

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

26 April 2017

Wednesday

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

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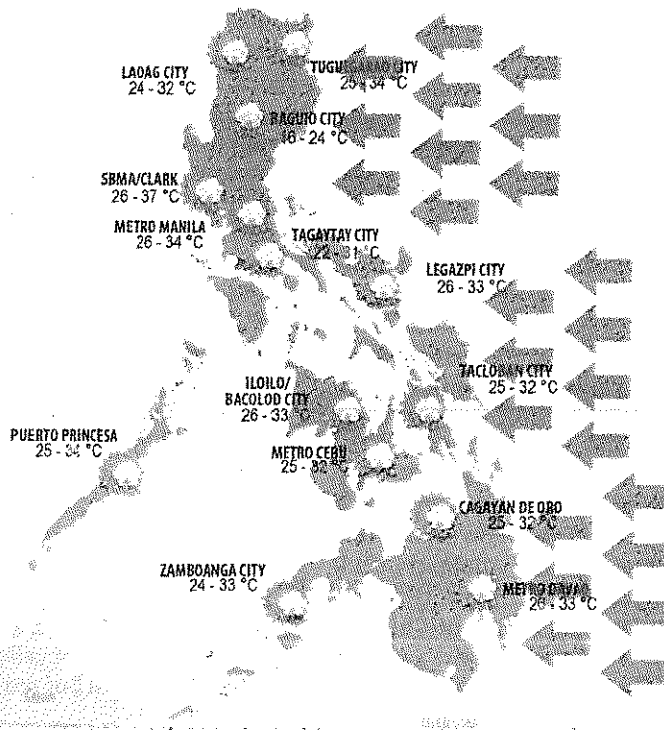
BusinessMirror



TODAY'S WEATHER

APRIL 26, 2017 / WEDNESDAY

EASTER LIES
AFFECTING THE EASTERN SECTIONS
OF THE COUNTRY
(As of 5:00 PM - Apr. 25, 2017)



3-DAY EXTENDED FORECAST	APR 27	APR 28	APR 29
	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
METRO MANILA	25 - 33 °C	25 - 33 °C	25 - 33 °C
TUGUEGARAO	24 - 33 °C	24 - 33 °C	25 - 33 °C
LADAG	24 - 32 °C	24 - 32 °C	24 - 32 °C
BAGUIO	17 - 24 °C	17 - 23 °C	16 - 24 °C
SBMA/CLARK	26 - 36 °C	26 - 36 °C	26 - 36 °C
TAGAYTAY	22 - 32 °C	21 - 32 °C	21 - 31 °C
LEGAZPI	26 - 33 °C	26 - 33 °C	26 - 32 °C
PUERTO PRINCESA	26 - 34 °C	26 - 33 °C	26 - 33 °C
ILOILO/ BACOLOD	26 - 32 °C	27 - 32 °C	27 - 32 °C

3-DAY EXTENDED FORECAST	APR 27	APR 28	APR 29
	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
METRO CEBU	25 - 32 °C	26 - 32 °C	25 - 32 °C
TACLOBAN	25 - 31 °C	25 - 31 °C	25 - 32 °C
CAGAYAN DE ORO	25 - 32 °C	25 - 32 °C	25 - 32 °C
METRO DAVAO	26 - 34 °C	26 - 34 °C	25 - 33 °C
ZAMBOANGA	24 - 33 °C	24 - 34 °C	24 - 34 °C

SUNRISE	SUNSET	MOONRISE	MOONSET
5:36 AM	6:12 PM	5:20 AM	6:04 PM
NEW MOON	FIRST QUARTER	LOW TIDE	HIGH TIDE
APR 26 6:16 AM	MAY 3 10:47 AM	4:27 AM 0.05 Meter	9:56 AM 0.78 Meter

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SAGOT KO, PADALA MGA

26 April 2017



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SC JUNKS PETITION VS TORRE DE MANILA

High court says there's no law prohibiting construction of the condominium building

**By Marlon Ramos
and Vincent Cabreza**
@Team_Inquirer

After a two-year lull, the construction of Torre de Manila, dubbed "pambansang photobomb" by netizens, may now proceed.

The Supreme Court on Tuesday rejected a petition questioning the construction of the 49-story residential building, which its critics claimed ruined the view of the sky-

line behind the historic monument of national hero Dr. Jose Rizal at Luneta Park.

Citing lack of jurisdiction, the magistrates voted 9-6 to throw out the petition for mandamus filed in 2014 by the Knights of Rizal against DM Consunji Inc (DMCI), owner and developer of Torre de Manila.

In a statement, the Knights of Rizal said it respected the high court's ruling as it expressed grati-

tude to the public "for carrying this issue with us and for making the same as a test case for Philippine heritage."

"The public support that was expressed in favor of our stand was an indication not only of the importance of the national monument, but also of the continued relevance and reverence our national hero, Jose Rizal, still enjoys," the group said.

For its part, DMCI Homes welcomed the outcome of the legal bat-

tle, which it described as "fair and just." The developer said it would "immediately advise its customers and future residents on the updated construction timeline," which had been affected by the controversy.

"Moving on, we will immediately resume construction to finally end the undue suffering of our stakeholders, most especially our workers and future residents who depended on our commitment to complete the project." **A2**

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DMCI Homes said.

The Knights of Rizal, supported by the Office of the Solicitor General, had sought the "immediate and complete demolition" of the condominium building on Taft Avenue in Ermita, Manila.

TRO also lifted

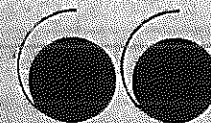
Theodore Te, the high court's spokesperson, said the tribunal also lifted the temporary restraining order (TRO) it issued in June 2015 against DMCI, which indefinitely put on

hold the construction of Torre de Manila.

"The court dismissed the petition ... for the reasons that (it) has no jurisdiction over the subject matter," Te said in a news conference in Baguio City, where the justices are holding their annual summer full-court session.

He said the tribunal likewise ruled that the petitioners "have no standing to sue" and that they failed to prove that "they stand to suffer no injury."

"The court also found that there is no law that prohibits the construction of the challenged Torre de Manila," Te said.



**We will
immediately
resume
construction to
finally end the
undue suffering of
our stakeholders**

DMCI Homes

In urging the court to order the demolition of the building, the Knights of Rizal claimed DMCI violated several laws in building Torre de Manila, including Republic Act No. 4846, or the Cultural Properties Preservation and Protection Act; Republic Act No. 7356, the law that created the National Commission on Culture and the Arts; and Republic Act No. 10066, better known as the National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009.

DMCI denied the allegations as it lamented that stopping the project could lead to about P4.27 billion in forgone revenue

and capital investment for the company.

Before the high court issued the TRO, the Consunji-owned property developer said it had already spent P1.28 billion for the project.

On the DMCI website, the developer described Torre de Manila as "an exclusive residential community right in the heart of the city [with] leading universities, reputable hospitals, and key business and commercial centers of the Metro area all within easy drive or commute."

Senior Associate Justice Antonio Carpio, who has been tasked with writing the majori-

ty decision, voted to allow the building of the structure along with Chief Justice Maria Lourdes Sereno and Associate Justices Bienvenido Reyes, Noel Tijam, Presbitero Velasco Jr., Lucas Bersamin, Mariano del Castillo, Estela Perlas-Bernabe and Marvic Leonen.

Those who wanted to block the construction project were Associate Justices Samuel Martires, Jose Mendoza, Teresita Leonardo-de Castro, Diosdado Peralta, Francis Jardeleza and Alfredo Benjamin Caguioa.

Jardeleza would file a separate dissenting opinion on the issue. INQ

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AFP: No terror threat monitored for Asean

By JAIME LAUDE

There is no specific terror threat that could disrupt the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit in Manila this week, but the military stressed it is not leaving anything to chance and "everything is covered" security-wise.

"Nothing to worry," Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief Gen. Eduardo Año said, as he assured the public that the military, in cooperation with the Philippine National Police (PNP), is prepared against terror and other disturbances during the summit at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC).

"We have everything covered," Año said.

The AFP, he said, also did not detect terrorist activities that might be launched by Abu Sayyaf bandits under Abu Rami, who was killed by government forces in Bohol earlier this month.

"Of course we will finish the Abu Sayyaf in Bohol," Año said.

To ensure a smooth coordination among security units, all of them would be under

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the direct supervision of the national operation center, a body formed to handle security operations during the ASEAN event, Año said.

He revealed the military is focusing its efforts on dealing with the possible repercussion on Metro Manila of the ongoing military operations against the Abu Sayyaf in Bohol and the Maute group in Lanao del Sur. Both terror groups are claiming to have links with the Middle East-based Islamic State.

The AFP chief also pointed out that while he sees nothing wrong with being a Muslim convert, some of those claiming to be part of the "balik-Islam" are being monitored for possible links to the Maute. A senior anti-terror official said some sympathizers of the terror group are based in Manila.

Authorities said some balik-Islam members have become "highly dangerous religious fanatics."

Also to boost police presence at the ASEAN venue, the Cagayan Valley Regional Police Office has sent a contingent of 191 personnel to Metro Manila.

Region 2 Deputy Regional Director for Operations Sr. Supt. Bernabe Balba said the contingent includes two medi-

cal specialists, 21 security personnel, eight drivers and a logistics non commissioned officer.

Int'l delegates screened

Even the 1,900 foreign delegates had been checked of any derogatory record as part of stricter security measures, the Bureau of Immigration (BI) said.

"We just want to make sure that because of the influx of foreigners, it would not be used as an opportunity for those who are planning anything," BI spokesperson Ma. Antonette Bucasas-Mangrobang said.

"We just want to make sure that those listed as delegates do not have derogatory records in our country," she added.

A foreign national is considered as having a derogatory record if he or she is a terror suspect, has criminal record, or is a fugitive in his or her country of origin.

Based on advance screening of the foreigners' background, none of them were found to have derogatory record, the BI spokesperson said.

The Immigration official said that since last year they have been offering to process the immigration documents of the heads of state, their en-

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tourage and delegates to the ministers' meetings.

"We have been offering to process for several months now. We are part of the National Organizing Committee so we receive regular lists of delegates coming in for particular meetings. Whether here in Manila or in the provinces, we have officers there" to attend to them, Mangrobang added.

"For the heads of state who are coming, we have port courtesies being extended. They would no longer be asked to line up in the Immigration counters. We have particular officers assigned to them," she said.

The BI would continue to

provide such services until Nov. 14, or after the ASEAN event at Clark Field in Pampanga. The Nov. 1-14 event is expected to gather more than 4,300 delegates.

BI Commissioner Jaime Morente had also ordered the deployment of 360 personnel for today's event – of whom 227 would be on duty at any given time.

"There would also be Immigration representative detailed at the airports and all the venues that are being used for the ASEAN events such as the SM Mall of Asia complex and 1 Esplanade," Mangrobang added.

Meanwhile, Malacañang yesterday declared April 28

a special non-working day in Metro Manila.

The declaration was contained in Proclamation No. 197 signed by Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea.

He said ASEAN 2017 organizers and the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority had recommended the suspension of work for the government and the private sector in Metro Manila on April 28.

Malacañang's declaration last week under Memorandum Circular No. 18 was only for class and work suspension for April 28.

Declaring the day a special non-working holiday entitles employees to additional pay if they report for work on that day.

According to Labor Advisory No. 4 issued by the labor department yesterday, the "no work, no pay" principle applies only to employees who did not work unless company policy, practice, or collective bargaining agreement entitles them to payment on a special day.

For work done during a special day, a worker shall be paid an additional 30 percent of his daily rate on the first eight hours of work.

For work done in excess of eight hours or overtime work, a worker shall be paid an additional 30 percent of his hourly

rate on that day.

For work done during a special day that also falls on his or her rest day, a worker shall be paid an additional 50 percent of his daily rate on the first eight hours of work.

For work done in excess of eight hours during a special day that also falls on a worker's rest day, he shall be paid an additional 30 percent of his hourly rate.

Malacañang has suspended work in government offices at the PICC complex in Pasay City from April 24 to 30 and at the Cultural Center of the Philippines complex from April 28 to 30.

Work in government offices in Pasay, Makati and Manila is also suspended on April 27.

The work suspension does not cover agencies involved in the delivery of basic services, including security and safety, health and emergency preparedness, and those directly involved in various ASEAN meetings and related activities.

It will be up to local governments in Pasay, Makati and Manila to decide whether to suspend classes tomorrow.

Malacañang is also leaving it up to local governments and employers to decide whether to suspend work on April 29. – **With Alexis Romero, Raymund Catindig, Evelyn Macairan**

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MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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Army troopers encounter NPAs, recover firearms

By **RESITUTO A. CAYUBIT**

CAMP LUKBAN, Catbalogan City, Samar – Philippine army troopers patrolling Basey town last Sunday encountered a group of NPA men who fled after a brief firefight leaving behind high-power firearms, a report from the 8th Infantry Division (8ID), Philippine Army, based here, said yesterday.

A tip from a concerned citizen led the army troops from 87th Infantry (Hinirang) Battalion to the NPA safehouse in Sitio Ogbok, Barangay Villa Aurora, Basey.

The report said the rebels opened fire on the government troops while they were cautiously approaching the safehouse but scampered away when the troops opened fire.

After the encounter, the troops recovered two M-16 rifles and several magazine rounds of ammunition, the report said.

Meanwhile, another troop of soldiers from the 87th IB who were conducting a reconnaissance patrol encountered a group of NPA rebels in Barangay Borong, Calbiga, Samar. The troops recovered one M-16 rifle.

There was no casualty from the government side. Authorities believe that the NPAs were wounded from the bloodstains that were left along the trail where they fled, the report said.

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Seized Maute lair was terrorist training camp

ILIGAN CITY – A camp of the Maute group seized in Piagapo, Lanao del Sur had been used as a training ground for its new recruits, an official said yesterday.

Brig. Gen. Nixon Fortes, commander of the Army's 103rd Infantry Brigade, said most of the new recruits are aged 11 to 15.

Fortes said intelligence reports and information provided by civilians show that the Maute group transferred its camp from Butig town to Piagapo. The camp has 200 bunkers and foxholes.

A certain Commander Dabs and Imman Bantayao, who were in charge of the recruitment of new members and in running the camp, were among those killed in air and ground assaults by government forces. Bantayao

was a former Moro Islamic Liberation Front leader under the group of Abdullah Macapaar, alias Commander Bravo.

Lt. Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr., Western Mindanao Command chief, said militants are recruiting new members through social media.

"Those who have a feeling of hopelessness are vulnerable because the Islamic State of Syria and Iraq (ISIS) is promising something like having the purpose of their life," Galvez said.

He said the seizure of the camp prevented the expansion of the group in Lanao in prepa-

ration for the propagation of an ISIS "province."

"They are looking at Lanao as their base in the Philippines," Galvez said.

He said it was the reason why Abu Sayyaf leader Isnilon Hapilon, the designated emir of ISIS in Southeast Asia, went to Lanao. Hapilon was believed killed in air strikes last month.

More displaced

Meanwhile, the number of families displaced in the clashes between government troops and Maute militants increased.

At least 604 families or 3,148 individuals left their homes as of yesterday, Vice Gov. Mamintal Adiong Jr., chairman of the Lanao del

Sur Inter-Agency Task Force said, citing the report of the Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office.

The evacuees were from Barangays Tapukan, Gakap and Bangko in Piagapo and Lumbac-Alalan, Pagayawan and Sitio Watu at the boundary of Piagapo and Balindong.

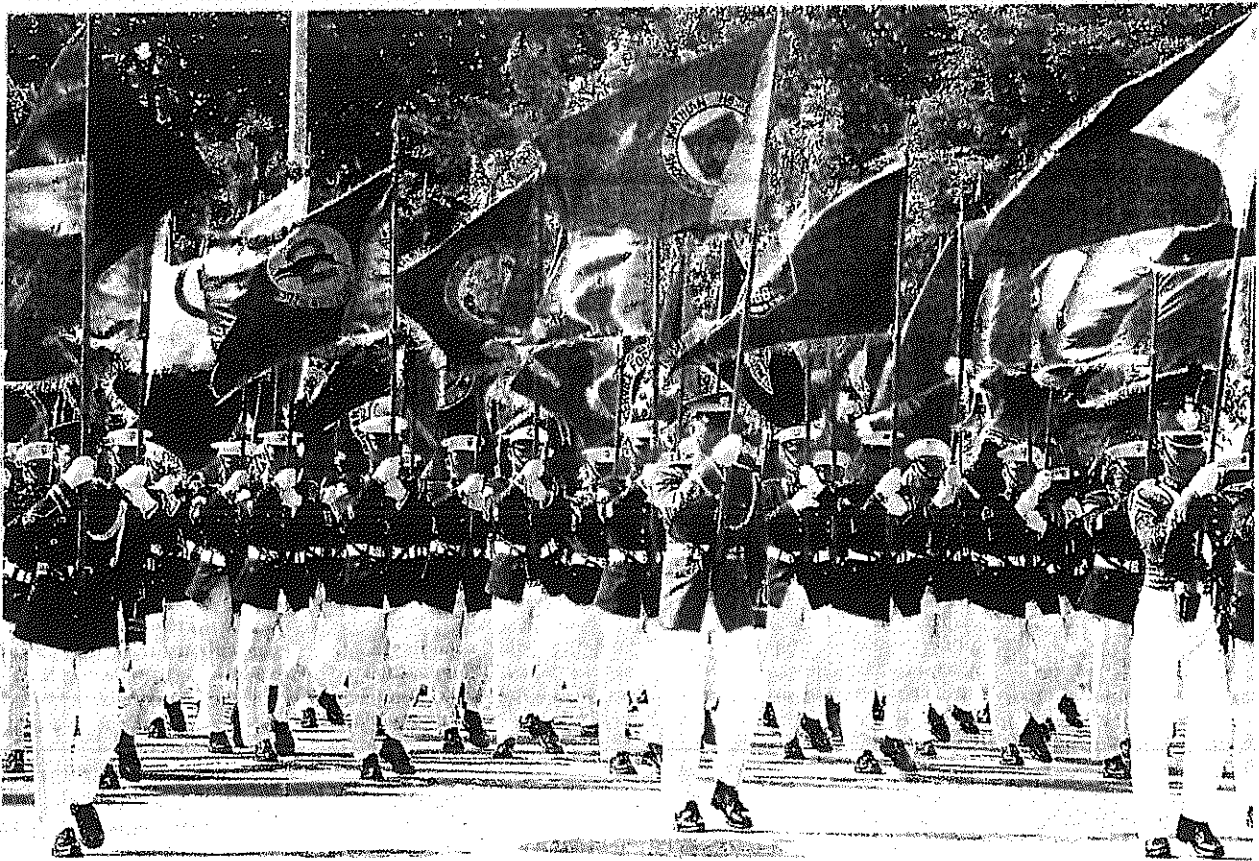
Adiong said the provincial and local governments, Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and other concerned agencies are providing assistance to affected residents.

At least 36 militants, including four foreigners, were killed in the encounters. – Lino de la Cruz, Roel Pareño, Jaime Laude

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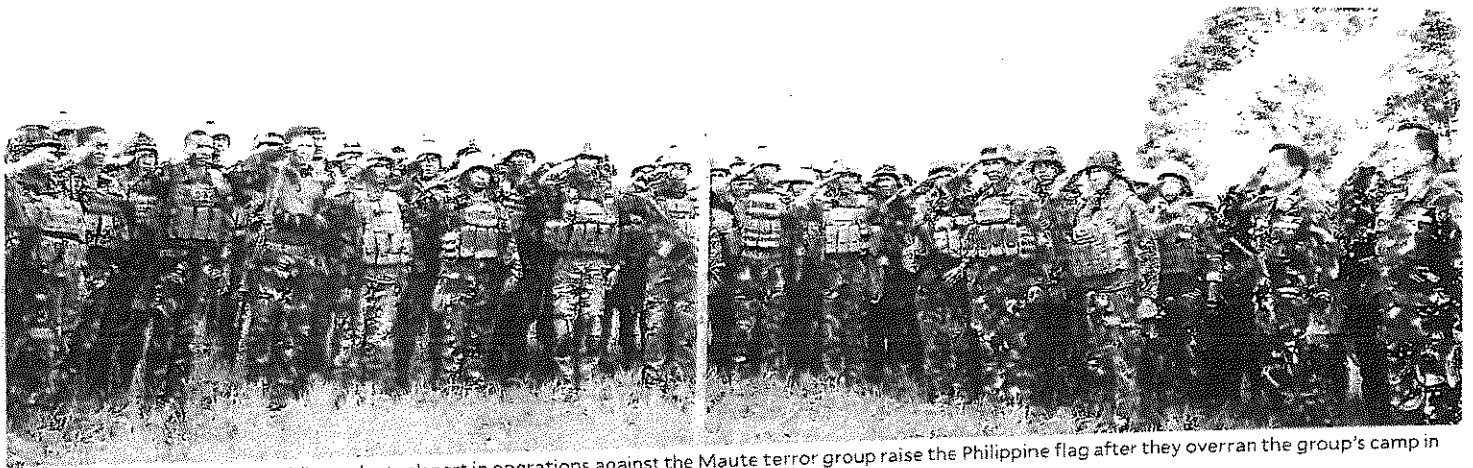
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MISSION ACCOMPLISHED Soldiers who took part in operations against the Maute terror group raise the Philippine flag after they overran the group's camp in Piagapo town in Lanao del Sur province on Monday. —RICHEL V. UMEL

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Soldiers hoist a Philippine flag at a Maute camp seized in Piagapo, Lanao del Sur on Monday in this photo provided by the Western Mindanao Command.

24 April 2017



Page: 1

AFP chief: No soldier involved with Sayyaf

By ALEXIS ROMERO

The military assured the public yesterday that no soldier is involved with or protecting the Abu Sayyaf group.

Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief Gen. Eduardo Año said the military has a system check for all its officers to determine if they are fit to occupy sensitive positions.

Año said the system keeps the rank and file "clean."

He gave the assurance amid

fears the Abu Sayyaf might infiltrate the AFP, like what happened to the Philippine National Police (PNP) with the arrest of Superintendent Maria Cristina Nobleza, who was reportedly romantically involved with an Abu Sayyaf bomb maker.

AFP spokesman Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla said the military has been conducting continuous counterintelligence to determine if there are soldiers supporting or protecting any

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AFP chief

From Page 1

threat group.

"Our counterintelligence and background check of our ranks never stops. It's done on a 24/7 basis. It is continuing and focused on specific areas that could possibly threaten our security," Padilla said.

He expressed hope that Nobleza's is an isolated case.

"The Armed Forces is doing its best to avoid this incident from happening," he said.

Año said there's nothing wrong with Nobleza being a balik-Islam, as every Filipino has the freedom of religion.

What is not right, he said, is



Año

if these returnees to the Muslim faith allow themselves to be used by terrorists or other enemies of

the state.

Año said there is no need for the AFP to conduct loyalty checks on its ranks, noting their activities are properly coordinated with the top leadership.

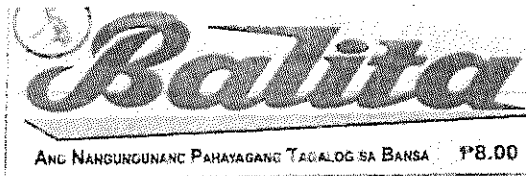
Padilla said the AFP would coordinate with the PNP in the probe on Nobleza.

He said the military and the police are conducting continuous counterintelligence gathering against Nobleza and Dongon, as well as possible spies in the AFP and the PNP.

"If anyone is caught sleeping with the enemy, the matter becomes a serious security concern that needs to be addressed immediately," he said.

- With Jaime Laude, Evelyn Macairan

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Page. 2

Walang kasabwat ng ASG sa militar—AFP chief

Ni Francis T. Wakefield

Tiniyak kahapon ni Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief of staff General Eduardo Año na walang matataas na opisyal sa militar na nakikipagsabwatan sa teroristang Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG).

Ito ang sinabi ni Año kasunod ng pagkakatanyag sa isang habaeng police colonel na naaresto sa Bohol dahil umano sa pakikipagsabwatan sa ASG.

Paliwatag ni Año may umiral na sistema ng background investigation sa mga opisyal ng militar na nasa sensitibong posisyon at unit.

"You have to undergo partial background investigation and full background investigation depending on the positions you are holding, tuloy-tuloy 'yun," sabi ni Año.

Naniniwala rin si Año na posibleng

pumalpak ang Philippine National Police (PNP) sa pagsasagawa ng background check sa mga tauhan nito.

"Baka doon lang nagkaroon ng lapses ang PNP, but there is an existing system for that. So, we have, we don't have to do loyalty check," sabi pa ni Año.

Sabado nang maaresto si Supt. Maria Christina Nobleza kasama ang umano y nobyo niyang ASG member na si Reenor Lou Dungan matapos magtangkang tumakas sa isang checkpoint sa Barangay Clarin, Bohol.

Namataang inihagis ni Nobleza ang isang mobile phone, na natuntun at ayon sa source ng *Balita* ay sinusikap ng mga suspek na makausap ang mga natitirang miyembro ng ASG sa Bohol.

26 April 2017



Pahina. 2

Pramis ng AFP sa Hulyo

WALA NANG ABU SAYYAF

NAGTAKDA ng hanggang Hulyo ang Armed Forces of the Philippines para tapusin ang problema sa Abu Sayyaf sa Mindanao.

Kasunod ito ng sunud-sunod na pagkamatay ng mga bandido sa sagupaan sa tropa ng pamahalaan sa Mindanao at sa lalawigan ng Bohol.

Ayon kay AFP Spokesman Brigadier General Restituto Padilla, Jr., nagbubunga na ang kamilang pagsisikap na madurog ang Abu Sayyaf, patinay dito ang pagkamatay ng mga bandido sa nakalipas na

mga bakbakan bukod pa sa pagnanais ng mga bandido na sumuko na sa batas. Nakatanggap na rin aniya ang militar ng surrender feelers mula sa kampo ni Radullan Sahiron, isa sa mga lider ng bandidong grupo.

Kasabay nito, sinabi ni Padilla na nakatitiyak silang walang espia sa kanilang hanay 'di tulad ng Philippine National Police, partikular sa kaso ni Pol. Supt. Maria Christina Nobleza na may karelasyong Abu Sayyaf na bomb maker. *(Aileen Taliping)*

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Pahina. 2

Abu Sayyaf 'pilay' na – AFP

Pilay na ang mga bandidong Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) sa lalawigan ng Bohol matapos ang opensiba na inilunsad laban sa mga ito ng tropa ng militar.

Ayon kay AFP Spokesman Brig Gen Restituto Padilla, nasa 'survival mode' na lamang ang dalawa pang miyembro ng mga bandido na nagtatago sa lalawigan at malabo na ang mga itong makapaghasik pa ng terorismo.

Sinabi ni Padilla na kontrolado na ng pinag-

NI JOY CANTOS

sanib na elemento ng militar at pulisya ang sitwasyon ng seguridad sa Bohol dahil tukoy na nila ang pinagtataguan ng mga nalalabi pang miyembro nito.

"It's a matter of time makukuha na rin natin sila, the situation is under control," ani Padilla kaugnay ng patuloy na hot pursuit operations laban sa grupo ng mga bandido na nagtatago sa Bohol.

Nitong Abril 11 ay dumang sa Sitio Ilaya, Brgy. Napo, Inabanga, Bohol ang grupo ni Sayyaf sub-commander Muammar Askali alias Abu Rahmi na nagresulta sa bakbakan na ikinasawi si Rahmi at lima pa nitong tauhan.

Sa follow-up operations nitong Sabado bandang alas-9 ng gabi ay napaslang naman sa pakikipag-engkuwento sa tropa ng militar at pulisya sa Brgy. Bacani, Clarin, Bohol ang apat pang bandido kabilang si Joselito Melloria, ang isang Balik Islam na nagpapasok sa grupo ni Abu Rahmi sa Bohol.

Ang grupo ni Rahmi ay sangkot sa pagbihag sa tatlong banyaga sa Island Garden City of Samal sa Davao del Norte noong Setyembre 21, 2016. Kabilang dito ang pinugutan ng ulong sina Canadian John Ridsdel

at Robert Hall habang masuwerte namang pinaalaya ang Norwegian na si Kjartan Sekkingstad at ang Pinay na si Marites Flor.

Sa pagkamatay ni Abu Rahmi ay una nang idineklara ni AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Eduardo Año na tapos na ang banta ng terorismo sa Bohol.

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Standard
TODAY

Page. 16

Give up guns if you wish to help DENR, NPA told

By John Paolo Bencito

THE New People's Army should surrender first their firearms as a precondition before Environment Secretary Regina Lopez could hire them to help her pursue her crackdown on mining, the Armed Forces of the Philippines said Monday.

At the sidelines of a news briefing in Malacañang, AFP spokesperson Restituto Padilla said that while the move "may give way to localized peace talks," the NPA should first dispose their high-powered firearms before striking a deal with Lopez.

"If they wanted to help, they should lay down their arms," Padilla said.

On Thursday last week, Lopez signified her willingness to work with the NPAs in Agusan province "to establish an Ecological, Economic and Educational (E3) zone in communities" around mining sites in the province—a move welcomed by Communist Party of the Philippines founding chairman José Maria Sison.

Lopez's decision, however, met initial opposition from security

forces, who asked the Environment chief to instead partner with "legitimate organizations and reliable partners" such as the military.

Padilla said that partnering with the NPA would only "pose danger to other citizens" if they will be left roaming around with firearms.

"Yes of course, because anyone who possess firearms pose danger to other citizens. There's only a number of legitimate organizations who can bring firearms, and that is the military and the police. All else, it must be registered," AFP spokesperson Restituto Padilla said.

"Do you think the NPA has registered firearms? I don't think so," he added.

The military spokesman said that they have already sent liaisons to work with the DENR on how to pursue operations in the heavily-mined provinces.

In the ongoing peace negotiations between the government and the reds, among the contentious issues left to be discussed are the issues on the cessation of hostilities and disposition of firearms.

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4 foreign jihadists fall

Jl terrorists sought refuge in Maute camp—military

By Francisco Tuyay

FOUR members of the Jemaah Islamiya terrorist group—three Indonesians and a Malaysian—were among the 36 bandits killed in four days of fighting between government troops and the Maute Group in Piagapo town in Lanao del Sur.

Armed Forces chief of staff Gen. Eduardo Año said the slain terrorists were in the company of the Maute bandits when government troops blasted and overran their fortified lairs on the edges of Piagapo town on April 21.

Año said the identities of the four slain jihadists remained un-

known as they had changed their names.

The Indonesians and Malaysian were part of the Ji before, but when their existence diminished, they made other affiliations, particularly with the Maute Group, which took over the remnants of

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the JI and aligned with the Abu Sayyaf Group under Isnilon Hapilon hoping they will be recognized by ISIS," Año said.

Attack helicopters backed by an Army artillery contingent blasted Maute's main camp consisting of hundreds of bunkers and trenches in the forested ridges of Piagapo, forcing bandits to flee. Pursuing Army Scout Rangers engaged the bandits in a running gunbattle.

Of the 36 killed bandits, 14 have already been identified, including a certain Bantayao or Bayabao, a former leader of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front under Abdullah Goldiano Maka-paar alias Commander Bravo.

The latest military strike at the Maute Group was intended to cripple its capability to sow violence and terrorism in Lanao province and adjacent municipalities and prevent them from spreading their attacks to civilians who do not support them.

Ground forces have been conducting clearing operations, locating the remnants of Maute bandits, and trying to determine the whereabouts of Hapilon who was critically wounded in a previous encounter with troops somewhere in Lanao del Sur.

"So far, we are conducting mopping up operations and we are trying to locate Hapilon because right now we have no proof of life," Año said, noting that there was talk that the Abu Sayyaf leader was ready to surrender because of his ill health.

Año said the military had also spotted "Arab-looking nationals" in Lanao del Sur, but could not confirm if they were affiliated with the Islamic State.

Año said they estimated the number of Maute members at 120 to 130 fighters, but added that this number had been dramatically reduced.

"With the developments unfolding, they [Maute] would eventually realize that what they have been fighting for is useless," Año said. **With John Paolo Bencito**

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2 Arabs suspected of ISIS links monitored in Lanao

BY FERNAN MARASIGAN

THE Armed Forces of the Philippines is investigating if two Arabs monitored in Lanao del Sur province, the stronghold of the terrorist Maute Group, are members of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria or ISIS, Gen. Eduardo Año, AFP chief of staff, disclosed on Tuesday.

"We have monitored one or two Arabs in the area but we cannot really confirm if they are really ISIS personalities," he said.

Año noted that in the past, there were Arabs who were going to Lanao del Sur on the pretext of establishing a foundation or for religious teachings.

"So it's early to say. But of course it's part of the intelligence tasking to look for foreigners who are inclined to support or to be affiliated with local terror groups including the group of Hapilon," said the AFP chief, referring to Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) leader Isnilon Hapilon.

It was reported earlier that Hapilon and some of his men ar-

rived in Lanao del Sur and joined forces with the Maute Group in an apparent attempt to establish an ISIS cell in the region.

At least 37 terrorists were killed in a series of clashes in the province that started over the weekend when government forces launched massive offensives against the Maute Group.

Among those reportedly killed were three Indonesians and a Malaysian, said to be members of the Asian terror group Jema'ah Islamiyah (JI).

"So far, we don't have their names yet but once we identify them, we will disclose them. These are JI and now they

are calling themselves as ISIS-inspired," Año said.

The military said continuous focused military operations are in accordance with President Rodrigo Duterte's directive to decimate all local terrorists in Mindanao in southern Philippines not later than July 31.

More than 500 families in three towns of Lanao del Sur were displaced from their homes as result of the recent firefights.

According to the AFP chief, Indonesian and Malaysian terrorists have been in the province for quite some time now.

"They are still part of the JI before and they changed the group's name when JI almost became non-existent. And then made other affiliations. This was where the Maute family took over these remnants of the JI and called themselves the Maute Group and aligned with Hapilon in the hope that they will be recognized as one wilayat, or Daesh or ISIS province," he explained.

Meanwhile, Año said there is no need to conduct a loyalty check on

AFP officials as a result of the discovery that a ranking official of the Philippine National Police (PNP) was affiliated with the Abu Sayyaf.

"There is an ongoing system [at the AFP] that when you are assigned to sensitive positions or units, you have to undergo partial background investigation and full background investigation depending on the positions you are holding. This is continuing. Maybe, the PNP committed lapses in that area. But there is an existing system for that so we don't have to do loyalty check," he pointed out.

Security forces recently arrested Supt. Maria Christina Nobleza in the company of a suspected terrorist while allegedly trying to rescue remaining Abu Sayyaf bandits in Bohol.

Authorities found out later that Nobleza, the deputy regional director of the Davao Regional Police Office's Crime Laboratory, is the girlfriend of suspected bomb expert Reenor Lou Dungon alias Kudre, a relative of slain ASG founder Abdu-rajak Abubakar Janjalani.

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Foreigners, Abu leaders among dead in Lanao del Sur clashes

AFP chief says 130 foreign nationals in Mindanao supporting local terror groups

By **Richel V. Umel**
and **Cynthia D. Balana**
@Team_Inquirer

PIAGAPO, LANAOS DEL SUR—Two leaders of the Abu Sayyaf Group and at least four foreigners were among the suspected terrorists killed in clashes that spanned three days as government forces pursued a local terror group in Lanao del Sur province.

In Manila, Gen. Eduardo Año, Armed Forces of the Philippines chief of staff, said three Indonesians and a Malaysian, believed to be members of the Jemaah Islamiyah terror group operating in Asia, were among 37 militants who were killed in the assault.

Año, in an Associated Press (AP) report, said 14 of the dead had been identified. The report, however, did not name any of the slain foreigners or armed men.

Brig. Gen. Rolando Joselito Bautista, chief of the 1st Infantry Tabak Division, said among those killed was Abu Imam Bantayaw, an Abu Sayyaf leader based in this town; and a subcommander identified only as Mael, who was killed and buried here on Sunday night.

Bautista said one of those slain, who soldiers believed was a foreigner, was buried in a crater that a bomb created as government forces engaged members of the Maute terror group.

Government troops recovered a

passport of an Indonesian national from the clash site in Barangay Gacap, he said. Bautista, however, did not release details about information contained in the foreign passport.

Bomb-making materials, bullets, uniforms, motorcycles and food items were also recovered from the area.

The military continued its combat operations against the Maute group following the order of President Duterte to neutralize terror groups in Mindanao, specifically the Abu Sayyaf and Maute groups, who both pledged their allegiance to the Islamic State, a jihadist movement based in the Middle East.

Brig. Gen. Nixon Fortes, commander

of the 103rd Brigade, said there would be no letup in the operations against the Maute group, which had established a new camp in Piagapo.

The area is just 5 kilometers from Camp Pukta of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front faction led by Abdullah Macapaar alias Kumander Bravo, according to Fortes.

Año, in an interview on Tuesday, said the four were among the 130 foreigners living in Mindanao who were believed to be supporting local terrorists led by the Abu Sayyaf Group.

He said mopping-up operations were ongoing as troops tried to locate Abu Sayyaf leader Isnilon Hapilon. —WITH REPORTS FROM JIGGER J. JERUSALEM AND AP INQ

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Death toll from Lanao Sur clash now at 37

The death toll in the ongoing military operations against the Maute Group in Lanao del Sur yesterday rose to 37 terrorists, including three Indonesians and a Malaysian, as government troops overran an enemy encampment in Piagapo town. Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Chief of Staff Gen. Eduardo Año said that the four slain foreign terrorists are members of the Jamaah Islamiyah (JI) who have allied with the Maute group and the Abu Sayyaf band of Isnilon Hapilon to gain recognition from the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The military last April 22 launched massive Army, Navy and Air Force operations against the Maute group in Lanao del Sur, particularly in Piagapo town. "There were series of encounters and now they (government troops) have occupied the main camp of the Maute group and we inflicted about 37 enemies killed -- with three Indonesians and one Malaysian," Año said. Also, among those killed was a certain Imam Bantayao, a former member of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Of the 37 reported terrorists killed, 14 have been identified while the remaining 23 were still unidentified. The AFP chief described the captured Maute camp as having "48 foxholes with good fighting positions." Año said that part of the military operations in Lanao del Sur was to determine if Hapilon is still alive. Recognized as emir or leader of the ISIS in southeast Asia, Hapilon was monitored in Lanao del Sur with a handful of his loyal Basilan-based followers last December and linked up with the Maute group in an effort to establish an ISIS caliphate in Central Mindanao. But he reportedly sustained serious injuries during military air strike last February -- with Año describing him then as "bedridden" and being carried on a makeshift stretcher. **Mario J. Mallari**

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AFP to China: Probe Pinoy fishers' harassment

By **ALEXIS ROMERO**

The military is hopeful that China will conduct an impartial probe into reports that the Chinese navy drove away Filipino fishermen at Union Banks in the disputed Spratlys chain.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has submitted its investigation report to the Department of Foreign Affairs.

"It is up to the DFA to act on the matter," AFP chief Gen. Eduardo Año said.

Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla, spokesman for the AFP, said the Chinese government has vowed to investigate the incident, which was relayed by Magdalo Rep. Gary Alejano to media last week.

"The Chinese government said they will look into the matter and we're going to wait for that," Padilla said.

Padilla said the Philippine government is conducting its own investigation of the incident.

"We have relayed that information to the Department of Foreign Affairs to act on it. If it is determined that indeed it is the Chinese navy

and not the coast guard, then appropriate protest through diplomatic channels will have to be given out," he said.

Padilla said the government has sent representatives to talk to the fishermen who were allegedly harassed by the Chinese navy.

Citing statements from witnesses, Alejano said the Chinese navy fired shots to deter Filipino fishermen from going to Union Banks on April 9.

"According to initial reports, it was the Chinese coast guard that was involved in the Union Banks incident. However, in our meeting with the fishermen, we were told that it was actually a Chinese navy ship," Alejano said.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana earlier ordered the AFP to investigate the incident.

Union Banks is located within the country's 200-nautical mile exclusive economic zone.

The alleged harassment of Filipino fishermen took place near Gaven Reef, one of seven artificial islands built by China in the Spratlys.

– With Jaime Laude

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Sandiganbayan affirms conviction of former AFP-RSBS officials

THE Sandiganbayan has thrown out motions for reconsideration filed by former top officials of the Armed Forces of the Philippines-Retirement and Separation Benefits System (AFP-RSBS) led by retired Brig. Gen. Jose S. Ramiscal Jr. seeking reversal of their conviction on July 19, 2016 on charges of malversation of public funds through falsification of public documents.

In a 13-page resolution dated April 19, 2017, the anti-graft court's Second Division affirmed the guilty verdict against the defendants that meted them

14 to 20-years imprisonment for defrauding the government of P250,313,200.

The court ordered each of the six accused to pay a fine of P250.313 million equivalent to the sum defrauded.

Aside from Ramiscal, also convicted were AFP-RSBS Legal Department head Julian Alzaga, Documentation Department head Manuel Satuito, and private defendants Elizabeth Liang and Jesus Garcia, representing Concord Resources Inc.

Their conviction was based on the finding that they conspired

with Liang and Garcia by executing a false deed of sale to make it appear that the AFP-RSBS paid P341.343 million to Concord Resources for four parcels of land in Barrio Makiling, Calamba, Laguna when a second deed of sale showed a payment of only P91,024,800.

The deed of sale bearing the amount of P291.343 (part of P341.343 million purchase cost) was used as proof of the alleged purchase and was kept in the AFP-RSBS records but it was the second deed bearing the smaller amount that was presented to

the Bureau of Internal Revenue as basis for the computation of taxes.

In holding all six defendants guilty of conspiring to commit fraud, the Sandiganbayan declared that it was the second deed of sale that was valid, noting that it was duly notarized and used as the basis for the eventual transfer of the property titles to the AFP-RSBS.

Based on this pronouncement, the court said the difference between the two declared acquisition costs represented the damage inflicted on the government. – *Peter J.G. Tabingo*

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Sayyaf remnants in Bohol soon cornered – AFP

By ALEXIS ROMERO

The two remaining Abu Sayyaf militants in Bohol are now “fighting for survival” and it is only a matter of time before they are captured or killed, the military said yesterday.

Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) spokesman Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla said the security issue in Bohol has been “adequately addressed” and the two remaining Abu Sayyaf bandits no longer pose a serious threat.

“The Bohol incident manifested a very deep-seated plan on the part of terrorists to sow discord and to target high-value individuals where they can earn a lot from,” Padilla said in a press briefing in Malacñang.

“The two or three remaining individuals – one of whom

we believe to have expired because of exposure to the elements and of hunger – are now down to two who are fighting for their survival,” he added.

Asked how the military can claim that the Bohol threat has been addressed while the Abu Sayyaf still has presence in the province, Padilla said the stragglers are being hunted down in an area the troops have encircled.

“Because of their long exposure to the elements, what they are doing now is to fight for their survival. So we have information, things that I cannot reveal as of the moment until such time that we have completely arrested them and taken them,” Padilla said.

“The help of the local government in the island of Bohol as well as the cooperation of our citizens is a clear case and a good example that we wish to pass on to all the LGUs (local

government units) throughout the Philippines and in all areas where unverified reports have been received,” he said.

Five Abu Sayyaf bandits, three soldiers and a policeman were killed after terrorists attacked government forces in Inabanga, Bohol on April 11.

The attack came days before the Philippines’ hosting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit and Related Meetings on April 26 to 29.

Padilla said the military has not detected any threat that could disrupt the regional meet, which is expected to be attended by 1,900 delegates from the ten member-countries.

“We don’t see any threat right now, no serious threat that is in the radar screen but our planning is always based on worst-case scenarios,” the military spokesman said.

“So whatever worst-case scenarios that we anticipate that could happen, then adequate preparations and plans are laid down to meet these scenarios,” he added.

Padilla said the Joint Task Force National Capital Region based in Camp Aguinaldo has been deployed all over Metro Manila to secure the ASEAN venues.

Padilla assured tourists that Bohol is now a safe destination.

“We value the time that you wish to rest so please do not cancel your reservations in these tourist areas and go out and enjoy yourself. Have the sabbatical you most urgently need and we will ensure that you will be able to do that unhampered and well secured,” he said.

The July deadline

Padilla said the military is optimistic that it would be able

to substantially reduce the capabilities of threat groups like the Abu Sayyaf and the Maute group by the end of July.

“We have set deadlines for ourselves to degrade their capacities and we by ourselves think that we are going to meet our targets by the end of July. The attempt to degrade them is bearing fruit,” he said.

Padilla said there are about 300 remaining Abu Sayyaf bandits, most of them in Jolo, Sulu.

The military sought to degrade the capabilities of armed groups like Abu Sayyaf under its previous security plan Oplan Bayanihan. The military is still pursuing the goal under its new plan Oplan Kapayapaan.

Asked about the assurance that the military would meet the July target on defeating the threat groups considering that

it also set deadlines in the past, Padilla said. “We set targets to significantly degrade their capabilities. We’re not saying to completely obliterate them down to zero. So it’s two different things.

“We do set targets because we want our people to work on a set deadline and to focus their efforts towards that end. Unless we do that, our efforts will be scattered, they will be dissipated,” he added.

Padilla said the capabilities of armed groups have been “substantially degraded” if they can no longer launch significant activities that will bring harm and create chaos in communities.

“We believe we are on the way of degrading them significantly because if we will go by statistics, they have not been able to launch significant disturbances,” he said.

– With Christina Mendez

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Military: Abu Sayyaf in Bohol are dead ducks

BY JOCELYN MONTEMAYOR

THE military yesterday said only two or three Abu Sayyaf members remain in Bohol from the group of about 12 which clashed with government troops in the province during the Holy Week.

They are now "fighting for their survival" and no longer pose a threat to the area, said Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla, AFP spokesman, in a briefing in Malacañang.

"Two or three remaining individuals -- one of whom we believe to have expired because of exposure to the elements and of hunger --- are now down to two who are fighting for their survival," Padilla said.

He also said troops continue to pursue the remnants whose locations have been identified.

Padilla also told foreigners it is safe to travel to Bohol.

Mayor Allan Piezas of Clarin town in Bohol said the town was placed under state of calamity because 13 of its 24 barangays have been badly affected by the pursuit operations.

He said some 3,000 residents have been evacuated to barangay halls and public schools to prevent them from being caught in the crossfire. He said residents panic each time there are reports of

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sightings of Abu Sayyaf men.

Eight of the Abu Sayyaf members who landed in Bohol on April 11 have been killed in the initial clash and in pursuit operations.

A poster distributed by the military after President Duterte offered a bounty of P1 million for each of the remnants showed there were 12 who went to Bohol, reportedly to kidnap foreign tourists and delegates to an Asean event.

Padilla also expressed confidence the military will defeat the Abu Sayyaf. "We have set deadlines for ourselves to degrade their capacities and we by ourselves think that we are going to meet our targets by the end of July," he said.

AFP chief Gen. Eduardo Año's target is to end the group within the first half of this year.

Año yesterday said the abduction and eventual beheading of S/ Sgt. Anni Siraji by the Abu Sayyaf last week in Sulu "has further fueled the motivation" of soldiers in going after the Abu Sayyaf.

Siraji was assigned with the Army's 32nd Infantry Battalion and was a Tausug like Abu Sayyaf members. He was not involved in actual combat operations against the Abu Sayyaf. He was among the several hundreds of former Moro National Liberation Front fighters who were integrated into the Armed Forces, as part of the 1996 peace accord the MNLF signed with the government.

He was abducted Thursday last

week in Barangay Igasan in Patikul town. His cadaver was found by soldiers in Barangay Upper Taglibi, also in Patikul last Sunday, already in state of decomposition.

"In war, you have to respect your opponent. You do not really do barbaric acts against your opponent. You have to respect what he is fighting for. But what they did to Siraji was inhuman, so we make sure that justice will be given to S/ Sgt Siraji," he said.

He also said Abu Sayyaf leader Radullan Sahiron and his men have no other option but to surrender.

Officials earlier said the Sulu-based Sahiron has sent surrender feelers to the military for health reasons. — *With Victor Reyes and Raymond Africa*

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ASG men in Bohol down to 2

The military has finally addressed the security threat in Bohol with only two Abu Sayyaf rebels involved in the foiled attack at large, an official said on Tuesday.

AFP spokesman Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla said the troops have surrounded the two rebels who are now "fighting for their survival" and no longer pose any security threat.

Padilla said troops have already surrounded the two Abu Sayyaf rebels at large, adding their impending arrest was only a matter of time.

"The two who are still being hunted is known to be in an area where we are already closely guarding and have encircled. And that because of their long exposure to the elements, what they are doing now is to fight for their survival," he said.

Last week, government troops clashed with Abu Sayyaf terrorists attempting to sow chaos in Inabanga, Bohol. Several rebels were killed during the firefight at the province where a regional summit meeting was being held.

(Genalyn D. Kabiling)

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ONLINE NEWS

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US Embassy still tries own spin on Balikatan

THE United States Embassy in Manila yesterday said this year's Balikatan exercise between American and Filipino forces, which will run from May 8 to 19, is focused on meeting "current challenges facing the Philippines."

"Along with preparing the US forces' and AFP's ability to respond to natural disasters and deliver humanitarian aid, Balikatan will also increase our militaries' terrorism capabilities," press attaché Molly Koscina said in a statement.

Previous Balikatan exercises were focused on territorial defense. President Duterte has said he wants military exercises with the Americans to focus on humanitarian assistance and counter-terrorism. The exercise will be conducted in various venues in Luzon, the Visayas, and the National Capital Region.

Maj. Celeste Frank Sayson, Balikatan public affairs officer, said the PH-US Mutual Defense Board and the Security Engagement Board have "carefully included President Duterte's guidance for this year's exercise."

Sayson also said this year's Balikatan will follow a single-scenario concept wherein a super typhoon "devastates" areas under Central and Northern Luzon commands, and Joint Task Force National Capital Region.

Sayson said the operational and counter-terrorism training that will be conducted under Balikatan includes advanced marksmanship, counter-improvised explosive devices, and maritime interdiction against piracy.

Sayson said details like the number of US and Filipino troops that will be participating in the exercise and the assets that will be involved are still being finalized.

At least 7,000 American and Filipino troopers took part in last year's Balikatan exercise.

"As to the equipment, we will be utilizing the usual equipment, except the HIMARS (high mobility artillery rocket system). There will no HIMARS arriving for this year's Balikatan," said Sayson.

The HIMARS was used in the live fire exercises in Crow Valley in Tarlac. Sayson noted there will be no live fire training in this year's Balikatan, though there will be sniper rifle and close-quarter battle events.

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No serious threat seen on ASEAN Summit

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) allayed the public's fears of any serious threat to the 30th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit this week.

In a press briefing in Malacañang on Tuesday, April 25, AFP spokesperson Brigadier General Restituto Padilla, Jr. said they do not see any serious threat but authorities are prepared for any worst-case scenario.

"On the issue of ASEAN, the Armed Forces is part of the task force. The security and the one in charge of safeguarding and ensuring the events under ASEAN hosting goes on well is composed of a lot of agencies," Padilla said. "We are all part of this team entrusted to ensure that the activities are held without any hitch."

"We don't see any threat right now, no serious threat that is in the radar screen but our planning is always based on worst-case scenarios," he said.

"So whatever worst-case scenarios that we anticipate that could happen, then adequate preparations and plans are laid down to meet these scenarios," he added.

Padilla assured that the Joint Task Force-National Capital Region (JTF-NCR) is fully equipped with whatever they need and the AFP has provided whatever it is that they will still need just in case of any contingency.

The AFP spokesperson meanwhile assured that the terror threat in Bohol has already been addressed as he called on tourists not to cancel their tour reservations.

It will be recalled that government forces clashed with the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in Bohol last week.

"The Armed Forces and the Philippine National Police [are] happy to inform you that the threats we faced in the island of Bohol and the other are confirmed reports that have been coming our way as well as to the public regarding dangers posed by terrorists in our tourists areas is already addressed," Padilla said.

In the same briefing, Presidential spokesperson Ernesto Abella said the Philippines is gaining momentum as a foreign direct investment (FDI) destination.

Abella said that FDI inflow last year reached USD 7.9 billion, exceeding the full-year target of USD 6.7 billion, and 40.7 percent higher compared to 2015.

"The President made the commitment to prioritize a better life for all, to improve lives by reducing poverty by rebuilding trust in government and peace in our borders," Abella said.

"We're gathering more momentum as a growing number of investors notice the positive results of our economy which rests on solid economic fundamentals, increased spending for crucial infrastructure, tax and constitutional reforms and a relentless drive to create a peaceful environment for business to flourish," he added.

Abella also noted that the projects registered with the Board of Investments (BoI) have increased by 67 percent in first quarter of 2017 or from 72 to 122 projects.

"Once operational, these projects are seen to generate about 36,115 jobs or an increase of 181 percent over the 12,841 jobs generated in the first quarter of 2016," Abella said, adding that these investment projects are also expected to create 6,884 new jobs in agriculture and 24,367 new jobs in investment and housing projects; and 3,038 new jobs for the manufacturing-related projects. (PND/PNA)

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Military still unsure of identities of Chinese harassers of PHL fishermen off Union Bank

The military is still to determine on whether it was members of the Chinese Navy or Coast Guard that harassed Filipino fishermen off Union Bank, in the Spratlys Island Chain early this month.

"We are still to determine that. What we know for sure is that seven Chinese personnel with firearms and aboard a rubber boat, which came from a Chinese vessel, we are still to determine on whether it (came from a Chinese Navy or Coast Guard ship)," Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief-of-staff Gen. Eduardo Año said Tuesday.

"So now we have gathered the data and then informed already the Department of Foreign Affairs, now the all other actions will be acted upon by the DFA," he added.

Año earlier said he received an initial report on the incident from Western Command head Lt. Gen. Raul Del Rosario.

He added that harassed fishermen came from La Union.

Año also said Union Bank, a submerged feature, is near Gaven Reef, a feature holding some Chinese structures. (Pram F. Nepomuceno/PNA)

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Lanao Sur offensive designed to degrade Maute Group capabilities: AFP

The recent operation against the Maute Group, which killed 37 bandits, is part of ongoing military efforts to degrade the capability of the brigands to wreak terror in Mindanao and other parts of the country, Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief, Gen. Eduardo Año said Tuesday.

The military operation in Lanao del Sur province, conducted on April 21-24, was a deliberate military offensive purely designed to degrade the capability of the Maute Group, Año said in an interview.

In that offensive, 37 Maute Group members were killed, 14 of whom have been identified. They include three Indonesians and one Malaysian whose names and identities are still being verified, he said.

The AFP chief added that this operation is in line with ongoing efforts to neutralize the remaining Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) bandits in Bohol who made an ill-advised attempt to land in Inabanga last April 10 to abduct some local and foreign tourists to boost their kidnap-for-ransom activities.

As of this posting, eight of the 11 ASG fighters under Muamar Askali alias "Abu Rami" have been killed, along with the bandit commander and their Inabanga contact, Joselito Milloria.

The AFP chief added that they are still locating a certain Imnam Bantayao or Bayabao, a former Moro Islamic Liberation Front leader under Commander Bravo, and ASG leader Isnilon Hapilon, believed to have been killed or severely wounded in the series of military offensives.

"We are still conducting mopping operations to locate Hapilon or proof of life (along with Bantayao or Bayabao)," he disclosed.

Año declined to give a number of the surviving Maute Group members following this offensive, adding that an assessment will be implemented shortly. (Priam F. Nepomuceno/PNA)

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AFP officials in sensitive positions carefully vetted before appointment

There are no ranking military officials collaborating with the enemy.

This was the assurance given by Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief-of-staff Gen. Eduardo Año when asked on whether they are conducting surveillance on any of its ranking officials or members in wake of the scandal involving Senior Supt. Maria Cristina Nobleza who was arrested in the act of helping cornered Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) bandits in Clarin town, Bohol last April 22.

Arrested with the lady police officer was her driver and alleged lover Reneirlou Dongon, a known ASG operative, who was earlier implicated in several bombing attacks but was freed due to a technicality.

They were nabbed while attempting to penetrate a police checkpoint in Clarin town.

"(In the AFP), all officials, before being given sensitive positions, are subjected to partial and full background checks (before they are given these positions)," Año added.

The AFP chief said that it is possible that some lapses may have occurred during Nobleza's promotion to the PNP Crime Laboratory.

An estimated three to four ASG brigands are still in the area. These are part of the 11-man team ASG sub-leader Muamar Askali alias "Abu Rami" who landed last April 10 in Inabanga town, Bohol to conduct kidnapping attacks against local and foreign tourists frequenting the area.

However, before they can fulfill their plans, they were intercepted by government forces, killing Askali and three others last April 11.

In the ensuing firefight, three soldiers and police officer were killed along with an elderly couple.

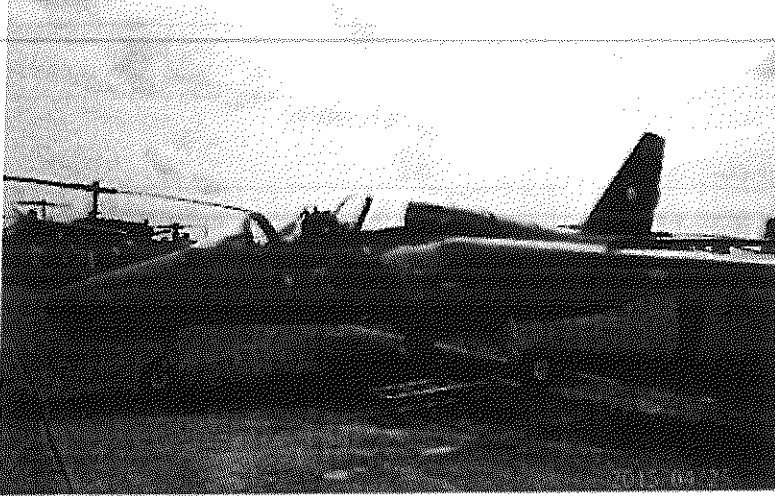
Pursuit operations, which culminated in Barangay Bacani, Clarin town last April 22, resulted in the death of ASG contact Joselito Milloria and three more bandits with no losses to the government side. (Priam F. Nepomuceno/PNA)

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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PAF looking for rocket motors for S-211 jet trainers



The Philippine Air Force (PAF) is looking for suppliers capable of delivering PHP8 million worth of rocket motors needed for the use of its SIAI-Marchetti S-211 trainer jets.

Bid opening is on May 5, 9 a.m. at the PAF Procurement Center Conference Room, Villamor Air Base, Pasay City, Air Force bids and awards committee chair Brig. Gen. Nicolas Parilla said in a bid bulletin posted at the Philippine Government Electronic Procurement System website.

The S-211 is the PAF's sole jet-powered aircraft following the retirement of the Northrop F-5 "Tiger" jet fighter fleet in 2005 and arrival of the Korea Aerospace Industries FA-50 "Fighting Eagle" jet fighter in 2015.

Three S-211s remain in the PAF inventory and are used closely for training, recon, and sometimes ground-attack missions. (PFN/PNA)

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20 PN ships, other assets deployed for 30th ASEAN Summit

Twenty Philippine Navy (PN) ships, of various classes and sizes, will be deployed to secure delegates of the ASEAN Summit and Related meetings from April 26 to 29 at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC) in Pasay City.

PN spokesperson Capt. Lued Lincuna, in a message to the PNA Tuesday, however, declined to give the names and locations of these ships, many of which are now patrolling Manila Bay for security and operational reasons.

Lincuna said these vessels are supported by elite troops from Naval Special Operations and Marine units along with assorted PN planes and helicopters.

Joint Task Force deputy commander Col. Victor Tomas earlier said they are yet to detect any security threats for the coming ASEAN event.

"We are very fortunate to say that there are no threats detected for the coming ASEAN meetings (at the PICC in Pasay City)," he added.

The above-mentioned military unit will serve as the Philippine National Police (PNP) back-up in securing the said event along with other government security agencies.

Despite this, Tomas said security for the meetings will still be tight so they will not be caught flat-footed in case of any untoward incident.

"We don't want to be overconfident so what we are doing is we are (still conducting) intelligence build-up and (target) hardening," he added. (PNA)

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