea.

"The incident is currently under investigation. The

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pilot is being assessed by the medical team on board USS Carl Vinson and there are no apparent injuries at this time," the US Navy said.

Several news reports said the aircraft had crashed, although this was not specifically mentioned in the official statement.

The US Navy also did not disclose where the aircraft carrier was heading when the incident happened.

US President Donald Trump earlier said the USS Carl Vinson led the "armada" heading for North Korea in response to the missile tests conducted by the hermit state.

The aircraft carrier has also been conducting routine patrols in the South China Sea, where various countries including the Philippines, Vietnam and China have conflicting territorial claims.

Last month, US Ambassador Sung Kim toured the USS Carl Vinson along with Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III and Justice Secretary Vitaliano Aguirre II while the aircraft carrier was patrolling in South China Sea. – Janvic Mateo

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## Gina's NPA 'friends' must disarm – DND chief

By JAIME LAUDE

Before soliciting the help of the communist New People's Army (NPA) to protect the country's environment, Environment Secretary Gina Lopez should convince the rebels to first lay down their arms and be useful citizens, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said yesterday.

Lopez reportedly plans to enlist the communist rebels for development projects in former mining communities in Agusan del Norte.

Lorenzana said the defense department strongly supports Lopez's steadfast commitment to the genuine protection of the environment and the promotion of sustainable development in the Philippines.

"The DND welcomes all initiatives that will help uplift the lives of our countrymen and bring livelihood to our communities. In fact, the main goal of the Philippine Defense Transformation Roadmap 2028 is the attainment of a more credible defense posture that will lead to national development," Lorenzana said.

The press statement was re-

leased yesterday by Department of National Defense spokesman Arsenio Andolong.

However, while waiting for official communication on how the DND could help the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in establishing "E3 (ecological, economic and educational zones)" nationwide, Lorenzana urged Lopez to encourage her friends from the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and NPA to take this chance to lay down their arms, stop all criminal and terrorist activities and become legitimate Filipino citizens.

The defense department and the military have blamed NPA rebels for the series of atrocities committed against military and civilian targets.

These usually stemmed from the rebels' kidnapping, arson and extortion activities against defenseless targets.

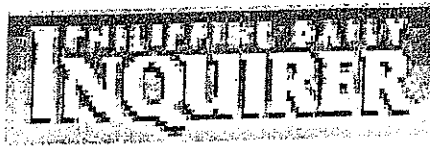
"If the CPP-NPA really wanted to help, they must lay down their firearms, stop their extortion activities and return to the fold of the law and be productive members of society," Lorenzana said.

– With Celso Amo

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# Scarborough, Spratlys and Benham

**W**hy is China so passionate in owning Scarborough Shoal and several maritime features in the Spratlys in the South China Sea (SCS)? And yet, so easily conceded the Philippines' rights over Benham Rise?

No controversy. The short answer is that Benham Rise is outside the so-called nine-dash line under which China claims historic title and sovereignty over almost the entire SCS.

But unlike the Spratlys and Scarborough Shoal, Benham Rise is totally submerged in water ranging from 50 to 5,000 meters in depth. This submarine status makes the exploitation of its vast resources extremely expensive and difficult to undertake.

On the other hand, the Spratlys and Scarborough Shoal are located in much shallower waters; in fact, China has enlarged some of the isles and rocks therein, not only to extract mineral resources but also, more visibly, to construct airports, seaports, buildings and other structures.

**Mendoza's primer.** Superlawyer Estelito P. Mendoza recently wrote a primer on this subject, published by the UP Law Center. As one of the two vice chairs of the Philippine delegation to the United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea, which convened during martial law in December 1973, he had an insider view of the negotiations.

(The other vice chair was then Foreign Undersecretary Jose Ingles. Alternating as chairs were then Sen. Arturo Tolentino and then Justice Secretary Vicente Abad Santos. All are now deceased.)

In 1982, the UN finally adopted the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (Unclos) that came into force in 1994. Mendoza related that our delegation was able to include the "archipelagic principles" in the Unclos,



## WITH DUE RESPECT

ARTEMIO V. PANGANIBAN

and eventually the "ultimate compromise ... to have a 12-mile territorial sea and an exclusive economic zone of 200 miles..."

On March 10, 2009, Republic Act No. 9522 was approved. It defined the baselines from which to measure our 1) 12-nautical-mile (NM) territorial sea, 2) 24-NM contiguous zone, 3) 200-NM exclusive economic zone, and 4) 350-NM continental shelf. (See my column on 4/2/17 for details.)

Thereafter, the Philippines notified the UN Secretary General (UNSG) of the baselines defined under RA 9522. It claimed the status of an "archipelagic state," composed of the "Philippine archipelago" (Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao) plus two "regimes of islands," the Kalayaan Island Group in the Spratlys and Scarborough Shoal (or Bajo de Masinloc).

Soon after, China submitted to the UNSG a "Note" dated April 13, 2009, alleging that RA 9522 "illegally claims Huangyan Island (referred to as 'Bajo de Masinloc' in the Act) and some islands and reefs of Nansha Islands (referred to as 'The Kalayaan Island Group' in the Act) of China... The Chinese Government hereby reiterates that Huangyan Island and

Nansha Islands have been part of the territory of China since ancient time."

Notably, it did not contest our rights over the "Philippine archipelago" and implicitly its corresponding territorial sea, contiguous zone, exclusive economic zone and continental shelf including Benham Rise.

**No ruling on land.** Mendoza opined, "Considering that ... China had taken possession and occupied several of the islands (or features) within the Kalayaan Group of Islands and over Bajo de Masinloc," the Philippines should have initiated a proceeding "in regard to these matters."

As it is, however, our arbitral claim and the arbitral award itself did not settle the issue of Chinese occupation and sovereignty over these islands or features. In fact, the arbitral tribunal had no jurisdiction to award title or sovereignty over land territory. Consequently, China cannot be expected to surrender its occupation or sovereignty over them.

Mendoza recalled that in a conversation with then President Ferdinand Marcos, then Chinese Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping, during a state visit here in June 1975, advised that negotiation is the only solution. And if no agreement is reached, how should the matter be resolved? His answer was simply "to talk some more, and more until agreement is reached."

Consistent with this "talk, talk, talk" approach is the Duterte administration's pursuit of the proposed Code of Conduct between Asean and China, spoken about by Acting Foreign Secretary Enrique Manalo in a recent Inquirer Forum. Is this a better strategy to resolve the impasse in the SCS? (To be continued.)

Comments to chiefjusticepanganiban@hotmail.com

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Without fear or favor

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E D I T O R I A L

# Harboring a deviant

**E**nvironment Secretary Gina Lopez made sure that everybody knows of her being an iconoclast Cabinet member by offering to commission members of the New People's Army (NPA) to, in effect, oversee the operations of mining firms while obviously throwing roadblocks to the review of the closure orders on mining projects.

Lopez stunned the public when she said she is willing to cooperate with communist rebels to protect the environment.

The problem with Lopez's idea is that the communist rebels have been torching equipment of legitimate businesses that refuse to pay what they call revolutionary taxes, although this is extortion, plain and simple.

In a business forum, Lopez said she is willing to allow the NPA to participate in development projects for mining communities in Agusan del Norte.

"What I've seen with the NPA, they just really want to get people out of poverty, they're really not bad people," Lopez said. Gee, Gina, killers, kidnappers and extortionists are not "bad people" but miners are?

Her idea surely does not jibe with the NPA character of refusing to give up their extortion activities which Rody sought as part of the peace negotiations ongoing between the government and the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP).

"They're really nice if you meet them... My hope there is we do it in one place, we've done it everywhere," she added.

Lopez may just as well say the government agrees to sharing power with the rebel group which has sought to put up a communist system through the power of the gun.

Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) founding chairman Jose Maria Sison, as expected, welcomed in a statement Lopez's offer.

Lopez, while playing footsies with the NPA, moved to block a plea of the Department of Finance (DoF)-led Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC) for the government to allocate P50 million to review the mine closures ordered by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

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Finance Assistant Secretary Paola Alvarez said most of the agencies in MICC were perplexed at the reason Lopez wanted “to throw a monkey wrench” into the MICC approved review of all mining operations by opposing the budgetary support of P50 million the body had asked the Department of Budget and Management (DBM).

Alvarez said that the action of Lopez was considered inconsistent with the order of Rody in a Cabinet meeting last February 7 for the review of the DENR order.

In an MICC meeting, she herself formally approved such an MICC review by signing MICC Resolution 6 during the Council’s meeting.

On the P50-million budgetary support, Alvarez recalled that “Lopez had also green-lighted this request to the DBM during the follow-up MICC meeting last February 20, as the council would need to hire a sufficient number of private experts from different fields to review the technical, legal, social, environmental and economic aspects of all 311 mining contracts in the country.”

Lopez also demanded that Finance Undersecretary Bayani Agabin to inhibit from the MICC process supposedly due to his past ties to mining companies.

Alvarez said “Secretary Lopez is free to make such an appeal, in the same manner that certain groups are free to oppose her confirmation by the Commission on Appointments on a conflict-of-interest issue and other grounds.”

Agabin worked for the Philippine Associated Smelting & Refining Corp. 15 years ago and with Rapu Rapu Minerals Inc. 10 years ago.

“Perhaps, it is the DENR secretary who needs to refuse herself from the MICC process, given that she has publicly stated that she would stick to the findings of the DENR’s audit report regardless of the outcome of the MICC review ordered by the President,” Alvarez said.

She said the recruitment of the experts who will conduct the review is a multi-agency process of which the DoF is a part of, as so mandated by Executive Order 79 that then-President Aquino issued in 2012 creating the MICC.

“The DoF cannot be excluded from this process, as it does not of itself face any conflict of interest, without violating its mandate under EO 79,” she said.

The MICC is mandated under EO 79 to review all mining-related rules and regulations, issuances and agreements, and was ordered convened by the President during the February 7 Cabinet meeting to discuss and reassess the DENR’s audit last year.

Lopez’s presence continues to weigh heavily on the whole Cabinet if not the whole nation, due to her insistence of pushing her advocacy even at the cost of the government’s interest.

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## **ONLINE NEWS**

**23 APRIL 2017**

[www.retiredanalyst.blogspot.com](http://www.retiredanalyst.blogspot.com)

### **Military, terror groups engage in gun battle in Lanao del Sur**

From ABS-CBN (Apr-22): ~~Military, terror groups engage in gun battle in Lanao del Sur~~

Military forces engaged joint members of the Maute and the Abu Sayyaf groups in a gun battle in Barangay Gakap, Piagapo town in Lanao del Sur on Saturday morning.

No casualties were reported as of posting time.

The firefight was the result of continuous military operations against the terrorists, the army said.

Lieutenant Colonel Jo-ar Herera, Tabak 1st Division spokesperson, confirmed that the Maute and Abu Sayyaf have joined forces as both groups are historically allies.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines used airstrikes to overwhelm the two groups.

Herera said Joint Task Force Kampilan, led by Brigadier Generals Joselito Bautista and Nixon Fortes, has been conducting operations to contain the terrorists in the area, adding that the military is following directives from President Rodrigo Duterte.

Herera said they are also confirming whether the Abu Sayyaf is still led by Isnilon Hapilon, who was first reported killed in Butig 2 months ago.

The military has also secured vital installations that may be targeted by the terrorist group to divert the authorities' attention.

The local government unit has evacuated about 200 families.

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## Army chides NPA for propaganda ploy

From the Sun Star-Davao (Apr 21): Army chides NPA for propaganda ploy

THE Philippine Army's 10th Infantry Division (ID) said that the New Peoples' Army (NPA) forced the two captured soldiers to wear their military uniforms when they were released as a propaganda ploy.

Captain Rhyan Batchar, 10th ID spokesperson said in a press statement issued Friday, April 21, that the release of the two soldiers on Wednesday at Colonsabak, Matanao, Davao del Sur while wearing their battle dress uniform (BDU) was orchestrated.

"This is the CPP (Communist Party of the Philippines)-NPA's vain attempt to cover up the treacherous and insincere abduction of the soldiers who were unarmed and in civilian clothes in the midst of the peace talks and ceasefire," Batchar said.

The government's troops under the 39th Infantry Battalion, who were earlier released, were identified as Sergeant Solaiman Calucop and Private First Class Samuel Garay.

They were abducted by the NPA last February 2 in Columbio, Sultan Kudarat, while the ceasefire was still in effect.

He cited that this is contrary to their usual practice of releasing their kidnapped, wearing shirts with a marked Prisoner of War.

During debriefing after their release, the soldiers said it was the NPA who ordered them to wear their BDU during the release.

They were even told to wear these while in captivity, but they refused to.

Batchar said that Calucop has a uniform in his bag when he was abducted while Garay's wife Jessa Mae was asked by a certain Joy Mirasol of Karapatan to bring her husband's BDU on the day of the release.

<http://www.sunstar.com.ph/davao/local-news/2017/04/21/army-chides-npa-propaganda-ploy-537817>

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## **Grandma, 2 kids die in Philippine encounter**

From The Gulf Today (Apr 22): **Grandma, 2 kids die in Philippine encounter**

A 70-year-old grandmother and two of her grandchildren, aged 11 and 9, were killed when they were caught in the crossfire during a clash between government forces and members of the communist New People's Army (NPA) on the island province of Masbate in the Bicol Region.

Senior Inspector Maria Luisa Calubaquib, the provincial police spokesman, identified the grandmother as Lolita Peita who died with her two grandchildren amid hints they were used as "human shields" by the rebels.

Calubaquib also reported that a relative of the victims, a widower and also aged 70, was wounded in the encounter that occurred on Thursday afternoon in a remote village in the town of Cawayan, Masbate.

Calubaquib said a team of Army soldiers were on security patrol when they clashed with the rebels in the village described by the military as an "NPA lair" where it was not unusual for the insurgents to use residents as "human shields" during encounters with government forces.

Also in Masbate, the military reported its discovery of an NPA bomb factory during recent clearing operations in another remote village in the town of Milagros.

The facility was capable of manufacturing hundreds of improvised explosive devices including landmines used by the insurgents in their attacks on military and police camps, according to the military.

The NPA with about 4,000 members is the armed component of the Communist Party of the Philippines that has been waging a Maoist-style insurgency against the government for close to 50 years, considered The longest in Asia and the Pacific.

When he took over Malacanang Palace on June 30, 2016, President Rodrigo "Rody" Duterte initiated the resumption of peace talks with the Maoists through their political arm the National Democratic Front (NDF) Oslo, Norway which has been brokering the negotiations.

But in February this year, Duterte ordered the cancellation of the talks as he accused the insurgents of violating the unilateral ceasefire they had declared by killing and kidnapping soldiers and policemen.

The president also ordered the military to use all available government resources including newly-acquired attack helicopters to go after the insurgents he had described as "terrorists"

<http://gulftoday.ae/portal/66ae7cf1-196a-415e-ad77-7ae6b9646092.aspx>

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