

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



**TEAM ARMY**

**Serving the people. Securing the land.**

[oacpa.army2012@gmail.com](mailto:oacpa.army2012@gmail.com)

**OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

**NEWS CLIPPINGS**

**16 December 2017**

**Saturday**

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

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### 16 DECEMBER 2017


PAGE NR.	TITLE	WRITER	NEWSPAPER
1	Weather Forecast	-	PDI p. A5
<b>HEADLINE NEWS</b>			
2	Senators stand by Aquino on Dengvaxia decision	Leila Salaverria	PDI p. A1
3-4	'Urduja' triggers floods, slides	Joey Gabieta	PDI p. A2
5-6	Widespread rains feared	Chito Chavez	Mla Bulletin p. 1
<b>ARMY RELATED NEWS</b>			
7	Army says Pastor slain in Mindoro clash not NPA rebel	Maricar Cinco	PDI p. A8
8	AFP says NPA now kept to launching token attacks	Mike Crismundo	Mla Bulletin p. 14
<b>AFP RELATED NEWS</b>			
9-10	Salary increases for AFP, PNP distort pay scale of other gov't employees	Gerry Baldo	Tribune p. 1
11	Tiamzons oppose return to prison	Jeffrey Damicog	Mla Bulletin p. 7
12	AFP to launch Red Rose Pin	Argyll Cyrus Geducos	Mla Bulletin p. 9
13	Military to step up operations in Mindanao	Jeannete Andrade	PDI p. A5
14	Prelates hit Congress on ML extension	Julie Aurelio	PDI p. A3
15-16	No need to expand martial law for now	Dempsey Reyes	Mla Times p. A1
17	Different reactions to extension of martial law	Nonoy Lacson	Mla Bulletin p. 14
18-19	AFP to uphold rights, vows no ML abuses	Jaime Laude	Phil Star p. 1
20	CHR respects Duterte, Congress extension of ML	Janvic Mateo	Phil Star p. 9
21-22	Marawi stories: Hundreds of human right violations	Janvic Mateo	Phil Star p. 9
23	CHR seeks probe of rights violations	Jaymee Gamil	PDI p. A5
24	Military confirms Maute recruitment started when Marawi siege ended	Argyll Cyrus Geducos	Mla Bulletin p. 14
25	Military warns vs IS-inspired group	Catherine Valente	Mla Times p. A1
26	None of seized weapons in Marawi City from military	PNA	Tribune p. 3
27	Mindanao military rule: 'We are worthy of people's trust - AFP	Mario Mallari	Tribune p. 1
28	Gov't MILF sign 4 new accords	Jose Rodol Clapano	Phil Star p. 14
29	China keeps building islands on disputed sea - report	The Associated Press	Mla Bulletin p. 1
<b>EDITORIAL/COMMENTARY</b>			
30-31	Double-whammy acts by Congress in one day	Satur Ocampo	Phil Star p. 11

<b>ONLINE NEWS</b>			
32	Walang deadline sa pagpulbos sa NPA at iba pang terrorist group – AFP	Analy Soberanoon	<a href="http://www.bomboradyo.com">www.bomboradyo.com</a>
33	AFP lauds Senate passage of pay hike bill for soliders, cops		<a href="http://www.pna.gov.ph">www.pna.gov.ph</a>
34	Expect more action in NPA-affected areas: AFP chief		<a href="http://www.pna.gov.ph">www.pna.gov.ph</a>
35-36	Maute-ISIS remnants recruiting post-Marawi siege — AFP	Argyll Cyrus Geducos	<a href="http://www.mb.com.ph">www.mb.com.ph</a>


16 December 2017




Page: 15



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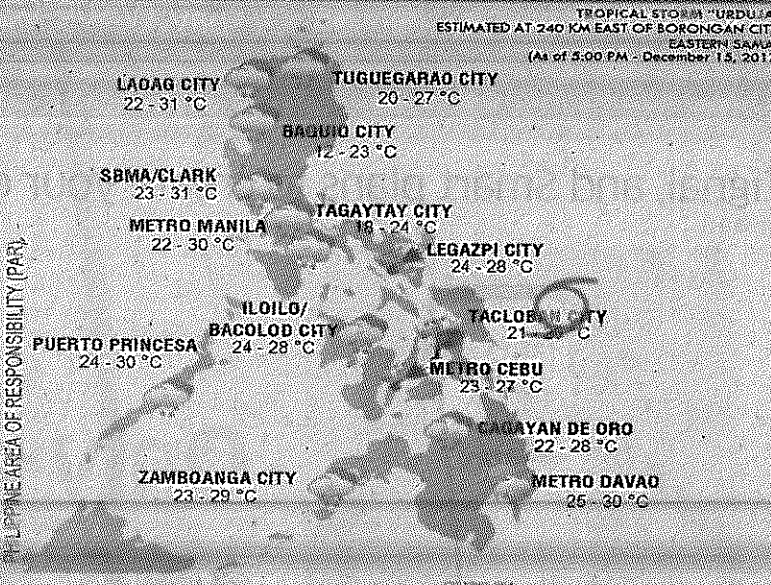




BALANCED NEWS • FEARLESS VIEWS

**TODAY'S WEATHER FORECAST | DECEMBER 16, 2017 | SATURDAY**

TROPICAL STORM "URDULIA"  
ESTIMATED AT 240 KM EAST OF BORONGAN CITY,  
EASTERN SAMAR  
(At 3:00 PM - December 15, 2017)



PHILIPPINE AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY (PAR)

**SUNRISE**  
6:14 AM

**SUNSET**  
5:30 PM

**MOONRISE**  
4:19 AM

**MOONSET**  
4:08 PM

**LAST QUARTER**  
DEC 10  
3:51 PM

**NEW MOON**  
DEC 18  
3:53 PM

**LOW TIDE**  
4:11 AM  
0.03 Meter

**HIGH TIDE**  
6:51 PM  
0.89 Meter

Partly cloudy to clear, light clouds, with  
occasional light showers or drizzle

Cloudy, strong with rain showers  
and/or thunderstorms

Light rain

Steady

City	Today	Tomorrow
METRO MANILA	23 - 30 °C	22 - 29 °C
TUGUEGARAO	21 - 27 °C	20 - 26 °C
LAOAG	24 - 31 °C	24 - 31 °C
BAGUIO	13 - 23 °C	13 - 23 °C
SBMA/CLARK	24 - 31 °C	23 - 31 °C
TAGAYTAY	18 - 24 °C	19 - 24 °C
LEGAZPI	24 - 27 °C	25 - 28 °C
PUERTO PRINCESA	23 - 29 °C	23 - 28 °C
ILOILO/BACOLOD	23 - 28 °C	23 - 28 °C
METRO CEBU	22 - 27 °C	23 - 28 °C
TACLOBAN	22 - 26 °C	24 - 30 °C
CAGAYAN DE ORO	23 - 29 °C	23 - 29 °C
METRO DAVAO	24 - 30 °C	25 - 31 °C
ZAMBOANGA	23 - 30 °C	24 - 30 °C

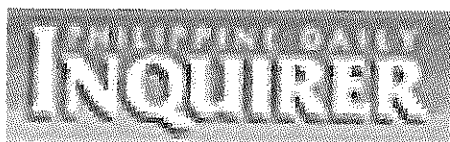
**DZRHNEWS TELEVISION**

MONDAY - FRIDAY  
11AM & 5PM

**PILIPINAS 10**

WEEKDAYS  
6AM, 6:30 PM & 9PM  
WEEKENDS  
6AM

16 December 2017



Page:   A1  

# Senators stand by Aquino on Dengvaxia decision

By **Leila B. Salaverria**  
@LeilasINQ

Several senators on Friday stood by former President Benigno Aquino III in the controversial purchase by his administration of the P3.5-billion anti-dengue vaccines as one of his critics filed a plunder and “mass murder” complaint against him in connection with the mass immunization program.

Aquino told a Senate hearing on the vaccination program, which started a few months before he stepped down last year, his administration could not leave people exposed to the mosquito-borne disease when there was a vaccine available.

## In ‘good faith’

Sen. JV Ejercito believed Aquino approved the purchase in “good faith” and it was possible he was misinformed about the risks from the world’s first antidengue vaccine, Dengvaxia, produced by the French pharmaceutical giant Sanofi Pasteur.

“It’s the other officials who might have taken advantage and did not give him an extensive report that includes the

risk if there was,” Ejercito said.

More than 830,000, mostly schoolchildren aged 9 years and older, have been vaccinated.

At Thursday’s hearing by the joint blue ribbon and health committees of the Senate, Aquino said no one had objected to Dengvaxia at the time it was considered for use by his administration.

Ejercito said a President relied on department secretaries and heads of agencies for information following due diligence.

“My personal take is that not all information was disclosed, so that the transaction would push through,” he said.

## ‘Done in haste’

He also believed the transaction was “done in haste,” and questioned the use of savings for such a major purchase.

“I find it also unusual that a P3.5-billion program does not have appropriation from Congress,” he said.

Sen. Joel Villanueva also indicated that he backed Aquino’s decision to go ahead with the vaccination program.

He said in an Instagram post Aquino “acted in the best interest of the country” based on the circumstances and the available information.

Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon also said Aquino relied on the expert advice of his health secretary.

“It was clear from the hearing that he did not violate any law,” Drilon said.

Augusto Syjuco Jr., a former Iloilo congressman, disagreed and on Friday charged Aquino and his health secretary, Janette Garin, of plunder, graft and corruption and mass murder in the Ombudsman.

## No evidence

Syjuco, a former head of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, said he filed the complaint on behalf of schoolchildren “who were inoculated with the deadly vaccine Dengvaxia, through apparent recklessness and negligence, and [Aquino and Garin’s] apparent anxiety to spend P3.5 billion of public funds.”

The eight-page complaint cited news reports and commentaries on the controversial immunization program, including posts from the “Thinking Pinoy” blog, a supporter of President Duterte.

Abigail Valte, a spokesperson for Aquino, said the public could judge Syjuco by his own admission that he had no evi-

dence to back his complaint.

“Unfortunately, our judicial system is bogged down by frivolous suits like this one. At the end of the day, public money and precious time is wasted, and for what?” Abigail Valte said in a text message.

Garin welcomed the complaint, saying it would provide “an opportunity to put an end to the case and for the truth to come out.”

Sen. Richard Gordon, chair of the blue ribbon committee, gave Aquino the benefit of the doubt, but would not clear him completely.

“I cannot exculpate him because there would appear to be some negligence on his part,” Gordon told reporters in a phone interview.

He said Aquino should have been more careful and asked questions and consulted experts.

Gordon also said it was unfair to blame Garin’s predecessor, Enrique Ona, for the vaccine controversy.

Ona may have talked about getting the vaccine, but his signature did not appear on any of the documents and he did not meet Sanofi officials in Paris, Gordon said. —WITH REPORTS FROM DJ YAP, JULIE M. AURELIO AND NIKKO DIZON INQ

16 December 2017



Page: A2

# 'Urduja' triggers floods, slides

**By Joey A. Gabieta and Jaymee T. Gamil**  
@Team\_Inquirer

TACLOBAN CITY—A 7-year-old boy drowned while three fishermen went missing as Tropical Storm "Urduja" dumped heavy rains on Eastern Visayas on Friday, triggering floods and landslides in at least 22 towns and displacing more than 24,000 families.

The bad weather also forced the suspension of classes and work across the region while brownout was reported in the provinces of Samar and Northern Samar.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said Urduja (international name: Kai-tak) was expected to make landfall in Northern or Eastern Samar as early as Saturday morning.

## On red alert

Despite moving at a sluggish 5 kilometers per hour, the tropical cyclone forced air carriers to cancel a total of 16 domestic flights from Ninoy Aquino In-

ternational Airport.

Operations centers of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), particularly in the Eastern Visayas and Bicol regions, were put on red alert on Friday, requiring all its personnel to be on 24-hour standby.

## Highest amount of rainfall

Pagasa said the highest amount of rainfall on Friday was registered in Guiuan and Borongan in Eastern Samar, Catbalogan in western Samar, as well as Tacloban City and Maasin, southern Leyte.

Accumulated rainfall amount in Guiuan reached 780 millimeters over 24 hours, past its normal monthly accumulated average of 440 millimeters.

In Sorsogon province, more than 3,000 people remained stranded at the port of Matnog town on Friday as the Philippine Coast Guard stopped passenger, cargo and fishing vessels from sailing.

The boy, David Bravo, from Mahaplag town in Leyte, was with his mother when he was swept away by rampaging

floodwaters about 6 a.m. on Friday, said Arvin Monge of the Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (PDRRMO).

Monge said the mother, who was not identified in the report, was about to throw their garbage into the water canal when floodwaters swept the boy.

Heavy rains triggered floods in the towns of Tolosa, Pato, Capooan, San Miguel, Babatngon and Dulag in Leyte and 16 towns in Samar, Biliran, Eastern Samar and Northern Samar.

In Samar, the swollen Calbiga River in Calbiga town forced 15 families in Barangay Polangi to move to the town center, according to Van Torrevillas, Samar PDRRMO officer.

## Displaced by floods

Minor landslides hit the villages of Cantigum in Calbiga, Polangi and Maulong in Catbalogan City while floods displaced at least 70 families in Barangay Tulay, Sta. Rita town in Samar province.

Floods also forced 16 families from their homes in Barangay Atipolo, Naval town in Bili-

ran, said provincial disaster officer Jun Docillo.

In Eastern Samar, 24,702 families from 150 barangays in the towns of Jipapad, Maslog, Arteche, Can-avid, Dolores, Salcedo, Balangkayan, Quinapondan and Oras were also affected by floods due to heavy rains.

#### Missing fishermen

George Erroba, provincial administrator, said three fishermen—Pepito Gacho Jr. and Rogelio Gamalo from Lawaan town and Elmer Beruja from Balangiga town—had been reported missing in the wake of the storm's onslaught.

Gacho and Gamalo went out to sea on Wednesday, while Beruja was reported missing by family members on Friday, Erroba said.

In Northern Samar, floods forced the evacuation of 156 families from the towns of Catubig, Lope de Vega, Las Navas and Mondragon, said Rei Josiah Echano, PDRRMC officer.

At least 1,878 passengers were stranded in Allen town, Northern Samar, after the Coast Guard barred vessels from

crossing to Luzon.

In all, at least 39 passenger vessels and nine cargo ships were barred from leaving the different ports in Cebu, officials said.

Pagasa said Metro Manila and nearby provinces were also expected to experience moderate to heavy rainfall this weekend.

As of 12 noon on Friday, the slow-moving storm was located 240 km east of Borongan City in Eastern Samar, moving northwest.

Rains are seen to be moderate to heavy within the 500 km diameter of the storm, Pagasa said.

Storm signals were already hoisted over 17 areas in the country.

#### Signal No. 2

Signal No. 2 was raised over Northern Samar, Eastern Samar, Samar and Biliran; and No. 1 in Catanduanes, Camarines Sur, Albay, Sorsogon, Romblon, and Masbate, including Burias and Ticao islands; Leyte, Southern Leyte, northern Cebu, Capiz, Aklan, and northern Iloilo, and Dinagat Islands.

Though Urduja's winds are relatively weak—with maxi-

mum sustained winds possibly reaching up to 75 kph near the center and gustiness of up to 90 kph as of noon on Friday—Pagasa advised that sea travel remained risky over the eastern seaboard of Bicol region and the Visayas.

#### Canceled flights

Among the flights canceled as of 4 p.m. were three PAL Express flights to Tacloban City and Legazpi City, three Cebu Pacific flight to Tacloban, one Cebu flight to Masbate, and one Skyjet flight to Siargao in Surigao del Norte. Return flights from these places were also canceled.

As of 11 a.m. on Friday, the NDRRMC operations center monitored some 8,500 stranded passengers in the seaports of Manila, Eastern Visayas, Bicol region and on Western Visayas, according to spokesperson Mina Marasigan.

Reports from the Office of Civil Defense in Bicol said 4,461 passengers were staying in ports around the region. —WITH REPORTS FROM JEANETTE I. ANDRADA, JEROME ANING, RACHEL ARNAIZ AND MOREXETTE ERRAM INQ

16 December 2017

MANILA BULLETIN  
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

Page: 1

# Widespread rains feared

## 'Urduja' intensifies; storm surge may occur

By CHRIS A. CHAVEZ

**S**cattered to widespread rains will continue over Eastern Visayas and Caraga region and is expected to prevail over Bicol Region and the rest of the Visayas within 24 hours as tropical storm "Urduja" remains almost stationary on its track.

The Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said residents of these areas must undertake appropriate measures against floods and landslides.

In a 2 p.m. weather update, PAGASA said Urduja is already 230 kilometers east of Borongan City, Eastern Samar

and is currently moving northwest at just 5 kilometers per hour.

Urduja, which packs maximum winds of 75 kph and gustiness of up to 90 kph, may make landfall in the Eastern Samar-Northern Samar area today.

With the prevailing weather condition, signal No. 2 is now hoisted over Eastern Samar, Northern Samar, Samar, and Biliran while signal No. 2 is up over Catanduanes, Camarines Sur, Albay, Sorsogon, Masbate including Burias and Ticao Islands, Romblon, Leyte, Southern Leyte, Northern Cebu, Capiz, Aklan, Northern Iloilo, and Dinagat Islands.

PAGASA warned that sea travel remains risky over the eastern seaboard of Bicol Region and ▶4

the Visayas due to the approaching tropical storm.

It also warned of storm surge of up to 14 meters at the coastal areas of provinces under storm signal No. 2.

### Thousands stranded

Due to the storm, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) said a total of 9,028 passengers were stranded in Bicol, the National Capital Region (NCR), Western and Eastern Visayas.

The NDRRMC said that the operations of 859 vessels, 30 rolling cargoes, and 20 motor bancas were stopped due to bad weather.

It added that classes in eight provinces, four cities, and 17 municipalities in Regions V and VIII were suspended due to heavy rains.

Reports also stated that three houses were damaged in Barangay San Nicolas, Naujan, Oriental Mindoro due to river bank erosion caused by strong water current.

A landslide incident also occurred on Congressman Mate Avenue, Mt. Slide, Tacloban City.

### Sorsogon evacuation

In Sorsogon, the Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (PDRRMO) of Sorsogon said at least eight families or 45 individuals from the coastal portion of Barangay Dancalan, Bulusan town, have been evacuated.

Ariel Doctama, PDRRMO public information officer, said these individuals were evacuated due to the threat of storm surge.

Doctama said they are targeting for evacuation at least 1,000 individuals from each of the seven municipalities located at the eastern seaboard of the province.

"The target is at least 1,000 individuals per municipality from towns of Sta. Magdalena, Bulusan, Prieto Diaz, Gu-



bat, Barcelona, Matnog, including Bacon District in Sorsogon City. Ito yung mga lugar sa eastern part na nakaharap sa Pacific Ocean na may malaking threat ng storm surge,” he said.

At least 500 individuals were scheduled to be evacuated from various villages of Mt. Bulusan, which has been acting up lately.

**Flights, sea operations cancelled**

In Surigao City, Surigao-Cebu, Surigao, Manila-Siargao-Manila, and Cebu-Siargao-Cebu flights were cancelled while vessels plying the Surigao-Southern Leyte, Surigao-Cebu and Surigao-Dinagat, Siargao routes were also halted due to strong winds and strong waves brought about by Urduja.

Classes in primary and high school level in both government and private sectors were suspended as alert level No. 2 was hoisted in the city.

Mayor Ernesto T. Matugas ordered social workers and personnel of the city social welfare office to closely coordinate with the port authority for possible assistance to the 232 stranded. Meanwhile, all field engineers, crew and personnel of the task force of the National Grid Corporation of the Philippines (NGCP) are already mobilized in an effort to immediately address any damage brought by Urduja.

“NGCP has mobilized its line crews and is currently conducting ground patrols to inspect and assess the impact of the tropical storm to its operations and facilities,” said NGCP Corporate Communication Officer (CCO) Glory Rebleza in a statement.

“Power system operator and transmission service provider NGCP has implemented the necessary preparations and precautions to minimize the impact of Urduja on transmission operations and facilities,” the NGCP-CCO said, in the same statement.

Engr. Sergio Dagooc, general manager of Dinagat Island Electric Cooperative and Siargao Island Electric Cooperative, also mobilized its task force on Thursday to take necessary and immediate response to any damage or power problem.

In the nearby province of Misamis Oriental, close to 1,000 individuals fled their homes due Urduja.

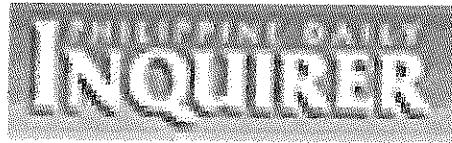
The Misamis Oriental PDRRC there said five houses were reported damaged and three partially damaged in Balingasag and Lagonglong towns. These houses were built along the riv-

erbanks and were washed away by the rampaging floodwaters, it said.

The PDRRC said more than 200 families from Lagonglong and close to 20 families from Balingasag have already evacuated.

Classes in both public and private schools are already suspended in the two municipalities since Thursday due to heavy downpour. (With reports from Francis T. Wakefield, Niño N. Luces, and Mike U. Crismundo)

16 December 2017



Page: AS

CAUGHT IN CROSSFIRE

# ARMY SAYS PASTOR SLAIN IN MINDORO CLASH NOT NPA REBEL

By Maricar Cinco  
@maricarcincoINQ

The Philippine Army on Thursday said a slain Christian pastor from Oriental Mindoro province was not a communist rebel but was only caught in the crossfire between soldiers and the New People's Army (NPA) in Mansalay town on Dec. 3.

The clarification came amid demands from the family and churchmates of Lablito Quiñonez (not Leovelito Quiñones as earlier reported) to have his name cleared.

The death of Quiñonez, a

member of Guardians of the Truth Church Mission International Inc., raised doubts that his was a case of mistaken identity after the Army tagged him as an NPA rebel in its earlier reports.

Quiñonez, who left a wife and five children, was the lone fatality in the clash in Barangay Panaytayan, an adjacent community to his home village of Don Pedro. A 13-year-old boy was wounded when a stray bullet hit their house.

Pastor Salvador Magalay, Guardians founder, said Quiñonez was one of 28 active pastors of the congregation

with churches located in the Mindoro provinces and in Antique province.

"What hurt us more was his being tagged a rebel. Even the church's name was being dragged into these ugly things he was being accused of," Magalay said.

Magalay said Lt. Col. Dennis Gutierrez, the battalion commander in the area, in a meeting last week, told him that the Army was "clearing" Quiñonez of accusations that he was a communist guerrilla.

Brig. Gen. Antonio Parlade Jr., commander of the Army's

203rd Infantry Brigade, said Quiñonez, at the very least, was "caught in the crossfire" but refused to call his death a result of a mistaken identity.

"We were surprised, too, when we learned that a pastor (was killed). But what needed explanation was why was he there?" Parlade said.

He said he was standing by the Army's earlier report that Quiñonez picked up and arrived with a group of rebels in Barangay Panaytayan. In fact, he said, bullets loaded in magazines were recovered tucked in Quiñonez's motorcycle. INQ

16

December 2017



Page: 14

## AFP says NPA now kept to launching token attacks

By MIKE U. CRISMUNDO

BUTUAN CITY — The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has repulsed all attempts by the New People's Army (NPA) to harass its units that are situated in far-flung areas in the Caraga region, military commanders in the field reported yesterday.

In separate flash reports to their respective headquarters' tactical command centers, battalion commanders said the NPA has only been able to launch token attacks against these units located in far-flung areas of Caraga in a bid to just establish their continued presence in the region.

"They have no capability to launch a bigger attack and they only conduct hit and run to soft targets (small team or unit in far-flung areas)," claimed the Civil Military Operations (CMO) officer

of the Army's 401st Infantry (Unity) Brigade Capt. Rodolfo S. Cordero.

"They even did not defend their regional headquarters of the CPP-NPA Northeastern Mindanao Regional Committee (NEMRC) that was recently overrun and captured by our operating troops where several bomb-making materials and improvised explosive devices were left behind in the Andap Valley Complex in Surigao del Sur, the 401st CMO officer said.

The CARGU Active Auxiliary (CAA) Lubo Patrol Base under the 36th Infantry (Valor) Battalion (36th IB) based in Sitio Lubo, Barangay Gacub, in Cantilan town, Surigao del Sur, was already harassed thrice, it said.

On Tuesday, NPA terrorists under guerrilla-committee 30 of the CPP-NPA-NEMRC harassed the Lubo Patrol Base at 4 a.m. then at 9 a.m., in both separate

attacks the perpetrators did not succeed in taking over the patrol base due to strong resistance of the defenders, 36th IB CMO Officer Capt. Francisco P. Garello Jr. also reported.

No one was reported hurt on both sides during the two incidents, he said.

"At 12:30 p.m. on Nov. 28, 2017, some 50 heavily armed NPA terrorists also attacked the CAA Lubo Patrol Base, but again failed to overrun it due to heroic and gallant show of force made by the defenders despite of their limited numbers compared to their attackers," claimed the 36th IB CMO officer.

However, despite these failed attacks by the NPA, Lt. Col. Xerxes A. Trinidad, commanding officer of the 36th IB "Valor" Battalion, said the military has strengthened its Lubo Patrol Base and other neighboring detachments under his areas of responsibility.

Meanwhile, all military and police units spread all over the five provinces and six cities in northeastern Mindanao were in "full alert" status to avert any surprise attacks by the NPAs during or after the CPP anniversary on Dec. 26.

16 December 2017



Page: 1

# Salary increases for AFP, PNP distort pay scale of other gov't employees

By Gerry Baldo

Opposition lawmakers who should be happy enough to have the salaries of soldiers and policemen, took a different route as they criticized the pay increase.

They questioned the huge salary increases for soldiers and policemen, compared with the salaries of other public servants, such as teachers, nurses, doctors and other civil servants.

ACT Teachers partylist Reps. Antonio Tinio and France Castro said the 100 percent pay hike for soldiers and police would cause massive distortion in the government salary scale.

Tinio and Castro revealed that the doubling of the base pay of military and uniformed personnel (MUP) will cause salary distortions in government service, with 1.2 million civilian employees on the losing end.

"House Joint Resolution (HJR) 18 which the Lower House quickly approved and the Senate is poised to also railroad, will put a wide salary gap between government personnel who have similar qualifications," said Tinio.

"Civilian employees will be left far behind by their armed counterparts

qualifications, or have spent equal, even more years in government service."

The lawmakers noted that during the floor deliberations, Tinio proposed to amend HJR 18 to include all government employees, civilian and MUP, and give a P3,000-increase across the board. The amendment was quickly rejected by the sponsors.

They said that a candidate soldier, a trainee who is only required to have a minimum of 72 units in college or technical and vocational course will already earn P18,587 monthly while thousands of rank-and-file employees with Salary Grades 1-10 will get P10,510 to P18,718 in 2018.

An Administrative Aide I who possesses the same level of educational attainment as the trainee candidate soldier will receive only P10,510.

"The 100 percent increase for Police Officer 1 (PO1) and Private will give them P29,668, almost P10,000 more than the P20,179 to be received under the third tranche of the revised Salary Standardization Law (SSL 4) by a Teacher I, a Nurse I, a Private Secretary, a Registrar I, and a Guidance Counselor I at SG11. The bulk of government workers, who are at the forefront of education and health services, are entry-level teachers, nurses and middle-level personnel in the public sector," said Castro.

"The salary of a Teacher I falls short of the standard family living wage of P1,145 per day. This is aggravated by the shortage of funds for school maintenance and other operating expenses that leave teachers with no choice but to shell out from their pockets to provide for their own teaching materials and other classroom needs.

"With their meager salaries, they end up vulnerable to predatory and usurious loans," she added.

"This is a dire situation also experienced by other professionals and employees in government and is one of the many reasons for a substantial pay hike."

"Moreover, a PO 1 and a Private will get an even bigger pay than the P29,010 (SG 15) salary of a Head Teacher II and a School Nurse II. While Head Teachers possess several years of experience and training, applying for entry-level positions in the military and police would definitely attract more," Tinio said.

"Teachers, clerks, aides and many other rank-and-file workers who have been in the service for about 10 to 20 years have never received pay as high as P20,000 to P30,000. This is an injustice that might lead to the demoralization in the ranks of the civilian bureaucracy."

A Second Lieutenant, who is a fresh graduate of the Philippine Military Academy or one required to have a bachelor's degree and to complete a one-year Officer Candidate School, will be paid P39,356. The pay of long-time educators and master's or doctoral

degree holders such as Principal I, Master Teacher I and Associate Professor I and veteran health workers such as Nurse IV and Midwife VI will be only be P2,743 higher, at P42,099 (SG19).

The solons also noted that the pay hike under HJR 18 for higher ranking military and uniformed personnel, to be given in two tranches, is higher than the salary increase for higher-level civilian positions under SSL4. The General will receive P121,143 in 2018 and P149,785 in 2019, with an increase of P28,642 (23.64%). However, the civilian official with equivalent pay rank of salary grade 29 such as a Regional Trial Court Judge, a Department Assistant Secretary, and a Labor Arbiter will only get an increase of P26,563 (20.68 percent ) from P128,467 in 2018 to P155,030 in 2019 under SSL4.

The solons added that this salary distortion will have far-reaching implications in terms of demoralization in the ranks of civilian personnel; government's ability to attract professionals like teachers, nurses and doctors to public service; and a diminution of the constitutional mandate of civilian supremacy, as greater importance is given for military personnel over civilian employees.

"President Duterte, DBM and the sponsors of the measure have yet to explain to the hundreds of thousands rank-and-file government employees the rationale behind the fast-tracking of this unprecedented pay hike for MUP on one hand and the refusal to grant civilian personnel salary increases on the other," Castro stressed. "We are

not against salary increases for soldiers and policemen, but since they are not the only ones who will feel the brunt of the impending new taxes and unceasing price hikes of basic commodities and services, the welfare of civilian employees and their families should also be given importance. We thus reiterate our call for salary increases for all government employees both civilian and military and uniformed personnel.

"We strongly urge the Senate to include civilian personnel in the coverage of salary increases by amending the Resolution to give additional P3,000 for all employees. We implore them to open their eyes to the harsh conditions faced by public school teachers, health professionals, and the rest of the rank-and-file civilians who make up the bulk of the entire government bureaucracy," the solons said.

Meanwhile, Iligan City Rep Frederick Siao called on the Commission on Higher Education to release the living allowances and monthly grants of 24 student-beneficiaries of the CHED K to 12 transition program for higher education faculty.

Siao said that the students have been waiting for months for these allowances and grants.

Siao called on the CHED to investigate the matter and charge those liable for the mess.

He said there are others who are similarly situated not just the 24 who have filed a complaint.

16e December 2017

**MANILA BULLETIN**  
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

Page: 7

# Tiamzons oppose return to prison

By JEFFREY G. DAMICO

**C**ommunist leaders Benito Tiamzon and his wife Wilma have opposed the court request of the Department of Justice (DOJ) to have them returned to detention.

The Tiamzons along with fellow communist leader Edilberto Silva have filed a joint pleading before the Manila Regional Trial Court (RTC) Branch 32 asking to either deny or defer the resolution on the motion filed by the DOJ.

The DOJ's National Prosecution Service (NPS) filed a motion cancel bail bonds posted by the three communist leaders and bring them back to jail after President Duterte terminated the peace talks with the communists.

However, the communist leaders told the RTC "despite such declaration by the president, the negotiating panel of the GRP (government) has yet to serve a written notice of termination to the NDFP (National Democratic Front of the Philippines)."

"As required by the agreement between the Parties, the peace negotiations may only be deemed formally terminated 30 days after a formal written notice is given by one party to the other," read their comment.

"It is important to note that this is the third time since the opening

of the formal talks in August 2016, that President Duterte has announced a 'termination' of the peace talks," they noted.

Benito is the chairman of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA), while, his wife is its secretary-general. Silva is the CPP secretary general and the chief of the National Organization Department.

All three are facing multiple murder charges before the Manila RTC over the alleged 1985 purge in Leyte of communist rebels suspected of being military informants.

Last August 12, the RTC granted the three bail so they can join peace talks with the government in Oslo, Norway.



WILMA and BENITO TIAMZON

16

December 2017



Page: 9

# AFP to launch Red Rose Pin

By ARGYLL CYRUS S. GEDUCOS

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) will honor its fallen troops by inaugurating the Red Rose Pin on its 82nd anniversary celebration on December 20.

Colonel Edgard Arevalo, AFP spokesperson, said at yesterday's Task Force Bangon Marawi press briefing that this will be the first time the AFP will launch the badge to honor troopers who died during operations.

"Ito po ay isang badge na gagamitin po o ipakikilala sa araw na iyon kung saan ito po ay isusuot ng lahat ng mga kaanak ng mga namatay na sundalo, at ganoon din po ang mga sibilyan na gustong ipakita ang kanilang pagkilala sa ating mga

namatay na sundalo (This badge will be introduced on the 20th and will be worn by relatives of fallen soldiers and by civilians who want to honor them)," he told reporters in Malacañang.

Arevalo said the badge aims to remind everyone of the sacrifices of the soldiers who risked their lives for the country.

Arevalo said the first set of Red Rose Pins will be distributed during the celebration of AFP's anniversary next Wednesday to the relatives of the fallen soldiers.

"Ine-expect po natin na 'yung ating mga bisita na kaanak ng mga tatanggap ng parangal na namatay sa mga labanan ay sila ang unang-unang magsusuot nito (We are expecting that the first to wear these

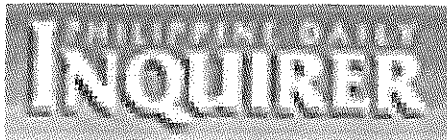
pins will be the relatives of the fallen troops who will be recognized on Wednesday)," he said.

"Hindi lang 'yan para sa December 20, kundi every time na meron po tayong pagtitipon (The pins will not only be distributed on December 20 but also every time we will meet)," he added.

The theme for this year's anniversary celebration of the AFP is "Protecting the People, Securing the State". President Duterte will be the guest of honor on the event.

The Red Rose Pin is a badge which shows a single rose while its stem is wrapped inside a bunting ribbon with the colors of the Philippine flag. The sun and two stars are in front of the ribbon. The words "Lest We Forget" is on the bottom of the badge.

14 December 2017



Page: As

# Military to step up operations in Mindanao

By Jeannette I. Andrade  
and Delfin T. Mallari Jr.  
@Team\_Inquirer

Residents of areas infested with communist rebels should expect military operations intensified in scope and coverage, Armed Forces of the Philippines chief of staff Gen. Rey Leonardo Guerrero said on Friday.

While the focus of operations will be security threats in Mindanao, Guerrero said he had also realigned commanders and troops "to attend to other

security concerns in other areas." "Our operations will be intensified in the sense that they [the public] can expect more patrols, checkpoints especially in the population centers," Guerrero said at Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City on Friday.

"We want to establish visibility and presence in population centers to deter terrorist actions," he said.

He said that military operations in western Mindanao would concentrate on jihadi groups, while actions in eastern Min-

danao would focus on the communist New People's Army (NPA).

"Right now, with the upsurge of atrocities in eastern Mindanao, we have started to put in more forces in eastern Mindanao for us to be able to address this problem," he said.

But the military has also been gearing up for operations in the Southern Tagalog and Bicol regions.

Guerrero said at Camp Nakar in Lucena City on Thursday that operations in Southern Luzon would also intensify with

the designation of Maj. Danilo Pamonag as the commander of Southern Luzon Command (Solcom).

## 'Bad news for enemies'

Guerrero said that the assignment of Pamonag, former commander of the military's Joint Task Force Marawi, would be "bad news" for communist rebels.

"The combined strength of Solcom and the experience of General Pamonag can only mean good things for the AFP and bad news for our enemies," he said.

"[This will be a] full-scale military operation that encompasses not only ground forces but also air and naval [assets]," Guerrero said.

The offensive will continue even during the Christmas season as Guerrero said that the military was not inclined to recommend a suspension of military operations (Somo) during the holidays.

"Somo is a political decision. It's in the discretion of the President. But on the part of the AFP, we will not be recommending it," he said.

"We are all in to win," Pamonag said. "Let us be relentless and focus all our energies and resources to hit hard and degrade the capabilities of the remnants of all lawless elements in Southern Luzon."

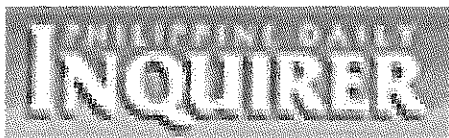
Last month, government forces killed 15 NPA rebels in a clash in Nasugbu town in Batangas province.

Brig. Gen. Ernesto Ravina Jr., Solcom deputy commander, led the command in an acting capacity for over a month before Pamonag assumed leadership. (NQ



12

December 2017



Page: 13

# Prelates hit Congress on ML extension

By Julie M. Aurelio  
@JMAurelioINQ

Two Catholic clergymen criticized the “subservient Congress” for allowing the extension of martial law in Mindanao and warned of the creeping authoritarianism it will purportedly spawn.

Writing in his blog on the day Congress approved the one-year extension of martial law, Manila Auxiliary Bishop Broderick Pabillo urged Filipinos to speak up against Congress.

Redemptorist priest Amado Picardal also scored both houses of Congress for failing to check and balance presidential powers and for being remiss in their duty to protect democracy.

Pabillo said lawmakers are “acting as if they are representing the people but are in fact representing the interests of the one in power.”

“Once one has tasted power, it is hard to say it is enough. This is true for Duterte, this is true for the police and this is true for the military,” the bish-

op stressed.

“They give a veneer of legality to martial law but they are making the abnormal normal, the extraordinary ordinary!” Pabillo said.

## Creeping authoritarianism

“Authoritarianism is creeping [surreptitiously] among us, unless we react and say ‘do we really need it?’” he said.

“This is what we get when we toy with power. One is never contented with enough power. It gobbles more power unless

people stand up and voice out, it is enough! This is not right!” he said.

Consequently, he said Mr. Duterte is again boasting that he can declare martial law all over the country.

Pabillo was referring to the president’s remarks in Taguig City on Dec. 13 when he suggested that he may expand the coverage of martial law if the communist New People’s Army steps up its attacks.

Mr. Duterte initially declared martial law in Mindanao

on May 23 after the Maute terrorist group attacked Marawi City. This was eventually extended to Dec. 31, 2017.

On Wednesday, however, the House of Representatives voted 226-23 while the Senate voted 14-4 in favor of extending martial law for one more year, or up to Dec. 31, 2018.

“[But] even if Congress has extended it,—does this make it right?” Pabillo asked.

“Martial law is supposedly an answer to an extraordinary situation, like the case of rebel-

lion. With this extension...—are we making the extraordinary situation ordinary?”

He questioned why the military and police cannot address the situation with the ordinary powers that they have and expressed suspicion that martial law will only be used to suppress dissent and divergent views.

Picardal, on the other hand, doubted that martial law can bring about peace or solve poverty, which is the root of rebellion. INQ

14

16 December 2017

# The Manila Times

Page: AT

## 'No need to expand martial law for now'

A NATIONWIDE declaration of martial law will depend on the political and military situation and actions of the so-called "enemies" of the state like the Islamic State (IS)-linked terror groups and the New People's Army (NPA), Armed Forces Chief Rey Leonardo Guerrero said on Friday.

At the same time, however, Guerrero downplayed the possibility "for now" since the military's projections extended only "up to what information we have at hand because based on the information we have at hand, we have to focus in Mindanao."

Guerrero's statements stemmed from President Rodrigo Duterte's recent pronouncement that he was not discounting the possibility of expanding martial law nationwide depending on the "enemies of the state."

Duterte's own declaration was made after Congress extended martial law for another year in Mindanao because of the continuing threats of terrorism, which now included the New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP).

In a news briefing at Camp Aguinaldo, Guerrero said: "I will not dare to venture into such topic considering not only because it is speculative but because as I have said, it's too early to [say], it's too far in the future for me to project."

Pressed by reporters on whether the enemies' activities would prompt a nationwide expansion of martial law, Guerrero said that the military action "will also depend on the political situation [in the country] and also the reaction of our adversaries and if [the enemies] would turn violent, the answer is obvious."

Guerrero stressed that the extension of martial law in Mindanao would help the military "address first and foremost, the remnant of the ISIS threat groups and secondly, all other threat groups, to include the CPP-NPA."

"With the marching orders of the President and with the declaration of the NPA [rebels] as terrorists, for sure we will be giving more importance and more focus on our operations against the CPP-NPA especially now that we have observed an upsurge in their atrocities nationwide," Guerrero said.

After the extension granted by Congress, Guerrero said the Armed Forces would be requesting more funds, the amount of which has yet to be determined.

He said, however, that "with or without the additional support, the AFP will be able to operate and perform its mission given the resources that we have."

### Persons of interest

Guerrero said that as part of the implementation of martial law, the military, in consultation with other security forces, would be drawing up a new list of "persons of interest."

At the height of the war in Marawi in June, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana issued two arrest orders bearing the names of more than 300 personalities allegedly supporting and spying for the Maute terrorist group that laid siege to the city on May 23.

### No rights violations

Guerrero and Col. Edgard Arevalo, military spokesman, allayed fears that soldiers would violate human rights, vowing that the Armed Forces would hold troops accountable if there were reports of such incidents.

"For me, we do not have problems and we ourselves are worthy of the people's trust, we have been

16

December 2017



Page: 14

## Different reactions to extension of martial law

By **NONOY E. LACSON**  
and **ALIG. MACABALANG**

**ZAMBOANGA CITY** — The Armed Forces of the Philippines, Western Mindanao Command (AFP-WestMinCom) yesterday expressed full support to the extension of martial law in Mindanao, saying the measure would be of great help to the police and military authorities in neutralizing terrorists and other criminal groups operating in this part of the country.

AFP-WestMinCom Commander Lt. Gen Carlito G Galvez Jr. said martial law has been “of great help to the police and military running after terrorists and organized criminal groups in Mindanao.”

Meanwhile, Zamboanga City Rep

Celso Lobregat said rebellion has not yet been completely suppressed despite Duterte’s declaration that Marawi City has been “liberated.”

The solon said that terrorism “didn’t end in Marawi, and in fact, the continuous acts of terror and rebellion continue to persist in the island provinces of Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi where remnants of the Islamic State-inspired terrorist group Abu Sayyaf is present and being pursued by government troops.”

Both Senate and the House of Representatives also extended by a year the suspension of the privilege of the “Writ of Habeas Corpus,” which allow police and military authorities to arrest persons of interests without warrants of arrest.

But not everybody in Mindanao agreed with the extension of martial rule until the end of 2018.

Maranao lawyers belonging to the Lanao del Sur chapter of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP) expressed objection to the extension because they believe that this will stand in the way of any investigation in alleged cases of looting by soldiers in Marawi City, particularly that at the City Hall.

“We, members of the IBP Lanao del Sur Chapter, were hoping against hope that martial law shall only be a painful memory after 31 December 2017. Alas, we were disheartened and disappointed when Congress extended martial law for another year, or until December 31, 2018,” IBP chapter president Mino Macalandap said in a statement.

17

16 December 2017



Page: 1

# AFP to uphold rights, vows no ML abuses

By JAIME LAUDE

With concerns raised over possible military abuses, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) yesterday vowed to uphold human rights as martial law is extended for a year in Mindanao.

AFP chief Gen. Rey Leonardo Guerrero gave the assurance to allay fears that the military's intensified campaign against terrorist groups across the country would result in human rights abuses.

Guerrero said the military's Human Rights Office will actively monitor the activities of AFP troops, and violators will be held accountable.

He gave assurance that human rights complaints would be entertained and acted upon.

"We have our mechanism to check on the discipline and misconduct of our soldiers to make sure that they are accountable and they are answerable for their misdeeds," Guerrero said.

In his first press briefing at the AFP headquarters at Camp Aguinaldo, Guerrero said the one-year extension of martial law in Mindanao would specifically deal with the threats posed by Islamic State (IS) remnants and the communist New People's Army (NPA).

Turn to Page 9

"Let us not talk about martial law for the whole country because our concern for now is the implementation of martial law in Mindanao," he said.

In a separate press briefing, AFP Public Affairs Office chief Col. Edgard Arevalo said the remnants of the IS-linked Maute group are actively recruiting civilians in Marawi City and from towns near the war-torn city in exchange for money.

"What we can say for now is we are monitoring these reports of recruitment, which is why we are continuing our operations to make sure they will not succeed," Arevalo told the Bangon Marawi press briefing in Malacañang yesterday.

Arevalo revealed the recruits were enticed with "financial remunerations." He added the militants are also using social media to upload videos for recruitment.

Arevalo said the military is working with concerned government agencies to counter the recruitment.

"We have made efforts there. For example, we conduct dialogues among the youth to counter violent extremism," Arevalo said.

"The objective is to make them realize and learn what is extremism, and how is recruitment being done by these

extremists," he said.

Guerrero said the intelligence gathered showed the continuing presence of foreign jihadists and local terrorist groups in Mindanao despite the defeat of the Maute group in Marawi City.

"We can never tell for now. Our projections can only extend up to what the information we have at hand. We have to focus our efforts in Mindanao... As for the other parts of the country, nobody can tell. It will depend on new developments and of course it will also depend on the future actions of our adversaries," Guerrero said.

"It's too far in the future for me to project. Let's see, the AFP's actions will always depend on the political situation and also the reaction of our adversaries. If they become violent, perhaps the answer is obvious," he said.

The heightened military actions will not only be in the areas of Eastern and Northern Mindanao but also in Sulu and Basilan against the Abu Sayyaf.

Outside Mindanao, the military will also be dealing with the NPA that President Duterte has tagged as a terrorist group.

"You can expect more focused and intensified military operations shall be conducted nationwide, most especially in Mindanao. This (martial law in Mindanao) is to address first

18

and foremost the remnants of IS threat groups and secondly, all other threat groups to include the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army," Guerrero said.

### The gathering

Lt. Gen. Benjamin Madrigal Jr., commander of the Eastern Mindanao Command (Eastmincom), also gave assurance the troops will uphold human rights of civilians even as the AFP deployed more forces in the region as part of preparations for the fight against the NPA and Islamic militants.

"With the existing mechanism established with other government agencies and multi-sectoral group, we would like to assure the public that (we) will faithfully perform our mandate to protect the people and communities in Eastern Mindanao and thwart any group from conducting acts of terrorism while preventing the spillover of violence and radicalism in the region," Madrigal said.

Madrigal is the concurrent martial law implementor in Eastern Mindanao,

"Our implementation will always be ruled by the principles of necessity, proportionality, rule of law and respect for human rights," he said.

The AFP has activated two new military groups, the 88th and 89th Infantry Battalions. They will be deployed to East-

mincom to support the 15th IB and the 2nd Scout Ranger Battalion, both veterans of the fighting in Marawi City.

Eastmincom covers Southern Mindanao, Northern and Eastern Mindanao as well as part of Central Mindanao, the areas where the NPA mostly operate.

At least 50 percent of the total strength of the NPA in the country is reportedly operating in Eastmincom's area of operations.

Eastmincom said there are about 1,900 NPA rebels in its area.

The Marawi uprising, which began on May 23, prompted President Duterte to declare martial law to contain the extremists in the region. There were fears that the IS was taking serious steps to gain a foothold in Asia and elsewhere as it faced setbacks in Syria and Iraq.

Some gunmen and commanders managed to escape during the Marawi fighting and were recruiting new militants and consolidating and plotting new bombings and attacks.

Extremist groups in other southern provinces, including the brutal Abu Sayyaf, continue to pose threats, according to the military.

Local military officials also warned of possible NPA attacks to celebrate the 49th founding anniversary of the communist insurgency in the

country.

Col. Andres Centino, commander of the Army's 401st Brigade in Agusan del Sur, said they have received directives from the Department of National Defense (DND) to sustain the military offensives against the NPA since there will be no traditional truce with the rebels during the holidays.

"The directives from the DND secretary were clear: no NPA gatherings by way of NPA plenum this coming Dec. 26," Centino said.

Centino was referring to the annual gathering of the NPA in the hinterlands during their anniversary to show off their firepower before civilian supporters and local officials during the Christmas truce with the government.

### Tacit approval

Foreign Affairs Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano said the Philippines has not received condemnation from any country around the world with regard to the extension of martial law in Mindanao.

He said many countries, in fact, have congratulated the Philippines for neutralizing the IS-linked Maute group in Marawi City.

"So far, I think there's calm," Cayetano said. "Actually we're getting congratulations around the world for acting upon it decisively, and a war of that magnitude to be

actually solved."

Cayetano stressed other countries are aware of the threat of terrorism.

"The whole world knows the threat of terrorism," he said.

He noted that members of the diplomatic community are also aware of the legal limitations of martial law under the Constitution.

Cayetano said many countries are sharing information about the terror threats in Mindanao, including the return of jihadists.

"So they no longer ask why we need martial law, because they are the ones who are telling us we have to take measures because (while) the main group has been neutralized, there are pockets of support and developments in the Middle East that may push some to fund terrorist groups," he said.

Cayetano, however, said he would still schedule a briefing for foreign diplomats to be attended by military and defense officials.

"The international community are looking more at why, how is it going, etc. Definitely we will be scheduling a briefing with them with our AFP, DND and get everyone together to share more information with them," he added.

— **Helen Flores, Christina Mendez, Edith Regalado, Ben Serrano, Jose Rodol Clapano**

16 December 2017



Page: 9

## CHR respects Duterte, Congress extension of ML

The Commission on Human Rights (CHR) reiterated its position against the extension of martial law in Mindanao, but said it respects the prerogative of the government to do so.

"The CHR respects the prerogative of the President, as well as the subsequent vote of Congress, to extend the declaration of martial law in Mindanao. We, however, continue to stress the need to address accounts of human rights violations on the ground," the CHR said.

"Consistent with our stance, the Commission believes that the police and military can address threats of terrorism and lawless violence without martial law," it added.

The CHR said they are hoping the intent of the extension will not be tarnished by human rights violations.

"It is now incumbent upon the government to observe and

ensure the safeguards of the Constitution and our laws to prevent abuses," it said.

"The commission, for its part, will closely monitor its implementation and denounce any form of abuses, consistent with our mandate and oath of service to the Filipino people."

A ranking official of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) said President Duterte might be suffering from the "intoxicating effects" of power when he ordered the one-year extension of martial law in Mindanao.

CBCP Episcopal Commission on Laity chairman Manila Auxiliary Bishop Broderick Pabillo said Duterte is "boasting" again after the "subservient" Congress supported his call to extend martial law in Mindanao for one more year.

"This is what we get when we toy with power. One is never contented with enough power. It gobbles more power – unless people stand up and voice out – it is enough! This is not right!

"Once one has tasted power, it is hard to say it is enough. This is true for Duterte, this is true for the police and this is true for the armed forces," Pabillo said.

Critics argued that an extension of martial law requires actual rebellion and in its absence, implementing military rule would be unconstitutional.

"They give a veneer of legality to martial law but they are making the abnormal normal, the extraordinary ordinary," Pabillo said.

He warned the extension is "conditioning the minds" of the people that martial law is alright and normal.

"Authoritarianism is creeping surreptitiously among us – unless we react and say 'do we really need it?'" Pabillo said.

"We cannot remain silent in front of the machinations of Congress who are acting not as representative of the people but of the one in power. Congress can no longer be trusted that they serve the interest of the people," he added.

The militant Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) took to task presidential spokesman Harry Roque.

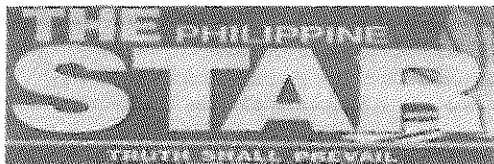
Roque earlier said "there would be no return of a dictatorial government" and human rights violations will not be repeated under Duterte's martial law.

"Martial law is martial law, no matter how they sugarcoat it, it is still the same Marcos-military rule that suppressed the civil and liberty rights of

the Filipino people and paved the way for a blatant plunder of public coffers," Pamalakaya chairman Fernando Hicap said.

"The presidential spokesman is deodorizing the Mindanao martial law in order to make it appear acceptable to the people and to prepare the public for a nationwide authoritarian rule; something that the Filipino people will not let happen," he said. – Janvic Mateo, Evelyn Macairan, Rhodina Villanueva

16 December 2017



Page: 9

## Marawi stories: Hundreds of human rights violations

By JANVIC MATEO

Thousands of narratives detailing hundreds of alleged human rights violations have been documented in the aftermath of the months-long siege of Marawi City, **The STAR** learned yesterday.

Abdulnasser Badrudin, chairman of the Regional Human Rights Commission (RHRC) in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), said they have launched an extensive investigation to verify supposed violations of human rights of the people of Marawi.

Badrudin said they have documented stories of over 14,000 internally displaced people, many of whom have complained over the loss of their homes and livelihood because of the armed conflict.

"Most of the issues focus on the loss of homes and other personal items, including identification cards (that make it difficult for them to move)," Badrudin said in a phone interview.

"We are also investigating cases of looting," he said, referring to reports that some people have taken advantage of the conflict to steal from the residents.

Badrudin said they are sorting through the narratives to determine how best to address the complaints of residents.

He noted that there also complaints against the security forces, mostly on alleged illegal arrests and supposed violation of the people's right to movement as a result of lack of identification documents.

"We have close communication with the military," he added, noting that law enforcement agencies are coordinating

with them and providing assistance in the conduct of their investigation.

The local official said they will also tap the national Commission on Human Rights (CHR) to hasten their verification of the different complaints.

And while they have yet to gain access to the main battleground area, Badrudin said the situation in the city has started to normalize as residents have begun returning to areas declared as safe zones.

### Probe HR violations

The CHR issued a statement calling on the government to address allegations of human rights violations and investigate claims against the military and other actors.

It noted that the military has been accused of looting, unlawful or arbitrary arrests, presence in camps, profiling and military harassment.

The CHR also noted incidents of enforced disappearances, torture and extrajudicial killings.

"We also urge the government to hold to account both state and non-state actors responsible for the atrocities committed against the local residents," it said.

"Despite recent reports on the situation in Marawi City now being normal, the communities still bear the damage and consequences of the armed conflict. Internally displaced persons continue to occupy shelter sites in Lanao del Norte, Lanao del Sur, as well as other areas in Northern Mindanao, the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and even Metro Manila," the commission added.

Turn to Page 12

The CHR said it is committed to extend all possible assistance to rebuild the communities and ensure that the people's rights to access to education, shelter, food, water and proper sanitation, among others are fulfilled by the government.

"Through close coordination with the RHRC and relevant line agencies, we will continue to provide recommendations

on how to ensure fast and responsive delivery of services to affected communities aligned with human rights treaties and standards," it said.

'Help the people of Marawi'  
Former CHR chair Loretta Ann Rosales said the government should focus on helping the people of Marawi instead of using the crisis to extend the declaration of martial law.

"The results of martial rule

have taken their toll on the most basic and fundamental rights of the people of Marawi to live a free, prosperous and democratic life," she said in a statement.

"The social cost of the war has not yet been assessed, but a visit to the camps of the evacuees from Marawi has shown the hurt, disappointment, anger and frustration of the people who were strongly against the continued military effort of the government," she added.

Rosales said the extension

of martial law on the basis of terrorists regrouping and the communist threat is against the provisions of the Constitution.

She said President Duterte should have issued a different proclamation as the intent for the continued imposition of martial law has already changed.

"Marawi is quiet, and the last thing the city needs is more guns, bombs and a continuing law of repression and deprivation of human rights," she added.



16 December 2017



Page: AC

**MARTIAL LAW**

**CHR SEEKS PROBE  
OF RIGHTS  
VIOLATIONS**

**By Jaymee T. Gamil**  
@JGamilINQ

While the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) respects the presidential and congressional prerogatives on martial law, it pressed an investigation of reported human rights violations.

“Consistent with our stance, the [CHR] believes that the police and military can address threats of terrorism and lawless violence without martial law,” the CHR said in a statement.

“However, in respect of legislative concurrence, we are hopeful that the intent of the extension will not be tarnished by human rights violations,” it added.

CHR spokesperson Jacqueline Ann C. de Guia said that the agency was still verifying the reported human rights violations first reported by Amnesty International last November.

The supposed violations include looting by the military, arbitrary arrests, military harassment, enforced disappearances, torture and extrajudicial killings.

De Guia said that its regional offices were still collating and verifying the reports.

“We continue to stress the need to address accounts of human rights violations on the ground,” it said.

“We also urge the government to hold to account both state and nonstate actors responsible for the atrocities committed against residents,” the CHR added. INQ

16

December 2017



Page: 14

## Military confirms Maute recruitment started when Marawi siege ended

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) confirmed that they have monitored “remnants” of the Maute-Islamic State (IS) group recruiting new members since the five-month war ended in Marawi City, Lanao del Sur last October 23.

The confirmation came days after martial law in Mindanao was extended by Congress due to reported terrorist recruitment and existence of other lawless elements.

According to AFP spokesperson Col. Edgard Arevalo, the recruitment they monitored were being conducted in municipalities near Marawi City.

“Ang recruitment na namo-monitor natin ay buhat sa mga remnants ng Maute-ISIS group. May namo-monitor tayo sa (The recruitment we hve monitored we conducted by the Maute-ISIS group in the) immediate vicinity of Marawi,” he said during the Task Force Bangon Marawi press briefing in Malacañang Friday.

“Dito natin nakikita ‘yung nag-i-intensify pa rin sila in the sense na hindi sila humihinto sa kanilang ginagawang recruitment at patuloy na pagkumbinsi na sumali sa kanilang hanay (Here we can see that they are trying to intensify their forces through their continued recruitment),” he added.

The new AFP spokesperson said the terrorist group was still offering financial remunerations, but no exact amount was mentioned. He added that it was unknown whether terrorists were able to really give the promised amount.

“Ang monitoring natin nito ay base doon sa mga nire-report din sa atin ng mga citizen in this locality. So, definitely hindi naman openly nila ginagawa ang kanilang pagre-recruit (Our monitoring is based on the reports of the citizens in this locality. Definitely they are not recruiting in the open),” Arevalo said.

“But what we can say for now is may namo-monitor tayong ganitong reports kaya pagpapatuloy ang ating operations upang siguruhin na (we have monitored these events and we are doing operations to ensure that) they will not succeed,” he added.

Arevalo also disclosed that the recruiters continue to uses social media to reach out to prospective members.

“Ang mayroon ay mga (There are) recruitment videos. I’m sure you have also come across this,” he said. (Argyll Cyrus B. Geducos)

24

16 December 2017

The Manila Times

Page: A1

MAUTE REMNANTS NOW ANSWER TO 'ABU TURAIFFE'

# Military warns vs IS-inspired group

BY CATHERINE S. VALENTE

**T**HE battle in Marawi City may have ended, but the war is not over.

This became evident on Friday after the Armed Forces of the Philippines said that Islamic State (IS)-inspired groups in Mindanao were ramping up their recruitment drive to beef up their fighters for terror attacks.

During the "Bangon Marawi" news briefing in Malacañang, military spokesman Col. Edgard Arevalo said the military was monitoring the "intensified" recruitment activities of the remnants of the group once headed by terrorist leaders Isnilon Hapilon and brothers Abdullah and Omarkhayam Maute.

"The recruitment we are monitoring is from remnants of Maute/ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) group. We monitored [such recruitment] in the municipalities around Marawi, the immediate vicinity of Marawi," Arevalo told reporters.

"They continue to intensify, in the sense that they do not stop their recruitment. They continue to encourage anyone to

join their force. And of course, they continue to offer financial remunerations. They also use social media as a tool for their recruitment activities," he added.

Arevalo cited in particular the group led by a certain Abu Turaife, who has been tagged by the military as Hapilon's potential successor as IS emir in Southeast Asia.

While Turaife's group has only 22 members, it was still deemed a "big threat" because of its capability to endanger the lives of the people in Mindanao, Arevalo said.

"We cannot underestimate them because they are only few. But maybe the 22 is what we could mention with certainty or report with certainty. But their ability to recruit, their mobility, the weapons that they have, and their capability to conduct terrorist activity cannot be measured by their number," Arevalo said.

"They don't need to be a large group. But then, the point we're saying is, they are capable, among other reasons that they were cited [as basis] for the extension of martial law," he added. "They are among those considered as a big threat because the group of Abu Turaife has leaning towards extremism."

## 'Vulnerable children' being recruited

According to Arevalo, these extremist groups were seeking to recruit their relatives and "vulnerable" children.

"And that is what we are intensely working on to prevent them from continuing to recruit these vulnerable sectors of our society," he said.

To counter the terrorists' recruitment efforts, the government has launched several programs for the youth, Arevalo said.

"We are countering violent extremism dialogues with the youth. We also have youth leader summit. And just recently, we concluded the education tour of Muslim youth in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Our objective is to give our fellow countrymen, especially the youth, a chance to realize what is extremism [and] how recruitment is being done by these extremists," he said.

"These are among the ways we see to promote unity and have a fruitful and mutual co-existence," the military spokesman added.

## Military rule

Mindanao has been under military rule since May 23, when fighting broke out between the Maute terror group and government forces in Marawi City in Lanao del Sur.

Under the Constitution, martial law may be declared for 60 days if there is an actual rebellion or invasion and when public safety requires it.

Upon the recommendation of President Rodrigo Duterte before the expiration of his martial law proclamation on July 22, Congress extended it to December 31, 2017.

Congress, in joint session on December 13, granted the President's request for a one-year extension of martial law in Mindanao to allow the police and military to eradicate all terrorist groups and armed lawless elements in Mindanao.

With the additional extension, martial law will be in effect in Mindanao from January 1 to December 31, 2018.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE, ARMY HEADQUARTERS, MALACAÑANG, MANILA. Email add: oacpa.army2012@gmail.com – Tel no.

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25

10 December 2017



Page: 3

## None of seized weapons in Marawi City from military

None of the weapons seized from Marawi City and destroyed this week showed any sign that they came from military stocks, Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief-of-staff Gen. Rey Leonardo Guerrero said yesterday.

"As for the (seized Maute Group) firearms inventoried so far, we are still to see any weapon (serial numbers) matching those in the inventory of the AFP," Guerrero said in Filipino when asked during a press briefing in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City whether AFP weapons were found among the terrorists' arms cache.

More than 1,000 firearms of various calibers and types were

seized by government forces in the battle to liberate Marawi City.

The battle began when government troops tried to arrest Abu Sayyaf leader and ISIS "emir" in Southeast Asia, Isnilon Hapilon, last May 23.

Fighting was declared after authorities confirmed the death of Hapilon and Maute Group co-founder, Omar Maute, last October 23.

Some 652 weapons were taken to the Army headquarters in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City to be destroyed ceremonially early this week.

The remaining 400 are still being processed as of this posting. PNA

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16 December 2017



Page: 1

# Mindanao military rule: 'We are worthy of people's trust' – AFP

By Mario J. Mallari

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) yesterday doused fears of government critics on the extension of martial law in Mindanao for another year.

AFP chief of staff Gen. Rey Leonardo Guerrero, at a press conference, cited the performance of the military during the last seven months when martial law was implemented in the region.

He stressed the 125,000-strong AFP has proved itself worthy of the public trust in implementing military rule.

"I think we have proved ourselves worthy of the people's trust, we have always been professional in our conduct, we have always exerted efforts to make sure that we are accountable and responsible for our actions," said Guerrero.

"Clearly, from the time it (martial law) was declared up to the time it was extended, up to now, we have seen

that the AFP has been faithful and committed in its performance of its mandates especially in the protection of human rights, the observance of law and the commitment to ensure peace and security in our communities," he added.

President Rodrigo Duterte declared martial law in Mindanao last May 23 when Islamic State-inspired terrorists, led by Isnilon Hapilon and the Maute brothers, laid siege on Marawi City.

The Commander-in-Chief asked for an extension after the declaration expired last July and was given by Congress until December 31 this year.

Early this week, Mr. Duterte, upon the recommendation of the AFP and the Philippine National Police (PNP), requested for another extension, this time for the whole 2018. Congress again approved the extension.

This was followed by concerns from various sectors on the possibility of placing the entire country under martial law, noting the basis of the one-year extension was the atrocities being committed by the communist New People's Army (NPA).

It will be noted that intensified NPA violations erupted after the President tagged them as terrorists.

## 'Speculative'

Guerrero, however, said it is too early to talk about the expansion of martial law nationwide.

But the AFP chief maintained that the possibility of implementing martial law throughout the country depends on the actions of enemies of the state, particularly of the NPA.

"Let us not talk about martial law for the whole country because right now our only concern is the implementation of martial law in Mindanao, and even (when) the extension of martial law was already passed by Congress, we still have to work on its implementation in the coming, come next year," he stressed.

Pressed on fears of the possible implementation of martial law in Luzon and the Visayas, the AFP chief replied: "I will not dare to venture into such topic considering, not only because it's speculative, but because it's too early, it's too far in the future for me to project."

"We can never tell for now, our projections can only extend up to what the information we have at hand, because based on the information we have at hand we need to focus first on Mindanao."

"So as for the other parts of the country, nobody can tell. It will depend on new developments and of course it will also depend on the actions, future actions of our adversary,"

Guerrero added.

President Rodrigo Duterte has earlier said a nationwide declaration of martial law is possible if the NPA, the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines, grows and becomes a bigger threat after the cancellation of peace talks.

The Chief Executive, however, stressed this will be the call of the military and the police.

## More actions

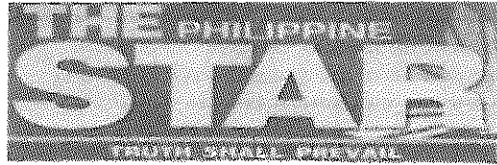
Guerrero, meanwhile, said the AFP is expected to put up more checkpoints and conduct more patrols in Mindanao, particularly in NPA-affected areas.

"There will be less skirmishes in Marawi now that operations there have winded down but in NPA-affected areas, they can expect more actions (patrols and checkpoints from) the military, it will be more intensified (in) scope and coverage," he stressed.

The rationale for this is to establish visibility and presence in population centers to deter the NPAs' terrorist actions, the AFP chief added.

Aside from the communist rebels, military efforts will also focus on Sulu, Basilan, and parts of Central Mindanao where lawless elements like the Abu Sayyaf and other terrorist groups like the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters and their allies are known to operate.

16 December 2017



Page: 14

# Gov't, MILF sign 4 new accords

By JOSE RODEL CLAPANO

**The government has signed four new agreements with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) as both parties reaffirmed their commitment to the peace process.**

Signed recently were the revised implementing guidelines on the joint communiqué signed on May 6, 2002; guidelines for the operationalization of the Bangsamoro Normalization Trust Fund, terms of reference of the joint communications committee and a certification extending the mandate of the civilian protection component of the International Monitoring Team.

Newly appointed government peace panel chairman Nabil Tan and MILF peace panel head Mohagher Iqbal

signed the agreements in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Jesus Dureza, Malaysian Special Adviser Kamarudin Bin Mustafa as well as members of the International Contact Group from Japan, Turkey, the United Kingdom and Center for Humanitarian Dialogue and Conciliation Resources witnessed the signing.

"Peace doesn't come overnight. We have to work hard for it," Dureza said.

"All of these (developments) are clear signals that

we'd like to move from where we are today... Move forward 'piece by piece,'" he said.

Dureza stressed the need to take advantage of the "meeting of minds" of the two peace panels in pushing the peace process.

Murad said peace structures are "working very hard" even as he lauded President Duterte's unwavering commitment to attain lasting peace in Mindanao.

"The President... has never been as committed than any other president in moving forward the peace process to address the injustices against the Bangsamoro people," Murad said.

After signing the agreements, Tan gave updates on the status of the proposed

Bangsamoro Basic Law, which has been submitted to the Senate and House of Representatives.

He said the congressional sub-committees tasked to reconcile the versions of the proposed measure would convene next week to get the inputs of the Bangsamoro Transitional Council and other resource persons.

"The peace process has humps and bumps, but we must stay the course. We are all partners here working for peace," Tan said.

Also during the meeting, the MILF peace panel announced the appointment of Jun Mantawil as its newest member, replacing Haji Mahmoud Estino, who died recently.

December 2017

MANILA BULLETIN  
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

Page: 1

## China keeps building islands on disputed sea – report

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON (AP) – Tensions over China's island-building in the South China Sea may have

►4 eased in the past year, but Beijing has kept busy.

New satellite imagery shows China has built infrastructure covering 72 acres (28 hectares) in the Spratly and Paracel islands during 2017 to equip its larger outposts to be air and naval bases.

The Washington-based Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative closely tracks developments in the South China Sea, where China and several Asian governments have conflicting territorial claims. It said Thursday there has been construction of hangars, underground storage, missile shelters, radar arrays and other facilities.

The activity comes as China joins what are likely to be protracted negotiations with Southeast Asian nations on a "Code of Conduct" for South China Sea. Tensions with the US on the issue have also eased, despite Washington's criticism of Beijing's conduct.

The construction is the follow-up phase to a campaign of land reclamation that was completed by early 2016 in the Spratlys, an island chain where Malaysia, Taiwan, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Brunei also have claims. According to the Pentagon, China has added more than 3,200 acres (1,248 hectares) of land to the seven land features it occupies in the area.

China also seems to have halted smaller-scale operations to expand islands in the Paracels that lie farther north, the initiative said.

The US and others have accused Beijing of further militarizing the region and altering geography to bolster its sweeping claims across the South China Sea. China says the man-made islands in the Spratlys, which are equipped with airstrips and military installations, are mainly for civilian purposes and to boost safety for fishing and maritime trade.

Greg Poling, the initiative's direc-

tor, said China had seized a diplomatic opening after the election of Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, who adopted a conciliatory stance toward Beijing over their territorial dispute. It's also been less of a focus for President Donald Trump's administration, preoccupied by North Korea's nuclear threat and trade disputes with China.

"It's gotten off the front pages, but we shouldn't confuse that with a softening in China's pursuit of its goals. They are continuing all the construction they want," Poling said.

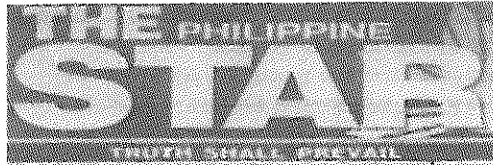
The most construction has been on Fiery Cross Reef (called Kagitingan Reef by the Philippines) in the Spratlys, including hangars alongside its 10,000-foot (3,000-meter) airstrip, underground structures likely intended to house munitions or other materiel, hardened shelters for missile platforms, and communication and radar facilities, the initiative said.

It also noted that China has deployed new military aircraft at Woody Island in the Paracels. At the end of October, the Chinese military released images of J-11B fighter planes there for drills. In mid-November, Y-8 transport aircraft were spotted on the same island that may be capable of electronic intelligence gathering.

Marine Lt. Col. Christopher Logan, a Pentagon spokesman, said Thursday that he could not comment in detail on US assessments of the region but that "further militarization of outposts will only serve to raise tensions and create greater distrust among claimants."

The United States does not claim territory in the South China Sea but has declared it has a national interest in ensuring that the territorial disputes there are resolved peacefully in accordance with international law and that freedom of navigation and overflight are guaranteed. China has opposed what it calls US meddling in an Asian dispute.

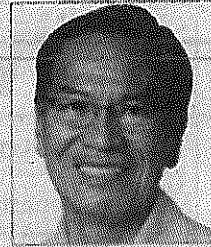
16 December 2017



Page: 11

## AT GROUND LEVEL

SATUR C. OCAMPO



### Double-whammy acts by Congress in one day

On Dec. 13, on its last session day before the holiday break, the 17th Congress of the Philippines, dominated by the “super-majorities” of President Duterte’s political allies, took two controversial actions both of which will have negative impacts on the lives of the Filipino people, particularly the vast number of the poor and marginalized.

The first was the approval, in a joint session by the Senate and the House of Representatives, of the president’s second request to extend – throughout the year 2018 – his May 23, 2017 Proclamation 216, imposing martial law and suspending the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus for 60 days in the whole of Mindanao.

Aimed at quelling the siege of Marawi City by the Maute and Abu Sayyaf extremist groups allegedly to set up an Islamic State province in Southeast Asia, the proclamation was first extended, with the approval of Congress, for five months until Dec. 31, 2017. Although the siege was ended in October with the Maute and Abu Sayyaf leaders and fighters wiped out, the state security forces cited various justifications for the year-long extension. These were not in accord with the requisites set by the Constitution (“in case of invasion or rebellion”).

The second disputed measure was the ratification, separately by each chamber, of the final version of the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion bill (TRAIN), which was adopted Monday by the bicameral conference committee. TRAIN is touted to reduce personal income tax, but imposes higher taxes on fuel, petroleum products, and other commodities. That means basic goods and services will be more expensive – which inevitably will further burden tens of millions of low-income families already hard up as they are.

The year-long extension of martial law in Mindanao came fast and swift.

On Monday, Duterte sent his letter-request separately to the Senate and the House leaderships. On Tuesday, security officials briefed key members of each chamber on the situation in Mindanao. (After the three-hour briefing, House majority leader Rodolfo Farinas was quoted in media as saying his colleagues “overwhelmingly” favored extending martial law.) Then on Wednesday, after four hours of questioning executive officials in the joint session, the voting was called. Result: 240 for the extension, 27 against. (Among the senators: 14 for, 4 against; among the House members, 228 for, 23 against.)

Duterte sought the extension on the following grounds: the remnants of the Maute group are actively recruiting members among the Muslim youths; 185 Moro rebels in the government’s martial-law arrest order remain at large and “in all probability are presently consolidating their forces”; the Turaife group was monitored as “planning to launch bombings, possibly in Cotabato”; the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters continue to defy the government, and the Abu Sayyaf remnants remain a serious security concern; and the New People’s Army “took advantage of the situation by intensifying their decades-long rebellion against the government... purposely to seize political power through violent means and supplant the country’s democratic form of government with communist rule.”

The “super-majorities” in the 17th Congress accepted these justifications. But there are opposing views from the people of Mindanao, both Muslims and Christians. Specifically, I note the sentiments of the Marawi residents as publicly expressed by Macabangkit Lanto, lawyer, former congressman, ambassador, and cabinet undersecretary.

“Many residents of Marawi City are lackadaisical toward, if not wary of, the issue of extending martial law in Mindanao, maybe out of despair and hopelessness,” Lanto wrote in a commentary. He added, wryly: “Such an extraordinary presidential power reserved by the Constitution for extreme crisis did not save their city from being flattened into rubble. In fact, it might even have emboldened military planners into carpet-bombing Marawi and unleashing military might. Martial law neither protected their houses from ruin nor accelerated the city’s liberation from the jihadists.”

“The alleged ‘significant violent activities’ and continuing threat by extremists to security, upon which the military and police base their recommendation to extend martial law,” Lanto pointed out, “are way off the constitutional requirement of persisting rebellion or invasion or when ‘public safety requires it.’ The fact that there is no ACTUAL rebellion and invasion in Mindanao stares us in the face.” But then, he lamented, “cases are often decided, not on legal grounds, but on other factors, not the least of them politics.”

About the NPA’s intensified military actions cited as rationale for the martial-law extension, a Philippine Daily Inquirer editorial called the government tack “misleading” because “the intensification comes as a direct result of the administration’s withdrawal from the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations.” (It was also a response to the martial law imposed in Mindanao and the AFP’s “all-out war” against the NPA). Pointing out that the communist insurgency was not part of the original rationale for the imposition of martial law, the editorial asked, “How can it suddenly become part of the rationale for its extension?”

30



A cause for graver concern was Duterte's remarks to reporters on Wednesday that if the NPA further intensified its recruitment and stepped up its attacks against government forces, he would consider declaring martial law nationwide. And mind this: he would leave it to the military and police to say when he would do so.

As regards the ratification of the TRAIN bicameral report by the House plenary, media accounts show that it was rammed through – or railroaded, without voting and with no copies of the report given to the legislators – late at night when there was no longer a quorum, as required by the House rules for such final action.

The presiding officer, Deputy Speaker Raneo Abu, responding to the motion to ratify the report, ignored ACT-Teachers Rep. Antonio Timio's shouts, "Mr. Speaker, objection! Objection!" as he hastily declared, "Any objection? There is none. The motion is approved!"

That's how many unpalatable administration legislations have been passed in the House.

\* \* \*  
Email: [satur.ocampo@gmail.com](mailto:satur.ocampo@gmail.com)



# ONLINE NEWS

## 16 DECEMBER 2017

[www.bomboradyo.com](http://www.bomboradyo.com)

### **Walang deadline sa pagpulbos sa NPA at iba pang terrorist group – AFP**

Posted By: Analy Soberanoon

Target ng focused military operations ng Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) ang mga komunistang New People's Army at ang ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) Daesh terror group.

Sa press briefing, binigyang-diin ni AFP chief of staff Gen. Rey Leonardo Guerrero na gagawin nito ang lahat para ma-neutralize ang CPP (Communist Party of the Philippines)-NPA at mga teroristang grupo.

Nilinaw nito na hindi siya nagtakda ng deadline para tapusin ang NPA at terrorist group.

Pahayag ni Guerrero na napakaambisyo na niya para sabihin na kakayanin ng militar na tapusin ang NPA at mga terorista.

Sa ngayon ay nakatutok ang puwersa ng militar sa Eastern Mindanao Command kung saan maraming NPA ang kumikilos.

"As far as our campaign plan is concerned, supposed to be we should have started yung effort natin against the CPP-NPA, but this was affected by the conflict in Marawi and we need to focus on terrorism," pahayag ni Guerrero.

Pinalakas din ng militar ang kanilang opensiba sa bahagi ng Western Mindanao partikular sa Basilan, Sulu, at Tawi Tawi.

www.pna.gov.ph

**AFP lauds Senate passage of pay hike bill for soliders, cops**

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has expressed its gratitude to the Senate for approving on third and final reading the resolution which seeks to increase the base salary of military and uniformed personnel (MUP) starting January next year.

"We are grateful to Congress for this act of approving the resolution," AFP public affairs office chief Col. Edgard Arevalo said late Thursday.

He added that the pay increase will definitely boost the morale of every soldier, airman, sailor, and marine as this translates to higher take home pay.

Sen. Gringo Honasan, chair of the Senate Committee on National Defense and Security and sponsor of Senate Resolution 11, earlier said the proposed law seeks to increase the base salary of all military and police personnel.

This includes jail guards, firemen, coast guards and those under the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority and the Philippine Public Safety College.

"The President has repeatedly made promises of higher salaries to the military and the police personnel. In support of this commitment, this joint resolution, if enacted into law, would double the MUPs base pay," Honasan said in his sponsorship speech.

www.pna.gov.ph

Expect more action in NPA-affected areas: AFP chief

With the one-year extension of martial law, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) is expected to put up more checkpoints and conduct more patrols in Mindanao, particularly in New People's Army (NPA) affected areas.

This was disclosed by AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Rey Leonardo Guerrero during a press briefing Friday.

He made this comment when asked what Mindanaoans should expect now that martial law has been extended for one year in Mindanao.

"There will be less skirmishes in Marawi now that operations there have winded down but in NPA affected areas, they can expect more actions (e.g. patrols and checkpoints from) the military, it will be more intensified (in) scope and coverage," Guerrero said in Filipino.

The rationale for this is to establish visibility and presence in population centers to deter the NPAs' terroristic actions, the AFP chief added.

Aside from the communist rebels, military efforts will also focus on Sulu, Basilan, and parts of Central Mindanao where lawless elements like the Abu Sayyaf and other terrorist elements like the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters and their allies are known to operate.

Martial law in Mindanao was declared on May 23 following heavy attacks by Maute Group terrorists in Marawi City. Congress, in a special joint session in July, granted the extension of martial law until December 31 this year at the President's request.

The Senate and House of Representatives, convening in a joint session early this week, granted President Rodrigo Duterte's request for the extension of martial law and the suspension of the privilege of writ of habeas corpus for a period of one year from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, 2018.

A total of 240 members of Congress voted to approve the resolution of both houses calling for martial law extension in Mindanao, while only 27 voted against it.

There was no abstention. A total of 14 senators voted in favor of the motion and four were against it, while 226 House members approved the motion and 23 rejected it.

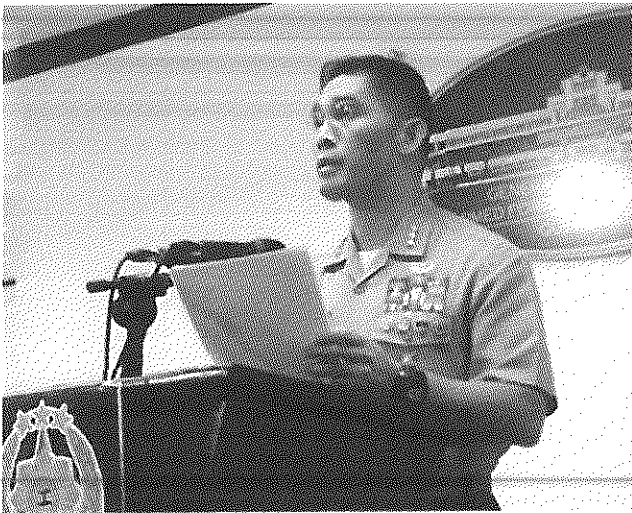
www.mb.com.ph

## **Maute-ISIS remnants recruiting post-Marawi siege — AFP**

*By Argyll Cyrus Geducos*

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) confirmed that they have monitored 'remnants' of the Maute-ISIS group to be recruiting new members since the five-month war in Marawi City, Lanao del Sur ended October 23.

The confirmation came days after President Rodrigo Duterte's martial law in Mindanao was extended due to reported terrorist recruitment and existence of other lawless elements.



Marine Colonel Edgard Arevalo (MANILA BULLETIN FILE PHOTO)

At the Task Force Bangon Marawi press briefing in Malacañang Friday, AFP spokesperson Col. Edgard Arevalo said the recruitment they have monitored was being conducted in municipalities near Marawi City.

"Here we can see that they are trying to intensify their forces through their continued recruitment)," Arevalo said in the vernacular.

The new AFP spokesperson said the terrorist group is still offering financial remunerations, but did not mention any exact amount. He, however, doubts whether or not the terrorists were able to really give the promised amount.

Arevalo said their monitoring was based on the reports of citizens in the locality. "Definitely they are not recruiting in the open."

He said that the recruitment has been happening since Marawi City was liberated. He said these recruiters are still using social media to reach out.

"There are recruitment videos. I'm sure you have come across such," he said. "Part of our work is to communicate with Facebook that such a post — if it's on Facebook — be barred or removed."

"If it's in the nature of a recruitment of a terrorist group then that could be a valid ground," he continued.

However, Arevalo had no data yet confirming whether arrests were made against these reported recruiters.

He added that these recruiters are possibly the ones who were able to escape from Marawi city as the war was ending.

Arevalo said that these recruiters are targeting the family members of their slain members, children, and women.

"The youth is the one they prefer to recruit because these are the sectors of our society that are, could be considered vulnerable," he said.

"They are gullible. They can be easily fooled into joining their group by making false promises," he added.

### **Turaife group**

Meanwhile, Arevalo said the assessment of the AFP that a certain Abu Turaife is the successor of Isnilon Hapilon who was killed by the military mid-October in Marawi City is with basis.

Hapilon, the leader of the Abu Sayyaf Group, is said to be the emir of the Islamic State (ISIS) in the Philippines.

"That is an assessment that he could be the successor of Isnilon Hapilon. It is of real basis based on our operating units in the field," Arevalo said.

He added that based on AFP record, the Turaife group has 22 identified members.

"We cannot underestimate the group just because they only have 22 members)

"We cannot discount their ability to recruit, their mobility, the arms that they have, and their capability to conduct terrorist activities).

"After all, there is no need for a large number of people to bomb a vital installation or institution, or a public place," he continued.

The Turaife group was cited in Duterte's letter to the Congress as one of the reasons to extend the martial law in Mindanao. The martial law, which was declared to address the war in Marawi City, will now expire on December 31, 2018.