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OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

NEWS CLIPPINGS

18 December 2017

Monday

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

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PANAHON TV
www.panahon.tv /PanahonTV



PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS. FEARLESS VIEWS

TODAY'S WEATHER FORECAST | DECEMBER 18, 2017 | MONDAY

TROPICAL STORM "URDUJA"
VICINITY OF CALBAYOG CITY, SAMAR
(As of 5:00 AM - December 17, 2017)

LADAG CITY 22 - 29 °C	TUGUEGARAO CITY 21 - 25 °C		
BAGUIO CITY 13 - 21 °C	SBMA/CLARK 24 - 31 °C	TAGAYTAY CITY 23 - 29 °C	LEGAZPI CITY 25 - 29 °C
METRO MANILA 22 - 28 °C	ILDILIG, BAGOLOLO CITY 25 - 29 °C	CEBUAN CITY 24 - 31 °C	METRO CEBU 29 - 32 °C
PUERTO PRINCESA 25 - 32 °C	GAGAYAN DE ORO 23 - 32 °C	METRO DAVAO 25 - 34 °C	ZAMBOANGA CITY 24 - 31 °C

SUNRISE	SUNSET
6:15 AM	5:31 PM
MOONRISE	MOONSET
5:58 AM	5:37 PM
LAST QUARTER DEC 18 3:31 PM	NEW MOON DEC 18 12:30 PM
LOW TIDE (MANILA SOUTH HARBOR) 5:29 AM 0.12 Meter	HIGH TIDE 9:52 PM 1.07 Meter

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

Cloudy at times with rainshowers and/or thunderstorms

Light rain

Rains with gusty winds

	DEC 19	DEC 20	DEC 19	DEC 20	DEC 19	DEC 20		
METRO MANILA	23 - 29 °C	24 - 30 °C	TAGAYTAY	18 - 24 °C	19 - 24 °C	TACLOBAN	24 - 32 °C	24 - 32 °C
TUGUEGARAO	20 - 24 °C	22 - 27 °C	LEGAZPI	25 - 29 °C	25 - 30 °C	GAGAYAN DE ORO	23 - 32 °C	23 - 33 °C
LADAG	22 - 29 °C	21 - 30 °C	PUERTO PRINCESA	25 - 32 °C	25 - 32 °C	METRO DAVAO	25 - 33 °C	25 - 33 °C
BAGUIO	14 - 20 °C	15 - 21 °C	ILDILIG, BAGOLOLO	26 - 30 °C	26 - 30 °C	ZAMBOANGA	24 - 32 °C	24 - 32 °C
SBMA/CLARK	24 - 30 °C	24 - 29 °C	METRO CEBU	25 - 31 °C	25 - 31 °C			

DZRH NEWS TELEVISION

MONDAY - FRIDAY
11 AM & 5 PM

PILIPINAS HD

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

18 December 2017

Manila
Standard

Page: A1

**ANDANAR: GIVEN 'IS' THREAT
TO STRIKE ANYWHERE**

Expanded martial law 'always an option'

BY LLANESCA T. PANTI

EXPANDING martial law beyond Mindanao is always an option, given the threat that Islamic State (IS)-inspired groups may attack anywhere, Palace Communications Secretary Martin Andanar said on Sunday.

"We, in government, are open to all options. If something happens, then we will apply what is necessary," Palace Communications Secretary Martin Andanar

➤ **OptionA2**

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■ OPTION FROM A1

Expanded martial

in a radio interview when asked about the official position of the President or the Palace on the possible triggers to the declaration of martial law nationwide.

Andanar added, "All options are open in a sense that if anything happens, it [martial law] is within the Constitution and the power of the President to protect our countrymen."

The Duterte administration had found a surprisingly big number of the Maute and the Davao Islamiya groups that laid siege to Marawi City on May 23, he said.

"What the President said was that once these extremists launch attacks, he would exercise his authority to declare martial law. Now, anything can happen around the country," Andanar said.

"We can't predict where will they strike next, but it is possible that their elements from the Middle East, such as Mosul (in Iraq) and Aleppo (Syria), they were defeated there so they could come here," he added.

Andanar noted that members of the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan in the past had also sought refuge in "sympathetic" countries, including those in Southeast Asia.

President Rodrigo Duterte de-

clared Martial law in Mindanao on May 23 as fighting broke out in Marawi between the Maute Group and government troopers who were trying to serve an arrest warrant on extremist leader Isnilon Hapilon, the appointed IS emir in Southeast Asia.

The ensuing five-month siege wrought havoc on the lives of the Marawi City residents, displacing 500,000 residents and destroying millions of pesos worth of property in the once thriving city.

The war also took the lives of hundreds of soldiers, policemen and civilians, as well as about 800 militants from the Maute Group, according to the military.

The president declared Marawi City liberated from terrorists on October 17, a day after Hapilon and Omar Maute, leader of the extremist group bearing his family name, were killed by government forces in Marawi.

Despite this, Duterte, on the recommendation of the Defense department, had asked Congress for a one-year extension of martial law in Mindanao, which Congress recently approved.

He has tried to allay public fears of a dictatorship with the new extension of martial rule from January 1 to December 2018.

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BILIRAN, ROMBLON LANDSLIDES

25 dead,

26 missing

Photo provided by the Office of the Presidential Assistant for the Visayas shows one of three landslides that devastated Biliran province



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By MIRIAM DESAGADA
and CECILLE SUERTE FELIPE

NAVAL, Biliran—Inces-
sant rains and a tornado
spawned by Tropical Storm
Urduja unleashed land-
slides in Eastern Visayas,
burying alive scores of
residents.

As of last night, 23 bodies
had been recovered from the
landslides in Biliran triggered
by Urduja (international name
Kai-Tak), while a couple was
buried alive in a landslide in
Romblon last Saturday.

Personnel from the Provin-
cial Disaster Risk Reduction
and Management Council
(PDRRMC) told *The Freeman*
and *The STAR* that 26 people
were missing and feared to
have been buried alive.

Senior Supt. Robert Monco,
director of the Biliran Police
Provincial Office, said search
and retrieval operations would
continue into the stormy night.

Rescuers dug into the mud
from Saturday night until yes-
terday and were able to recover
seven bodies – two of them
children – from a landslide in
Barangay Locsoon here.

The PDRRMC later iden-
tified four of the fatalities
retrieved from a landslide in
Barangay Iyusan in Almeria:
Henry Jorge Z. Wimbue Garbo,
50; Marbeth Garbo, 50; and
Wilma Garbo, 12.

Seven more bodies – including

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three children – were retrieved from another landslide at Barangay Cabibihan in Caibiran, where eight houses by the riverbank had been buried.

Ten other people were declared missing as of yesterday afternoon.

Caibiran Mayor Eulalio Maderazo said a tornado struck a hilly portion of a sitio in Barangay Cabibihan, causing the landslide that swept the eight houses at the foot of the hill, just beside the Caibiran River.

Some of the occupants were swept into the river where four bodies were recovered, two of which were those of an eight-year-old boy and a five-year-old girl, Maderazo said.

In an update yesterday afternoon, municipal health officer Dionesio Plaza said the recovered bodies from the Caibiran landslide have been identified: Rosal Español, 27; Jimson Español, 4; Judy Ann Español, 2; Manuel Bendecio, 25; Mylene Bendecio, 5; and 33-year-old Mernal Tangcap who was passing by when the landslide occurred.

Maderazo said the flooding in the town subsided yesterday afternoon.

Plaza said seven more persons were missing.

Maderazo said the town has no power. The Biliran Electric Cooperative said it might take a month before electricity would be restored in the province.

Maderazo added that the Larrazabal Bridge, linking Caibiran and Naval, had collapsed. The Caraycaray Bridge, connecting Naval and Biliran, also collapsed.

The PDRRMC and the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) in Biliran initially estimated the damage to infrastructure in the province at P30 million.

Meanwhile in Balangiga, Eastern Samar one fisherman was reported missing and many roads there remained impassable as of yesterday.

The Office of Civil Defense 8 also reported that there were fatalities in Mahaplag, Leyte and that there was still no power in the province.

Police identified the couple in Romblon as Masolmie Romero and Matilde Romero, both 60 years old, residents of Barangay Mabini, San Fernando.

The couple was trapped by the landslide inside their house.

Investigation showed that the landslide took place at around 11 p.m. as heavy rain poured in the area, said Supt. Imelda Tolentino, spokesperson for the Region IV-B (Mimaropa) police.

Early yesterday morning, Jessie Roda, barangay captain of Mabini reported that the locality was heavily affected by the landslide.

19 hurt, thousands stranded

Urduja has injured at least 19 people so far, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) reported yesterday.

They suffered injuries from falling debris, vehicular accidents and landslides, said NDRRMC spokesperson Romina Marasigan.

As of yesterday, 4,327 families from Samar, Northern Samar and Eastern Samar have been evacuated to ensure their safety.

The NDRRMC has also recorded 15 landslides or erosions, four flooding and one incident of a boat capsizing as Urduja pummeled the Visayas.

Urduja has affected 51,004 families or 221,953 individuals from 492 barangays in Region V, VII, and XIII with 20,389 families or 87,917 persons moving to evacuation centers.

About 17,000 passengers remained stranded in ports across the country yesterday due to Urduja, according to the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG).

In a report from its headquarters in Manila, the PCG said a total of 16,996 passengers were recorded in over 50 ports as of noon as sea vessels were still not allowed to travel due to the stormy weather.

Most of the stranded passengers were in the North Harbor in Manila where a total of 4,027 people were bound for the Visayas and Mindanao for the Christmas break.

Apart from stranded passengers, the PCG said 118 vessels, 1,575 rolling cargoes and 34 motorboats were held off at different ports.

As of noon yesterday, a total of 62 flights were cancelled by AirAsia, Cebu, Cebu Pacific, PAL Express, Skyjet and Zest airlines.

But operations at the Daniel Z. Romualdez Airport in Tacloban City have been restored fully after the storm's onslaught.

The airport resumed operation at 5 a.m. yesterday after its suspension last Dec. 15, causing all commercial flights to be cancelled, the Department of Transportation said in a statement.

Staff from the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (CAAP), together with personnel from the Philippine Air Force and the Philippine Army,

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cleared the area of fallen trees and other debris, it added.

Airport personnel also reinforced the ceiling and installed portable floodlights at the parking area, according to CAAP director-general Jom Sydiongco.

Strong winds brought by the storm uprooted trees, caused a portion of the airport's cyclone perimeter fence to lean, and damaged airport facilities, according to Sydiongco.

CAAP officials reported that all airports in Region VIII are operational, only sustaining minor damage due to the storm.

These are the airports in Calbayog, Catarman, Catbalogan, Borongan, Guiuan, Tacloban, Biliran, Ormoc, Maasin and Hilongos.

Stormy Christmas

Urduja slightly weakened but will continue to dump rains over MIMAROPA (Mindoro-Marinduque-Romblon-Palawan) in the next days, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said yesterday.

Meanwhile, PAGASA warned that a new weather disturbance is threatening Urduja-hit areas.

The agency also warned the public against possible flashfloods and landslides as scattered to widespread rains will continue over the southern part of Mindoro provinces, Marinduque, Romblon, Palawan, Aklan, Capiz and Antique.

As of 5 p.m. yesterday, signal No. 1 remained hoisted over the southern part of Mindoro, Romblon, Palawan, Aklan, Antique and Capiz.

Urduja slammed into Samar on Saturday and made two landfalls in Mobo, Masbate and Sibuyan Island yesterday.

It was also expected to hit landmass at Aklan and Palawan within the next 24 hours.

As of 4 p.m. yesterday, Urduja had 65 kilometers per hour winds near the center and gustiness of up to 90 kph. It was forecast to move west-southwest at 15 kph.

PAGASA weather forecaster Aldczar Aurelio said Urduja was projected to be over Romblon this afternoon and in the vicinity of Palawan tomorrow afternoon.

Urduja is expected to exit the Philippine area of responsibility on Wednesday morning.

It is expected to weaken further as it exits the country.

Aurelio also warned the public, especially fisherfolk, against big waves in the seaboard of Luzon and the Visayas with waves expected to reach as high as 4.5 meters.

PAGASA said Metro Manila and the rest of Luzon would have cloudy skies with scattered rains due to the northeast monsoon.

Eastern Visayas and Mindanao will experience partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rain showers and thunderstorms.

Meanwhile, a new cyclone is threatening to hit the country days before Christmas.

Aurelio said the tropical depression was located 1,950 km east of Mindanao as of 2 p.m. yesterday.

The new weather disturbance - which will be locally named Vinta - packed winds of 40 kph near the center and gustiness of up to 50 kph.

Aurelio said if the cyclone maintains its present speed, it is likely to enter the Philippine area of responsibility on Dec. 22 and may follow the track of Urduja.

He said the usual track of cyclones during December is Visayas and Mindanao.

"While we don't know yet the strength and track of the new cyclone, it's important that we prepare for this," Aurelio said.

Ships capsize, roads closed

A tugboat towing a cargo vessel loaded with 90,000 bags of cement capsized last Friday noon due to strong winds and rains that hit Butuan City and nearby areas.

Capt. Elviro Baniera, captain of the tugboat owned by Strong Desire Shipping Co., said all his crewmembers were safe after they were rescued by locals at the wharf.

Adonis Villegas, bargeman of cargo vessel *M/V Ocean 7* owned by West Ocean & Shipping, said all of his crew were also safe.

The Maritime Industry Authority is now investigating the incident.

Two major roads in Eastern Visayas have been closed to traffic due to severe floods, the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) said yesterday.

In a travel advisory, the DPWH said the Gandara Diversion Road in Samar and the national road from the junction Buray-Wright to the junction at Taft Road in Eastern Samar were both closed to vehicles as of 5:30 p.m. last Saturday.

The DPWH said the Gandara Diversion Road was not passable to light vehicles due to rising floodwater.

It said the national road in Eastern Samar, on the other hand, was closed to all types of vehicles due to flooded portions at Malinao, Taft and Mabuhay, Taft.

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"Motorists are advised to use Marabut-Lawaan to Junction Buenavista road in entering Eastern Samar and in going to Tacloban where the (mud from the landslide) at Paya. Giporlos is already cleared," the DPWH suggested.

Meanwhile, five other roads were partially closed.

In Samar, the road at Barangay Cagmanipis Sur only has one lane open for vehicles due to rockslide.

In Biliran, only light vehicles are allowed to pass through Talibong Bridge due to cracks and washed out riprap.

The Sanggalang section, Naval-Biliran-Cross country road Loosoon section and Cabucgayan-Biliran all have only one lane passable due to landslides, the DPWH added.

Relief operations ongoing

President Duterte is set to visit areas hit by Urduja to check the conditions of affected residents.

"I would like to see for myself what government can do better than what these guys there are doing now," he said.

Malacañang said government response teams would continue to work during the holidays to assist disaster-hit areas.

"Vital services, such as preparedness and response to disasters or calamities shall continue with their operations even during the holidays," presidential spokesman Harry Roque Jr. said in a statement yesterday.

Roque said the defense department and the NDRRMC are closely coordinating with other agencies and are working round the clock to render the necessary services.

He said the social welfare department has mobilized relief operations to provinces affected by Urduja.

The agency has a stockpile of 368,000 family food packs (FFPs) worth P223 million, food and non-food items worth P393 million, and available standby funds amounting to P245 million.

Malacañang assured communities affected by Urduja that the government is prepared to provide them assistance.

"We continue to observe the developments and the effect of storm Urduja. It has lingered and has caused rains here in Luzon. What we really want to impress in the people is they should not worry because the government's service is continuous," Presidential Communications Operations Office Secretary Martin Andanar told radio station dzMM yesterday.

"This is very unfortunate but don't worry because the government is on top of the situation," he added.

Andanar said the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) has pre-positioned relief goods and is ready to distribute them to storm-hit provinces.

He said all military assets are ready for deployment upon the recommendation of the NDRRMC.

The DSWD is providing relief assistance to families and individuals in Eastern Visayas and in Northeastern Mindanao.

DSWD Field Office 8 released last Saturday 1,040 FFPs, 2,080 pieces of *malong*, 2,080 hygiene kits and 20 sacks of clothing to augment

the relief supply of the Tacloban City Social Welfare and Development Office.

The city has been placed under a state of calamity due to widespread flooding and landslides.

The field office has also released 894 FFPs, 1,788 pieces of *malong*, and 1,788 hygiene kits to the municipal government of Giporlos in Eastern Samar and 1,726 each of food packs, *malong*, and hygiene kits to the Barugo local government unit (LGU) in Leyte.

Meanwhile, DSWD Region XIII pre-positioned 2,575 FFPs in Tandag City, Surigao del Sur and in the island municipalities of Sungao del Norte and Dinagat Islands.

DSWD Region XIII is ready with 15,107 FFPs at the Timiwisan warehouse in Butuan City for augmentation when needed. It has also 6,000 FFPs placed at a mobile storage unit in Placer, Sungao del Norte.

DSWD field offices in Mimaropa and Region V have also been monitoring the status of stranded passengers at different ports in the regions in close coordination with concerned LGUs - With Michael Punongbayan, Edu Punay, Helen Flores, Ben Serrano, Rudy Santos, Alexis Romero, Ghio Ong, Rainier Allan Ronda

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18 December 2017

Manila
Standard

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Military, police shift to offensive vs rebels

By Bill Casas

MALACAÑANG said Sunday it has decided not to suspend the military operations against the communists rebels.

“The decision not to declare a suspension of military operations with the members of the New People’s Army over the Christmas holidays stays,” presidential spokesman Harry Roque said in a statement.

“Our defenders will not stand down as there has been a call on from the other side to launch offensives against state forces.”

Roque made his statement even as the Philippine Na-

tional Police said Sunday it had shifted to an offensive stance against the New People’s Army after its recently tagged by the government as a terrorist organization.

In a statement, the PNP said it had mobilized tactical and maneuver units for a coordinated offensive against the NPA alongside the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

Meanwhile, the 66th Infantry Battalion under the

701st Infantry Brigade conducted a Community Support Program in Barangay Arabo-Pantukan, Compostela Valley that resulted in the mass surrender of 290 Underground Mass Organization members on Dec. 12, 2017.

Roque said the communists were notorious for conducting treacherous attacks even when there were unilateral ceasefires in the past during which the military lost scores of defenders.

Declaring a SOMO [suspension of military operations] now is not to the nation’s best interest as it would only expose our defenders to enemy attacks and embolden them to commit more atrocities, especially during their

anniversary,” Roque said.

“However, we do not discount possibilities that there may be circumstances that may arise for government to reconsider its present position.”

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana on Tuesday said he would not recommend to President Rodrigo Duterte to observe a traditional Christmas truce with the communist fighters, signaling sustained hostilities following the collapse of the peace talks with the Maoist rebels last month.

Amid the continued clashes during the negotiations, Duterte on Nov. 23 signed a proclamation unilaterally scrapping the peace process with the communists that aimed to end nearly half-cen-

tury long insurgency.

He said the peace talks were called off because of the left’s “pure nonsense” demand for a coalition government, which he opposed by insisting he should maintain control over the military and the police.

Lorenzana said he will not ask Duterte to declare a ceasefire with the New People’s Army, the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines, due to the heightened guerrilla attacks against state forces.

The Defense chief said suspending military operations the NPAs would leave soldiers vulnerable to assaults from the leftist combatants.

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December 2017

Malaya

The National Newspaper

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NPA rebels attack soldiers in rescue mission

BY VICTOR REYES

COMMUNIST New People's Army rebels on Saturday waylaid government forces on their way to Northern Samar to help in efforts to rescue victims of floods caused by storm "Urduja."

Two of the soldiers were wounded in the attack and are now recuperating at a hospital, said 2Lt. Michele Estares, civil military operations officer of the Army's 20th Infantry Battalion based in Catarman, Northern Samar.

Estares said 20th IB forces were sent to Barangay Hinagonoyan in Gatubig town to help in the ongoing humanitarian assistance and disaster response operations, particularly in the rescue of residents affected by flooding.

He said the soldiers, who were on foot, were waylaid by about 50 NPA rebels at around 3:20 p.m., triggering a firefight that lasted for an hour and 25 minutes.

Wounded were Cpl. Yzarel Laure and Pfc. Ronald Gomez who were taken to the Northern Samar Provincial Hospital while the withdrawing rebels incurred an undetermined number of casualties.

"The troops were sent there to conduct rescue operation. They were walking in a muddy area when they were attacked by the rebels who are apparently aware of the troop movement," Estares said.

Col. Edgard Arevalo, chief of the AFP public affairs office, said the attack "only manifested the true color of these communist terrorists" and "validated the aptness of government's decision to terminate the peace negotiations and to discontinue the traditional Christmas truce."

NPA rebels have stepped up attacks against government targets since President Duterte issued a proclamation on November 23, officially terminating peace negotiations with the communist movement.

On December 5, the President again issued another proclamation, this time classifying the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the NPA, as terrorist organizations.

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MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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6 soldiers hurt in grenade blast

ROEL CATOTO
MIKE CRISMONDO

SURIGAO CITY – Six soldiers were wounded when a grenade exploded near a village hall where they were resting from patrol duties in San Francisco, Surigao del Norte, Wednesday evening.

According to Major Arvin L. Dugho, 30th Infantry Battalion (30th IB) press information officer, the battalion's troops were on patrol in Barangay Magtangale and took a breather at around 6:25 p.m. when a suspected New People's Army (NPA) member lobbed a grenade at them.

The wounded soldiers were rushed to a hospital in Surigao City for medical treatment.

"No one was seriously hurt and they are now back in the camp," Dugho said.

Meanwhile, Brig. Gen. Nemesio M. Gacal, commanding general of the Army's 402nd Infantry (Stingers) Bri-

gade based in Butuan City, reiterated his previous directive to all battalion and company commanders, including operational control (Opcon) unit commanders, to redouble their security and combat operations to avert any terroristic activities by the NPAs as the CPP anniversary celebration is fast approaching on December 26.

This was the same order issued by Northeastern Mindanao Police Regional Office 13 (PRO 13) Director Chief Supt. Noli A. Romana to all directors and city and municipal chiefs of police.

Gacal and Romana on Sunday appealed to the public to cooperate with the government security forces by providing timely and accurate information about the presence of the NPA terrorists in their respective communities to prevent any terroristic activities.

"We also need the full cooperation of the civilians to maintain peace and order in this region," PRO 13 spokesperson Chief Insp. Renel E. Serrano said.

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INQUIRER

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RESCUE MISSION

2 SOLDIERS WOUNDED IN NPA AMBUSH IN N. SAMAR

By **Joey A. Gabieta**
and **Rachel Arnaiz**
@inquirervisayas

CATARMAN, NORTHERN SAMAR—Two Army soldiers were wounded on Saturday when their unit was ambushed by suspected communist rebels while heading to a village in Catubig town, Northern Samar, to rescue residents trapped in floods triggered by heavy rains brought by Tropical Depression "Urduja" (international name Kai-tak).

Pfc. Roland Gomez suffered a bullet wound in the buttocks while Cpl. Yzazel Laure was hit in the stomach.

The two were part of a team of 14 soldiers belonging to the 20th Infantry Battalion who were on their way to Barangay Hinagoyonon on Saturday afternoon to help residents affected by the floods, according to 2nd Lt. Michelle Estares, information officer of the unit based in Catubig.

Northern Samar province has been placed under a state of calamity after more than 2,000 families were evacuated due to the flooding.

When the soldiers reached Barangay San Miguel in Catubig about 3:30 p.m., about 50 members of the New People's Army (NPA) opened fire. The battle lasted for more than an hour before the rebels fled.

The wounded soldiers were brought to Catarman Community Hospital in Catarman town. Their condition was declared stable.

Humanitarian mission

The soldiers, who are under the command of Lt. Noli Lapizar, immediately conducted pursuit operations against the rebels.

Estares said she was disappointed that the rebels staged the ambush on government troops who were on a humanitarian mission to help flood victims.

"Our troops were there to conduct HADR [humanitarian assistance and disaster response] as part of our responsibility to conduct disaster rescue operation and help people who need assistance during disasters," she said in a text message to reporters.

Romina Marasigan, spokesperson for the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, denounced the NPA attack.

"I hope the NPA rebels understand what they have done. If they themselves become victims of disasters, we will also provide them with their needs," Marasigan said.

President Duterte last month unilaterally terminated peace talks with the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), citing their lack of sincerity in negotiations as the NPA continued its attacks.

The NDFP is the political arm of the CPP while the NPA is its armed wing. —WITH A REPORT FROM NIKKO DIZON INQ.

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2 soldiers wounded in NPA attack

FRANCIS WAKEFIELD

Two government soldiers were wounded when New People's Army (NPA) guerrillas fired on a group of troopers who were helping people affected by Storm Urduja in Northern Samar on Saturday.

Lt. Michelle Estares, Civil-military Operations Officer of the 20th Infantry Battalion, said troops from the unit were on a disaster response mission near Barangay Hinagonoyan, Catubig town, when they were engaged by about 50 insurgents.

Estares said the soldiers fought back and the battle lasted for almost two hours before the rebels retreated.

Estares identified the wounded soldiers as Cpl Yzazel M. Laure who was hit in the abdominal area, and Pfc Ronald L. Gomez who was hit in the buttocks.

They were brought to the Northern Samar Provincial Hospital while other troops went after the NPA group.

"It is unfortunate and sad that our soldiers were engaged by terrorist NPAs while serving the people. Our troops were there to conduct (a disaster response mission)," Estares said.

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NPA unit ambushes food relief delivery to 'Urduja' evacuees

ABOUT 50 New People's Army (NPA) rebels ambushed Philippine Army troops delivering food relief to families affected by tropical storm Urduja in Catubig town of Northern Samar on Saturday, wounding two soldiers, a civil-military operations officer said.

The troops under the Army's 20th Infantry Battalion (201B) clashed with

► **Ambush A2**

■ **AMBUSH FROM A1**

NPAs

the communist rebels at about 3-20 p.m. in a fight that lasted for one hour and 25 minutes along Barangay Hinagonoyan.

Second Lieutenant Michelle Estares, 201B civil-military operations officer, said in a report on Sunday the two wounded soldiers were immediately taken to the Northern Samar Provincial Hospital. They were identified as Corporal Yzazel Laure and Private First Class Ronald Gomez.

Estares said in the report there was an "undetermined" number of casualties on the side of the NPA.

"It is unfortunate and sad that our soldiers were engaged by terrorist NPAs while serving the people. Our troops were there to conduct HADR (humanitarian assistance and disaster relief) as part of our responsibility to conduct disaster rescue operation and help

people who need assistance during a disaster," she said.

President Rodrigo Duterte had declared the NPA and its umbrella group, the Communist Party of the Philippines, as terrorist organizations through Proclamation No. 374, signed on December 6.

Meanwhile, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) condemned the incident. NDRRMC spokesperson Romina Marasigan said the troops on duty at the time were only there to serve the evacuees displaced by Urduja.

"This is not an armed conflict, this is not a campaign on anything. I hope that the NPA [rebels] would understand that what they did was not good, very wrong," Marasigan said in a phone interview.

"If they were the victims of any natural disaster the government would have done the same thing to them – which is provide them with what they need during a time of calamity," she added.

33 dead, scores injured

Amid the weather disturbance in the Visayas, Marasigan said 33 fatalities have been reported while scores of others were injured, and still others were missing as Urduja lashed across several provinces in the Eastern Visayas. (See related story on Page A1)

Many were injured amid falling debris, vehicular accidents and landslides.

The NDRRMC had warned of flash floods and landslides brought about by Urduja that made a landfall over San Policarpo town in Eastern Samar on Saturday.

From its latest report on Sunday, 20 incidents were monitored in the regions of Mimaropa (Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon and Palawan) and Bicol, Western Visayas and Eastern Visayas.

A total of 51,004 families or 221,953 people were affected in 497 barangay (villages) in Bicol,

Eastern Visayas and Caraga.

Of the said number, 20,389 families or 87,917 persons are being served inside and outside their respective evacuation centers, the NDRRMC said while in Samar about 4,327 families were pre-emptively evacuated.

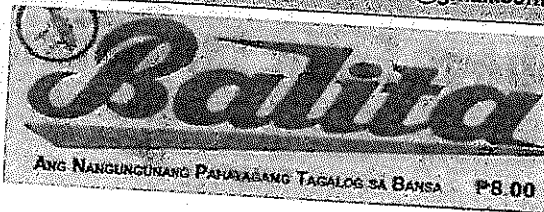
Some 18 houses were partially destroyed in Catbalogan City and Butuan City, Agusan del Norte.

As of 8 a.m. on Sunday, Urduja has weakened into a tropical depression.

Warning Signal No. 1 was raised over the Southern parts of Occidental Mindoro and Oriental Mindoro, Albay, Sorsogon, Masbate including Burnas and Ticao islands, Northern part of Palawan including Cuyo and Calamian Group of Islands, Aklan, Antique, Capiz, Iloilo, Guimaras, Northern portions of Negros Occidental and Cebu, Northern and Eastern Samar, Leyte and Biliran.

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2 sundalo sa 'Urduja' rescue ops sugatan sa NPA attack

Ni FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

Sugatan ang dalawang sundalo makaraang pagbabarilin ng mga himihinalang miyembro ng New People's Army (NPA) ang grupo ng mga sundalong nagsasagawa ng Humanitarian Assistance Disaster Response (HADR) sa Northern Samar habang binabayo ng bagyong 'Urduja' ang lalawigan, nitong Sabado ng hapon.

Sinabi ni Lt. Michelle Estares, Civil-military Operations Officer ng 20th Infantry Battalion, na nangyari ang insidente bandang 3:20 ng hapon.

Nabatid na nagsasagawa ng HADR ang 20th IB at kumikilos patungong Barangay Hinagonoyan sa bayan ng Catubig nang tambangan sila ng nasa 50 rebelde.

Ayon kay Estares, tumagal ng dalawang oras ang bakbakan at

kaagad na naisugod sa Northern Samar Provincial Hospital ang mga sugatang sundalo habang tinugis naman ng kanilang mga kasamahan ang mga tumakas na rebelde.

Batay sa report, sa tiyang nabaril si Corporal Yzazel M. Laure, habang sa puwet naman ang tama ni Pfc Ronald L. Gomez.

"It is unfortunate and sad that our soldiers were engaged by terrorist NPAs while serving the people. Our troops were there to conduct HADR as part of our responsibility to conduct disaster rescue operation and help people who needs assistance during disaster," aru Estares.

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Pahina. 4

14 Army, 2 pulis pinarangalan

CAMP NAKAR, Lucena City– Pinagkalooban ng plake ng pagkilala at P50,000 cash ang bawat isa sa 14 na sundalo at 2 pulis-Quezon dahil sa ginawang kabayanihan. Kasama ng iba pang mga sundalo upang maging malaya ang Marawi City sa kamay ng teronstang Maute-ISIS.

Pinangunahan ni Que-

zon Governor David Suarez kasama sina P/Chief Supt Mao Aplasca, police regional director Ferdinand Ravina, Solcom acting commander at Quezon PNP Director P/ Senior Supt Roderick Armamento, Quezon police director ang pagkaloob ng parangal kina Lt Bonifacio Vender, Sgt Ernie Vender, Cpl's Reynaldo Adoc, Jemson Funtillar, Elvin Manzano, Ledimar Miras, Armando Meneda, Jordan Osillo, Romar Potencia, PCC Rommel Vival, Pfc's Christian Bolor, Michael Lagion, mga sundalo ng Philippine Army,

Cpl Winston Enverga at Private Rodrigo Dignos Jr. SP04 Trevor Toriano, at si PO1 King Robert Gendrano.

Ang pagpaparangal sa mga nabanggit na sundalo at pulis ay isinagawa kamakalawa kasabay ng graduation ng 192 drug surrenderer na nakapasa sa anim na buwang rehabilitation at training.

Ipinagkaloob din ni Governor Suarez sa Quezon PNP ang bagong SWAT mobile van, 3 bagong 1300 motorcycle, M14 Armalite rifles at mga bullet proof vest **Tony Sandoval**

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6 na sundalo sugatan sa granada

CAMP BANCASI, Butuan City
– Anim na sundalo ang nasugatan makaraang pasabugan ng granada sa kasagsagan ng pakikipagbambakan nito sa New People's Army (NPA) sa bayan ng San Francisco sa Sungao del Norte.

Bahagyang nasugatan ang anim na tauhan ng 30th Infantry Battalion (30th IB) makaraang hagsan ng granada ng NPA sa Barangay Magtangale sa San Francisco, dakong 6:15 ng gabi nitong Miyerkules, inulát kahapon ng 402nd Infantry (Stingers) Brigade.

Kaagad namang dinala ang mga sundalo sa ospital sa Sungao City, at kaagad ding nakabalik sa kanilang headquarters.

Kasabay nito, inatasan ni Bng. Gen. Nemesio M. Gacal, commanding general ng 402nd Infantry (Stingers) Brigade ng Philippine Army ang lahat ng battalion at company commanders na paigtingin

ang seguridad at combat operations habang nalalapit ang anibersaryo ng Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) sa Disyembre 26 – nakaraniwan nang nagsasagawa ng malawakang pag-atake ang mga rebelde.

Inatasan din naman ni Chief Supt.

Noli Romana, ng Police Regional Office (PRO)-13 ang lahat ng provincial director at mga hepe na maging alerto sa pagdepensa sa kani-kanilang himpilan laban sa posibilidad ng pagsalakay ng NPA.

Mike U. Crismundo

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AFP: 2 militants eyed as Hapilon's successors

By ROEL PAREÑO

ZAMBOANGA CITY – Two militants are reportedly being eyed to replace slain Abu Sayyaf leader Isnilon Hapilon, the military said over the weekend.

Ground troops are pursuing the group headed by the two terrorists, according to Armed Forces Western Mindanao Command chief Lt. Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr.

Hapilon was said to be the "emir" in Southeast Asia of the Islamic State.

Galvez declined to identify the two to avoid giving publicity to the group and its

followers.

"Yes, there are two possible replacements, but we refuse to identify them because it will create hype," he said.

Galvez gave the assurance that whoever would be picked between the two would suffer the same fate as Hapilon, who was killed along with Omar Khavam Maute during the Marawi

battle.

Earlier sources said that Abu Sayyaf leader Furup Indama and Malaysian terrorist Amin Baco were being eyed to succeed Hapilon.

Baco was reported killed during the Marawi battle, but the military is still verifying the information.

Indama's group, which is based in Basilan, is known for kidnapping activities.

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'Christmas SOMO with Reds possible'

While the government is not suspending military offensives against communist guerrillas during the holidays, it is not closing its doors to a holiday truce, Malacañang said yesterday.

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque said communist insurgents were "notorious" for conducting "treacherous" attacks even if there was a suspension of military operations (SOMO).

"We do not discount possibilities that there may be circumstances that may arise for government to reconsider its present position," Roque said.

On the other hand, the communist New People's Army (NPA) would rather face death

Turn to Page 12

Christmas

From Page 1

fighting rather than surrender.

The NPA message was relayed through a press statement dated Dec. 15 and signed by National Democratic Front (NDF) Mindanao spokesman Joaquin Jacinto amid the government's warning to the rebels to surrender or die.

The statement said the extension of martial law in Mindanao paved the way for dictatorship by President Duterte.

"With the backing of super-majority allies, barking dogs of Duterte in Congress, he secured himself and the (Armed Forces of the Philippines/Philippine National Police) absolute control over the economic, political and even the cultural life of the people in Mindanao," it said.

Duterte's AFP and PNP, through their brutal operations controlled economic activities such as farming of the masses, especially those which they suspect supporting the revolutionary movement," it added.

Duterte the military and

the police, according to NDF-Mindanao, can impose upon local government units to redirect resources to buttress their unjust war and attacks against the people.

"The AFP/PNP even threatened to deprive media people of their right to cover activities of the (Communist Party of the Philippines) and the NPA such as their anniversary celebration, an act which disregards the media's independence and the freedom of the press," it said.

With the extension of martial law, the people of Mindanao can only expect the escalation of Duterte's and the AFP's brutal, anti-people all-out war against the revolutionary movement and the peasant and *lunad* masses, the organization said.

"The extended and more inclusive martial law will further give license to the AFP to employ indiscriminate airstrikes using jet fighters, attack helicopters and armed drones, shelling with newly bought 155mm howitzer cannons and direct brutal attacks by regular AFP troops and their paramilitary goons — all aimed against civilian communities in the countryside, towns and cities," the statement said. — Ben Serrano, Alex Romero, John Unson

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INQUIRER

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No ceasefire with Reds

By Philip C. Tubeza
@pctubeza1NO

Malacanang rejected on Sunday appeals to suspend military operations against the communist New People's Army (NPA) during the Christmas holiday purportedly because of the rebels' treachery.

"The decision not to declare a suspension of military operations (Somo) [against] the New People's Army over the Christmas holidays stays," said presidential spokesperson Harry Roque.

Treacherous attacks

"Our defenders [will] not stand down as there has been a call [from] the other side to

launch offensives against State forces," he added.

"The [Communist Party of the Philippines] NPA is notorious for treacherous attacks even when there were unilateral ceasefires in the past during which we have lost scores of our brave defenders," Roque said.

"Declaring a Somo now is not [in] the nation's best interest as it would only expose our defenders to enemy attacks and embolden [the rebels] to commit more atrocities, especially during their anniversary," he said.

The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) was founded by University of the Philippines professor Jose Maria Sison on

Dec. 26, 1968, and the anniversary, the 49th this year, is usually marked by rebel attacks.

Sison had earlier suggested the leadership of the CPP-NPA might declare a unilateral ceasefire for the holidays, as had been done several times in the past, but the military rejected the idea.

"However, we do not discount possibilities that there may be circumstances that may arise for government to reconsider its present position," he added.

Sexual misconduct

In a speech in Davao City on Sunday, President Duterte again lambasted the CPP-NPA and accused the rebels of sexual

misconduct among country folk.

He had earlier said he would use the one-year extension of martial law in Mindanao to decimate the communist insurgency, warning that he would use helicopter gunships and use NPA rebels for target practice.

"There is only one rationale—the existence of the Republic," Mr. Duterte had said. "You threaten the existence of the Republic of the Philippines, I am sure that everybody will do what we must do to prevent it."

Congress had approved the President's request to extend martial law in Mindanao until Dec. 31, 2018, due to the threat posed by Islamic State-inspired terrorists and the NPA. NO

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ASG member nabbed in QC

ACERAMBA
DENISE SAN JOSE

An alleged member of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) wanted for 11 years for murder and who is now a tricycle driver was arrested by the Quezon City Police Friday after a police officer posed as a passenger.

Quezon City Police District director Chief Supt Guillermo Eleazar identified the suspect as Abdulmum Yahya, known as "Jayson," 35, a resident of Basilan Street in Salaam Compound, Barangay Ciliat.

Joint operatives from the District Special Operations Unit (DSOU), with National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NCR-NICA) and Naval Intelligence and Security Group (NISG) of the Philippine Navy personnel nabbed Yahya after receiving a tip from a resident of Salaam Compound that a wanted person was living in their neighborhood.

Senior Inspector Paterno

Domondon of the DSOU said that they verified the said report with authorities of Zamboanga and Basilan.

Domondon also found out that Yahya is a cousin of Hadji Taufik Sanhin Yahya, known as "Nofong Yakan," who was known to be one of the "hard-core" members of the ASG and was wanted for nine counts of murder and four counts of frustrated murder in Mindanao.

Domondon also disclosed that the suspect admitted he had close links with members of the ASG and said that he worked for them as a courier.

Yahya, who was also known as "Mauhrin Yahya," has a standing warrant issued by Judge Leo Jay T. Principe of the Isabela City, Basilan Regional Trial Court with no provision for bail in August 2005.

According to Domondon, the suspect was arrested at about 10 a.m. Friday along Tandang Sora Avenue when one of the arresting officers posed as a passenger and confirmed his identity.

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AFP chief admits terrorism can't be finished off during his term

FRANCIS GONZALEZ

Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Chief of Staff General Ray Leonardo Guerrero admitted that his remaining term as the highest military official of the land is not enough to finish off terrorism in Mindanao.

Guerrero is supposed to retire on Sunday, December 17, 2017, when he reached the mandatory retirement age of 56. However, his term was extended by President Rodrigo Duterte for four more months or up to April 24, 2018, to give him enough time to oversee his plans and programs as chief of the 125,000-strong military.

"For me to say that we will be able to finish the terrorist problem within my term, considering that I will be serving only up to April, will be overly ambitious," Guerrero told reporters.

"I'm just being practical. Like I said, the AFP operates based on a campaign plan. We've set targets and timelines and right now we have targets as far as the neutralization of terrorist threat is concerned."

"I'll do my best, to the most that I can give at the time that I am afforded as the chief of staff," he added.

Guerrero, at the same time, allayed fears by some that the extension of martial law in Mindanao will lead to human rights violations by government troops.

"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 and clearly our implementation of martial law from the time it was declared up to the time it was extended," Guerrero said.

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POLICE FILES

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AFP naghahanda sa pag-atake ng NPA sa kanilang anibersaryo

NAGHAHANDA na ang mga sundalong nasa mga probinsya ng Pangasinan, Nueva Vizcaya at Nueva Ecija sa posibleng pag-atake ng New People's Army (NPA) sa ika-49 anibersaryo ng Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) sa December 26.

Ayon kay Lieutenant Colonel George Bergonia, commanding officer ng 34th Infantry Battalion sa San Jose City, Nueva Ecija, bagaman nagtatagpo ang mga NPA kasinod ng pagdedeklarar ng Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte sa mga armadong Komunista bilang mga terorista, ay hindi malayong maglutasat panahon ang mga ito ng pag-atake para sa anibersaryo ng CPP.

Ayon pa kay Bergonia, mayroon dalawang grupo ng NPA na dating nasa bulubundukin ng Caraballo.

Isa sa mga ito ang nag-o-operate sa silangan ng Pangasinan. Namataas ang mga miyembro nito sa liblib na barangay sa bayan ng Umirigan, San Quintin, Natividad at San Nicolas.

Ngunit matapos mabatay ang styam sa mga miyembro nito, kabilang ang kanilang punong na si Joe Managan alvas ka Razul, ay nabuwag na ang nanang grupo.

Nabuo ang CPP December 26, 1968 sa isang liblib na barangay sa Alamos City, Pangasinan.

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NGAYON

Pahina. 2

Palasyo: Walang Christmas ceasefire sa NPA

Tiniyak ng Palasyo na hindi magdedeklara ng suspension of military operations (SOMO) sa New People's Army (NPA) ngayong Kapaskuhan.

Sinabi ni Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque na noteryus ang NPA at Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) sa mga pag-atake sa kabila ng ipinatupad na ceasefire ng gobyerno.

Ani Roque, nakahanda ang mga tropa ng gobyerno sa mga pag-atake ng NPA.

"Our defenders would not stand down as there has been call on the other side to launch offensives against state forces," dagdag ni Roque.

Nauna nang idineklara ni Pangulong Duterte ang NPA bilang teroristang grupo. *(Doris Borja)*

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Pahina. 2

AFP, PNP todo alerto vs NPA attack

Dahil sa natanggap na intelligence report na plano ng mga teroristang New People's Army (NPA) na umatake kaya todo alerto ngayon ang Armed Forces of the Philippine (AFP) at Philippine National Police (PNP)

Sinabi ni Director

Camilo Pancratius Cascolan, chief ng PNP Directorate for Operations, na lahat ng police units ay naghahanda na ng counter measures laban sa mga posibleng pag-atake ng NPA bago sa 49th founding anniversary ng Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP)

sa Disyembre 26. Giit ni Cascolan, mas mabuting magsagawa sila ng opisibla kaysa dumipensa kaya patuloy ang kanilang preventive at prophylactic combat patrol at pakikipag-ugnayan sa AFP para sa karagdagan pagbabantay sa lahat ng kampo at vital installations

Sinabi naman ni Philippine Army Spokesperson Lt Col Ray Tiongson, na base umiho sa intelligence report na nakalap ng militar, planong maglunsad ng pag-atake ang NPA na binansagan na ngayong terorista ni Pangulong Duterte ka-sunod ng paggunita ng kanilang anibersaryo sa darating, na Disyembre 26

Sa impormasyon pang militar, ang plano umanong pag-atake laban sa mga pwersa ng

gobyerno ang siyang magiging highlight sa nakatakdang pagtitipon ng CPP-NPA sa Agusan del Sur at Surigao del Sur

Ang mga pag-atake umiho ng NPA ay gagawin sa mga bahagi ng Eastern at Northern Mindanao kung saan may malakas na pwesto ang komunistang grupo kaya alerto ang pwersa ng pamahalaan sa Eastern at Western Visayas, Southern Tagalog, Bicol region, Central at Northern Luzon, Cordillera Administrative region at Cagayan Valley

Magugunita na idineklara ni Pangulong Duterte na terrorist organization ang NPA matapos na lagdaan ang Proclamation No. 360 na nagbabasura sa peace talks sa mga komunistang grupo (Gemma Garcia)

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Pahina. 4

AFP tutok sa resbak ng NPA

Lalo pang pnaingting ng Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) ang kanilang monitoring sa layuning mabigyan ng kankulang proteksyon ang mga sibilyan laban sa pinalakas na open siba ng mga komunistang New People's Army (NPA).

Sa intelligence report na nakalap ng militar, planong maglunsad ng pag-atake ang NPA na binansagan na ngayong terorista in Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte kasunod ng paggunita ng kanilang anibersaryo sa darating na December 26, 2017.

Ayon kay Philippine Army Spokesperson Lt. Col. Ray Tiangson, todo alerto ang mga sundalo bunsod ng mahigpit ang direktaba na protektahan ng mga lito ang mga sibilyan at bigyan ng pansin ang karapatang pantao nang sa gayon hindi mabigyan ng pagkakat-on ang angarebeldeng grupo ng makapag-lunsad ng pag-atake at pag-recruit ng mga bagong miyembro.

"They are directed to remain faithful and committed in the performance of their mandate to ensure peace and security in the communities, protect human rights and follow the rule of law," pahayag ni Tiangson.

Ang pahayag ni Tiangson ay kasunod sa planong pag-atake laban sa mga pwersang gobyerno bilang highlight sa nakatakdang pagtitipon ng CPP-NPA sa Agusan del Sur at Surigao del Sur kaugnay ng pagdiriwang sa kanilang 49th founding anniversary.

Sa report, nakatutok ang pag-atake ng NPA sa bahagi ng Eastern at Northern Mindanao kung saan may malakas na puwersa ang komunistang grupo kaya alerto ang puwersa ng pamahalaan sa Eastern at Western Visayas, Southern Tagalog, Bicol region, Central at Northern Luzon, Cordillera Administrative region at Cagayan Valley. **(Betchai Julian)**

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Navy engineering brigade starts Marawi rehab

THE Philippine Navy confirmed on Sunday that the Naval Combat Construction Brigade or Seabees are assisting in the rehabilitation phase in wartorn of Marawi City in Lanao del Sur, which the Islamic State-linked Maute terrorists held under siege for five months.

Captain Lued Lincuna, Philippine Navy spokesman, said around 50 heavy equipment operators were deployed to Marawi last September 9, when the battle for Marawi City was still ongoing.

"They were equipped with seven assorted heavy equipment to participate in the rehabilitation of Marawi and they are now conducting clearing operations and repair of essential infrastructures," Lincuna told reporters in a text message.

The Seabees is an engineering unit of the Navy, which is tasked with handling combat engineering and amphibious construction in support of Fleet-Marine operations.

Armed Forces Chief Gen. Rey Leonardo Guerrero said that since

last month, military engineering units from the Navy, Army and Air Force have been deployed to handle debris and clear the most affected areas of Marawi City.

The military had said that rehabilitation of Marawi City would require martial law to prevent any future attacks from remnants or supporters of the Maute group.

On May 23, President Rodrigo Duterte declared martial law in Mindanao after military operations to serve the warrant against former Southeast Asian IS "emir" Isnilon Hapilon.

Because of the foiled operations, the Maute group alongside Hapilon attacked the city and laid siege to the whole city with the end in view of establishing an IS province in Marawi.

In October, security officials declared the liberation of Marawi City, weeks after Hapilon and Maute leader Omarkhayam Maute were confirmed killed by military ground forces. The two terror leaders were among the 920 extremists killed while the siege went on for five months.

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NEVER ON A SUNDAY

Martial law extended to the end of 2018



BY ATTY. RENÉ ESPINA
FORMER SENATOR

THE extension by the Philippine Congress of martial law in the whole island of Mindanao to the end of 2018 is to me a welcome move for all people who want law and order restored in that island. Unfortunately, whatever our opinion is regarding the extension, the fact remains that many parts of that territory have been ruled by warlords who have been tolerated by the various political parties that have been given the power to temporarily rule our republic. Let me just remind some of those who are arguing against extension, about some notorious incidents which have shaken the stability of our democratic government.

First, the "traditional cheating" in the elections in the ARMM. The people who know how elections are conducted in the area categorically state that one should not be surprised that the candidates of the incumbent administration are the candidates that are credited with almost all the votes cast in the region. In fact, a former Comelec commissioner, now deceased, told me in confidence that some of the elections in that area which he investigated occurred a day or two before the actual date design-

ated for the elections. We should not be surprised that even the teachers cooperate in the cheating for fear of being "eliminated." After all, according to the teachers, elections are only conducted on a specific date, while they have to contend every day with the existing realities when they work in that region.

Because of the tolerance of the Manila government, some of the incumbent powers that be in the ARMM become intoxicated with their alleged powers that even official government income becomes their personal fund. Look what happened to the wife and sisters of the governor and the journalists who accompanied them. They were massacred. I wonder when will the victims be given justice and the malefactors punished.

How about the Mamasapano massacre of our Special Action Force who were killed by some of the MILF rebels? What about the other notorious terrorists like the BIFF and others pretending to be "Islamic militants," etc.? Let us not forget that there is a political party that wants to grab power by using guns and front organizations that have "patriotic pro masa" names. In fact, they are stooges of the Communist Party of the Philippines. The CPP commands the New People's Army. The CPP-NPA by the way has

been declared by President Rodrigo R. Duterte as a terrorist organization. The declaration has long been overdue. Some past Philippine governments have been tolerant of the attacks of the NPAs and even granted them amnesty, to the detriment of peace and order and the unfair treatment of our heroic soldiers and policemen. President Duterte knows where he is coming from because of his being for a long time the city mayor of Davao in Mindanao.

As I see the insurgency problem, the areas of conflict are in the "Moro" areas which the government is trying to solve with a new charter for the Bangsamoro region. After giving all possible autonomous powers as may be sanctioned by our Constitution, we hope that peace will finally be attained. However, this attempt should be the last and all those who transgress the law should be punished harshly.

The second problem, of course, are the roving CPP-NPA terrorists who are mostly in the north eastern part of Mindanao. Martial law is indeed a very large plus to the policemen and the soldiers who enforce the law and arrest all those involved in terrorist acts. Let's all pray that 2018 will be the year of peace.

rene-gespina@gmail.com

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POLI-VIEWS

AFP and PNP salary increase



FRANCIS N. TOLENTINO

IT is the season to be jolly indeed for the valiant members of the Philippine National Police and the Armed Forces of the Philippines. The long wait will soon be over and our uniformed personnel shall finally be accorded with the salary commensurate with the risk they take in keeping our country safe and peaceful.

Filipino peacekeepers will surely have great reason to look forward to the ensuing year as the Joint Resolution of the House of Representatives and the Senate will soon bear fruit. Recently passing the third and final reading, the said resolution proposes to increase the base pay of uniformed personnel to be drawn from the ₱64.24 billion earmarked to support the proposed raise. The campaign for this pay hike was begun years back, but only now has it taken more recognizable shape in President Duterte's administration. It may be remembered that this increase in salary for uniformed personnel was one of the President's promises during his bid for the Presidency. A man of his word, President Duterte is expected to have no reservations in approving the legislative branch's joint resolution as soon as it

reaches his table.

In the joint resolution, a Police Officer 1 for example, will receive ₱29,688 monthly basic pay effective January 1, 2018 corresponding to nearly a 100 percent increase from the present ₱14,834 monthly salary of a PO1. This translates into greater financial flexibility for uniformed personnel, making them less vulnerable to corruption and inspiring them to serve the people with honesty and dedication.

This well-deserved increase for our police and military troops is surely to boost not only their morale as public servants, but more so their sense of dignity and honor as defenders of the country and its people. It is always never easy to put your life on the line during police operations or military engagements or to defend national borders against enemies and intruders. This anticipated increase will surely affirm the national government's commitment to ensuring that those who endanger their lives for the sake of the country will never be left unrewarded. Not only will this added take-home pay enable them to provide more for their families' needs, but will enable them as well to prepare for a stable and happy retirement. For this happy retirement is, after all, what we endeavor to someday enjoy.

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AFP to use 2-pronged offensive in Mindanao

By Priam Nepomuceno · December 17, 2017, 10:35 am

MANILA -- With a year-long extension of martial law in Mindanao, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) will be intensifying operations against the New People's Army and terrorist groups operating in the region.

The announcement was made by AFP chief-of-staff Gen. Rey Leonardo Guerrero in a briefing at Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City on Friday, saying residents should expect military operations intensified in scope and coverage.

"When I mentioned focused, I meant yung focus sa buong Mindanao and yung priority natin sa eastern Mindanao side is yung NPA, while on the western Mindanao ang priority ng Mindanao is yung remnants ng ISIS threat" (When I mentioned focused, I meant that the focus of the operation is on the entire Mindanao and the priority will be on Eastern Mindanao for anti-NPA operations while on Western Mindanao, the concentration will be on remnants of the ISIS threat), said Guerrero.

Guerrero said more patrols and checkpoints will be conducted in areas known to be infested with communist rebels to deter terrorist actions.

The AFP chief said the Philippines' ongoing unilateral, bilateral, and trilateral arrangements with neighboring countries will enhance troops' maritime awareness especially in the country's southern borders.

Guerrero was referring to the recently signed trilateral cooperative agreement with Indonesia and Malaysia in the Sulu Sea and the bilateral agreement with Indonesia in the Celebes Sea.

The agreements have greatly reduced kidnapping incidents as only 11 have been recorded this year compared to the 36 or 37 posted in 2016. (PNA)