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OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

NEWS CLIPPINGS

28 December 2017

Thursday

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

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WEATHER FORECAST

Tail end of a cold front affecting the eastern section of southern Luzon. Northeast monsoon affecting northern and central Luzon. Cloudy skies with scattered rains and thunderstorms over Calabarzon, Bicol region and Eastern Visayas.

| | | | |
|--------------|---------------|----------|-------------------|
| METRO MANILA | Rainy | DAVAO | Cloudy with Rains |
| BAGUIO | Rainy | LEGAZPI | Cloudy with Rains |
| BATAAN | Partly Cloudy | LEYTE | Cloudy with Rains |
| BORACAY | Partly Cloudy | PALAWAN | Partly Cloudy |
| CEBU | Partly Cloudy | SUBIC | Partly Cloudy |
| CLARK ZONE | Partly Cloudy | TAGAYTAY | Cloudy with Rains |

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YEAR-END REPORT

The decision was also pushed by an NPA ambush in in Talakad, Bukidnon on Nov. 10, killing a four-month-old baby and one policeman and leaving six injured.

"In spite of the best efforts exerted by the Administration, the NDF-CPP-NPA failed to show its sincerity and commitment in pursuing genuine and meaningful peace negotiations as it engaged acts of violence and hostilities, endangering the lives and properties of innocent people," the Proclamation read.

On Dec. 5, Duterte signed Proclamation no. 374 declaring the Reds as terrorists and ordered their arrest under the Human Security Act (HSA). He earlier ordered the arrest of non-armed legal fronts for conspiracy to commit terrorism under the HSA, and the re-arrest of those temporarily released as an act of good faith to the peace talks aside from those who are already old.

Despite ordering the military and the police to shoot armed NPAs, Duterte on Dec. 8 hinted the peace talks can still be revived by Labor Secretary and Chief Peace Negotiator Silvestre Bello III any time but not in the near future.

Drug war shift

Duterte made a surprising move when he stripped the Philippine National Police (PNP) off their authority over the drug war on Oct. 10, 2017. He also removed from the drug campaign the AFP, National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), and the Bureau of Customs (BOC); and gave the sole responsibility to the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA).

According to Duterte, he did this to satisfy his critics who continue to slam the drug war, one of the pillars of his campaign, due to the police's involvement in the kill-

ings including that of teenagers Kian delos Santos and Carl Arnaiz.

However, in less than a month Duterte said he would bring back the PNP to the drug war in fear that the drug condition in the country might worsen. He signed Memorandum Order no. 17 on Dec. 5, bringing back the PNP, and other law enforcement agencies, to the drug war to actively support the PDEA.

Duterte and China

This year, Duterte continued to build a good relationship with China. Chinese Premier Li Keqiang even described the relationship between the two Asian countries as "as warm as the temperature on Manila," as they witnessed the signing of 14 agreements in different areas.

"Winter has come to the northern hemisphere, but the temperature in Manila is still running pretty high. I think that somewhat reflects the temperature of China-Philippine relations which is also going pretty high on the basis of the positive improvement of the relations between the two countries," Li said in Chinese last November.

Duterte has repeatedly thanked China for its assistance to the Philippines, especially for the arms it turned over to address the Marawi siege. However, he said he would like to make clear on China's intention, especially when it comes to the issue on the disputed South China Sea.

"At one moment in our life or the lives of the Filipinos, they were there to give us the arms when we had none and we were fighting it out in Marawi," he said. "But let us be clear on what we intend to do here because eventually it will affect the entire Philippine archipelago."

Despite this, Li said that the Chinese government will extend 150 million Renminbi (RMB), or P1.15 billion, worth of grants for the Marawi rehabilitation. Li said China has confidence that under Duterte's leadership, "the rebuilding of Marawi will be completed at a very early date and the local people will embrace an even better life."

would not be another Ferdinand Marcos who had kept a firm grip on power by declaring martial law in 1972 to 1981. But, he said, his hands were tied, admitting that the military was overwhelmed by the terrorist groups who were well-prepared for the siege.

Duterte assured that his martial law will be free from human rights abuses, would stay within the boundaries of the Constitution, and would take responsibility for its consequences.

The offensive operations in Marawi officially ended on October 23, 2017, days after the military killed the terrorists' leaders, Isnilon Hapilon and Omar Maute, and exactly five months after the war erupted.

But on December 11, as recommended by the AFP and the Philippine National Police (PNP), Duterte asked Congress to extend the martial law in Mindanao for a year, citing the existing threats of communist rebels and other armed groups, and the reported terrorist recruitment in the island. The Congress approved the extension on December 13. It is now set to expire on December 31, 2018.

Terminated peace talks

After trying to talk peace with the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army-National Democratic Front (CPP-NPA-NDF), Duterte officially terminated the peace talks with the Reds on Nov. 23 signing Proclamation No. 360. He cited the groups' insincerity to the negotiations.

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Ties with other superpowers

Duterte also improved its ties with other world superpowers, particularly Russia and the United States.

Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev said both countries have opened a new chapter in their relations and assured Duterte that Russia is ready to expand ties with the Philippines, especially in countering terrorism. The two leaders witnessed the signing of nine agreements at the sidelines of the 31st ASEAN Summit last month.

Following their souring relationship, Duterte seemed to have improved its relations with the US when he met President Donald Trump last month during the ASEAN Summit.

Duterte also visited his "good friend" Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in Japan in October where they reaffirmed ties and expressed that both countries have now entered the "Golden Age of Strategic Partnership".

During the visit, Japan pledged to put in over US\$ 1 billion for three infrastructure projects in the Philippines. ASEAN

Chairmanship

Duterte's chairmanship for this year's ASEAN was lauded by many world leaders.

He passed the ASEAN gavel, symbol of ASEAN chairmanship, to Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong last month.

During Duterte's stint as ASEAN chair, the 50-year-old regional bloc was able to adopt and note a number of declarations, statements, and action plans, highlighting the completion and signing of the ASEAN Consensus on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers.

Marcos wealth

Duterte revealed that he accepted the Marcos' family's offer to return their wealth to the Philippine government to finally lay the issue to rest.

"I accept the invitation; it's finally time these things be finally accepted. I accepted lang na gusto na nilang makipag-areglo sa gobyerno para matapos na ang kaso (I accepted that they want to settle to finally lay the issue to rest)," Duterte had said last September.

Duterte earlier said that the Marcos family allegedly kept the wealth supposedly because they were planning to return to Malacañang anyway. He said he accepts the explanation, whether it is true or not, because there is really nothing more to it anymore.

However, he is leaving up to the government to decide on how to acquire the wealth and if it would still pursue further cases against the former First Family.

Collection of unpaid taxes

Duterte also boasted about how the government was able to collect unpaid taxes of large corporations, namely the tobacco manufacturer Mighty Corporation, and the Philippine Airlines (PAL).

Malacañang welcomed Mighty's ₱40-billion tax settlement as it would help the administration's ambitious ₱1.097-trillion "Build, Build, Build" infrastructure program to materialize. The Palace also noted that it is the biggest tax settlement in Philippine history.

The government has accused Mighty Corporation of using counterfeit tax stamps to avoid paying ₱37.88 billion in taxes. During his second State of the Nation Address in July, Duterte ordered the Department of Finance (DOF) to accept Mighty Corporation's tax settlement.

Malacañang also welcomed PAL's ₱6-billion settlement as this will fund the education of students in local and state universities and colleges (LUCs and SUCs). It was disclosed that the flag carrier finally paid its financial obligations, including unpaid navigation fees, to the government, which were incurred since the 1970s up to July 2017.

Laws, EOs, signed

Among the landmark bills Duterte signed into law this year was the Republic Act (RA) 10931 or the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act last August. This grants free tuition to all local and state universities and colleges (LUCs and SUCs) in the country despite uncertainty on the budgetary allocation for the program.

Duterte revealed that he signed the bill into law, despite the opposition of his economic managers, to give a chance to poor students.

Last August, he also signed the laws extending the validity of passports and driver's licenses to 10 years and five years, respectively. These are two laws which Duterte promised will be signed within his term during his first State of the Nation Address.

Last May, Duterte signed EO 26 on the implementation of the Nationwide Smoking Ban. Under the EO, smoking while in enclosed public places and transportation servicing the general population, whether stationary or in motion, except designated smoking areas (DSAs) is declared unlawful.

Meanwhile last June, Duterte signed EO 28 which provides for the regulation and control of the use of firecrackers and other pyrotechnic devices. Under the EO, the use of firecrackers will be confined to community fireworks display to minimize the risk of injuries and casualties.

Before the year ended, Duterte also signed the 2018 General Appropriations Act

(ACT) and the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) Act into law. However, Duterte vetoed five provisions from the TRAIN, the law which he said was the administration's biggest Christmas gift to the Filipinos.

Defending Aquino

But Duterte was not always on attack mode this year. Duterte defended his predecessor Benigno Aquino III from the usurpation of authority charge filed against the latter by the Ombudsman related to the Mamasapano incident where 44 members of the PNP-Special Action Force (SAF) died in an operation. He said Aquino cannot usurp what is inherently his duty.

Duterte also believes that Aquino implemented the now controversial dengue immunization program on good faith, thinking this would help the Filipinos against the deadly disease. Dengvaxia manufacturer Sanofi Pasteur recently revealed that the vaccine could worsen the effects of dengue on those who have not been exposed to the virus.

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TRAIN to make doing business in PH easier - Angara

Senator Juan Edgardo "Sonny" Angara assured on Wednesday that the newly enacted tax reform law - Republic Act No. 10963 or the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) - will make doing business in the Philippines a lot easier.

Angara, chair of the Senate committee on ways and means that led deliberations in the tax reform measure, said that under the TRAIN law Filipinos with small businesses will not only find their taxes reduced, but also enjoy the perks of the simplified fil- ▶12

ing of tax and payment processes.

"Marami talaga sa ating self-employed at professionals ang nahihirapang makasunod sa mga regulasyon ng pagbubuwis. Minsan nga, mas malaki pa ang gastos nila sa pag-comply sa tax rules kesa sa mismong babayaran nilang buwis (Many of our self-employed and professionals are having a hard time complying with tax regulations. Sometimes, they have to pay a huge amount just to comply with the tax rules than just paying the amount of tax," said Angara.

"Kaya minabuti nating padaliin na ang sistema lalo na para sa mga maliliit na negosyante, (That's why we found ways to make the system easier especially for small scale businesses)," he said.

Under the law, the senator said the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) is mandated to cut the income tax return (ITR) forms from the current 12 pages to four pages only.

RA 10963 also clearly states that the BIR commissioner must simplify the business registration and tax compliance requirements of self-employed individuals and professionals.

"We are hopeful that these reforms would not only incentivize our self-employed and professionals to pay the correct taxes, but also encourage more Filipinos to engage in business," he said.

"Kapag maraming naengganyong mag-negosyo, mas dadami ang trabaho sa bansa at may dagdag-kita upang makatulong guminhawa ang pamilya, (If more people are encouraged to do business, there would be more jobs available in the country and this bring about additional income to the families)," Angara said.

President Duterte signed the TRAIN measure into law, together with the P3.767-trillion national budget, last December 19, 2017.

The Executive department is planning to implement the TRAIN program starting Jan. 1, 2018.

Angara said the Philippines' ranking slipped to 113th this year from 99th last year (2016) among 190 countries in the

latest Doing Business report of the World Bank apparently due to a complicated tax system.

Based on the World Bank report, a budding entrepreneur would need to make 20 different tax and contribution payments and visit multiple agencies in person just to start a business in the Philippines.

Moreover, the new business would be expected to pay 43 percent of its commercial profits in taxes and contributions annually.

To address this, Congress exempted from income taxes compensation income earners as well as professionals and self-employed individuals with small businesses, whose annual taxable income does not exceed P250,000 under the TRAIN law. They are also no longer required to file ITRs.

At present, even if self-employed and professionals have no tax due, they are still required to file ITRs for record and monitoring purposes of the BIR.

Meanwhile, those with annual gross sales or earnings of above P250,000 but below P3-million can choose between a flat tax of eight percent (8%) or the scheduled personal income tax rates where they can deduct their business operation costs and expenses.

Furthermore, the TRAIN law increased the value-added tax (VAT) threshold from the current P1.9-million to P3-million.

This means those earning below P3-million will be exempt from the 12 percent VAT and will be subject to the three percent (3%) tax only if they opt for the schedular personal income tax rates.

Currently, VAT and percentage tax are filed and paid every month. With the reform, such filing and payment will be made quarterly.

Likewise, the law requires only businesses that have annual sales or earnings of above P3-million—from the current P600,000—to have their books of accounts audited by certified public accountants.

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NPA has no sense of honor – Rody

By ALEXIS ROMERO

President Duterte yesterday slammed communist rebels for attacking government forces after declaring a holiday ceasefire.

"The communists are terrorists who have no sense of honor," Duterte said during a meeting of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council in Lanao del Norte.

"Tingnan mo, ceasefire... saan ba 'yun? May inatake na naman sila. Walang honor talaga itong mga p***** i**** to. (Look, there is a ceasefire. Where was that? They attacked someone again. They really have no honor. Son of a b****)," he said.

The President was referring to an Army report stating that the New People's Army (NPA), armed wing of the communists, attacked a government militia patrol in Compostela Valley on Christmas Day.

The same report said that about 30 NPA members tried to kidnap a government militiaman on the same day in the province.

"These communists are braggarts. They talk as if they are somebody. That's why I call them terrorists," Duterte said.

"There was no agreement between us and the NPA. The forces of government are free to operate. They are the ones who started it," he said.

Duterte has terminated the peace talks with the communists, citing the rebels' supposed demand to establish a coalition government, a setup that he said would force him to "share" Philippine sovereignty.

He has also classified the NPA and the Communist Party of the Philippines, the political wing of the rebels, as "terrorists."

Despite the scrapping of the talks, Duterte declared a unilateral ceasefire with the communists that took effect from 6 p.m. on Dec. 23 to 11:59 p.m. on Dec. 26 and at the same hours from Dec. 30 to Jan. 2.

The NPA reciprocated by declaring a ceasefire that took effect 6 p.m. on Dec. 23 to 6 p.m. on Dec. 26, and the same hours on Dec. 30 to Jan. 2.

– With Emmanuel Tupas

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NO PEACE ON CHRISTMAS

DUTERTE SLAMS NPA CEASEFIRE VIOLATIONS

DAVAO CITY—President Duterte on Wednesday lashed out at the New People's Army (NPA) for attacking government troops, in violation of the ceasefire declared unilaterally by his administration and the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP).

During his meeting in Tubod, Lanao del Norte, with mayors of storm-devastated towns in the province, the President called the insurgents "egotists." "These communists are egotists. They speak as if

they're somebody. You see? Ceasefire ... but they attacked the ..." Mr. Duterte said.

Clashes erupted in Davao Oriental and Compostela Valley on Christmas Day as scores of NPA rebels harassed soldiers and tried to abduct a militiaman in separate incidents, according to the military.

The attacks prompted the Philippine National Police to remind its personnel across the country to brace for "more NPA atrocities."

On Christmas morning,

some 30 communist rebels reportedly tried to seize Arbilito Catampao, a militiaman and resident of Tubaon village in Tarragona, Davao Oriental, and assigned at the Tubaon Patrol Base of the Army's 72nd Infantry Battalion (IB).

Catampao was able to run and avoid capture, the military said.


Insurgents from the NPA's Guerilla Front 34 then harassed the Melale Patrol Base, also under the 72nd IB, in Laak town, Compostela Valley, around 7:30

p.m. Government troops stopped the rebels some 250 meters from the base.

The rebels withdrew after engaging soldiers in a two-minute firefight, according to Maj. Gen. Noel Clement, commander of the Army's 10th Infantry Division (ID).

There were no casualties among the militiamen and soldiers, said Capt. Jerry Lamosao, spokesperson for the 10th ID, but Clement believed that several rebels were wounded. —WITH REPORTS FROM NIKKO DIZON, FRINSTON LIM AND JEANNETTE LANDRADE. INQ

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AFP denounces NPA violation of ceasefire

BY MIKE U. BISMUNDO

BUTUAN CITY – The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) denounced the alleged attack by the communist-New People's Army (NPA) terrorists on a government patrol base, as it scored the Communist group's gross violation of the ceasefire during the holidays implemented by the government and the rebel group.

In a statement, Capt. Jerry S. Lamosao, chief of the Public Affairs Office (PAO) of the 10th Infantry Division (10th ID), bared that Melale Patrol Base in Barangay Melale, Laak, Compostela Valley Province (CVP) was attacked by forces believed to be fighters of the New People's Army (NPA) at 7:30 p.m.

on Christmas Day.

He said the defenders of the patrol base managed to push the raiders back to the northwest forested area in Barangay Melale, after more than a brief exchange of gunfire.

"The raiders belong to guerrilla-front Committee 34 of the CPP-NPA Southern Mindanao Regional Committee (SMRC)," the 10th ID spokesperson claimed.

Lamosao said the government forces were "able to immediately established a defensive position, and was able to return fire at the terrorists, who were positioned approximately 250 meters northwest from the said patrol base."

"There was no casualty on the government side and undetermined number of casualties on the side of the

NPA terrorists," he said.

The 10th ID spokesperson said the harassment was unsuccessful because all field units of the 10th ID were on full alert, and were vigilant for possible CPP-NPA attacks on government troops and vulnerable communities.

Lamosao also disclosed another alleged violation of the ceasefire with the attempted abduction of CAFGU Active Auxiliary (CAA) member Arbilito A. Catampao of Tuboan Patrol Base of Fifth CAA Bravo Company of the 72nd IB in Barangay Tuboan of that same municipality at 9:30 a.m. on December 26, the day of the 49th CPP anniversary.

"CAA Catampao was chased in Sitio Madian of that same barangay and attempted to be captured by 30

fully armed communist terrorists (CTs) under a certain Aka Jekol, commanding officer of Pulang Bagani Committee 8 and a certain Ramie, commanding officer of SECOM 15 of the CPP-NPA SMRC at Sitio Madian of the same Barangay. However, Catampao managed to run away and escaped," Lamosao said.

President Rodrigo Roa Duterte had earlier declared a unilateral ceasefire that took effect at 6 p.m. December 23 until 6 p.m. December 26, 2017, and will resume 6 p.m. of December 30 until 6 p.m. of January 2, 2018. As a response, Jose Maria Sison of CPP also made a statement, telling the NPA to do the same specially with the CPP's founding anniversary celebration on December 26.

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The Manila Times

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'NPA violated ceasefire'

Military cites Christmas Day attacks in Davao

BY DEMPSEY REYES

THE Armed Forces of the Philippines on Wednesday accused the communist New People's Army (NPA) of violating its own ceasefire for the Christmas season, but vowed to stick to the truce declared by President Rodrigo Duterte.

Col. Edgard Arevalo, the military spokesman, cited two NPA attacks in the Davao Region on Christmas Day - one in Davao Oriental wherein communist fighters attempted to abduct a militiaman, and another in Compostela Valley where rebels attacked a military patrol base.

"The Armed Forces of the Philippines strongly condemns the clear violation of the New People's Army of their own ceasefire declaration as evidenced by recent attacks on our troops," Arevalo said in a statement.

"These show the duplicity and deception of the communist

terrorists in saying one thing while doing the opposite," he added.

Arevalo noted that the NPA, the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), had violated its own ceasefire declarations before, "since they have, for the longest time, lost their ideological mooring and resorted to actions reflective of a terrorist organization."

The NPA declared last week an eight-day unilateral ceasefire following President Duterte's call for a truce for the Christmas holiday.

"This unilateral declaration of

ceasefire shall be in effect from 6:00 p.m. of December 23 to 6:00 p.m. of December 26; and 6:00 p.m. of December 30 to 6:00 p.m. of January 2, 2018," NPA spokesman Jorge "Ka Oris" Madlos said.

The government ceasefire was set on the same dates, but until 11:59 p.m. of December 26, 2017 and January 2, 2018.

Truce stays

The military spokesman said troops would stick to the Presi-

dent's ceasefire declaration for the holiday season, but maintain their active defense position.

"Our units and troops on the ground will remain ready to respond to any violent threat or attack that may be perpetrated by the NPA against our people and vulnerable communities," Arevalo said.

"We call on our lost brothers in the NPA to reassess their stand and take the peaceful path to peace and return to the folds of the law so that they can be with their families and become productive citizens of the community," he added.

Christmas attack

Maj. Gen. Noel Clement, com-

mander of the Philippine Army's 10th Infantry Division, said the first attack happened on December 25, Christmas Day at 9:30 a.m. in Barangay Tubaon, Tarragona, Davao Oriental.

About 30 communist fighters attempted to abduct Arbilito Catampao, a Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit (Cafgu) member, who was assigned at a patrol base under the 10th Infantry Division (ID).

The NPA rebels managed to escape from the scene. Clement said the fully armed communist fighters were under the command of "Jeko!" and "Ramie," NPA commanding officers.

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Hours after, in Melale village, Laak, Compostela Valley, an undetermined number of NPA members under the Guerilla Front 34 "harassed" a Cafgu patrol base under the 2nd Infantry Battalion.

"Approximately, the terrorists were positioned at more or less 250 meters northwest from the said [patrol base]," he said in a report.

Clement said troops immediately established a defensive position upon sensing that the Cafgu detachment was being "harassed" by NPA rebels. The troopers returned fire after the communist rebels made the first shots.

The firefight between government forces and communist fight-

ers in Compostela Valley lasted for about two minutes, with the NPA withdrawing toward the northwest direction of the encounter site.

Clement said there were no casualties on the side of the military, but claimed there was an "undetermined number of casualties" on the side of the NPA.

"The harassment did not prosper since 10 ID is on full alert and vigilant for possible CPP-NPA attacks on our people and vulnerable communities," he said.

In a phone interview, Clement told *The Manila Times*: "We have launched pursuit operations against these NPA rebels and it is still ongoing."

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Pahina. 3

NPA, lumabag sa tigil-putukan – AFP

Malinaw na paglabag sa idineklarang ceasefire ng New People's Army (NPA) ang tangkang pagdukot ng mga rebelde sa isang Citizen Active Auxiliary sa Compostela Valley at pangha-harrass sa isang army detachment sa Davao Oriental noong December 25.

Dahil dito, mariin itong kinondena ng Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) at sinabi ni Philippine Army 10 ID Comman-

der, Major General Noel S. Clement, malinaw na paglabag sa idineklarang ceasefire ng NPA ang nasabing insidente.

Sa report ni 10th ID spokesperson Capt. Jerry Lamosao, tinangkang dukutin ng 30 NPA sa pamumuno ni Ka Jekol at Ka Ramie ang CAFGU na si Arbilito A. Catampao sa Sitio Madian, Barangay Tubaon, Tarragona, Davao Oriental.

Isa pang insidente ang paglusob ng hindi pa matukoy na NPA na

miyembro ng Guerilla Front 34 sa Melale Patrol Base ng 1st Platoon, 4th CVP CAFGU Active Auxiliary Corps sa ilalim ng 72IB sa Brgy Melale, Laak, Compostela Valley.

Iniulat ni Capt. Lamosao na pumosisyon ang mga NPA ng 250 metro mula sa patrol base pero dahil sa nakaalerto ang mga tropa, agad dumipensa ang mga ito na nagresulta sa pag-atras ng kalaban matapos ang dalawang minutong bari-lan. **(Betchai Julian)**

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JUSTICE FOR FR. TENTORIO

DOJ ORDERS FILING OF NEW MURDER CHARGE VS 2 AFP OFFICERS OVER ITALIAN PRIEST'S SLAY

By Marlon Ramos
@MRamosINQ

The Department of Justice (DOJ) has ordered the filing of a new murder complaint against two military officers and several others, including two Manobo tribesmen identified with North Cotabato Rep. Nancy Catamco, for the killing of Italian missionary Fausto Tentorio six years ago.

Describing it as "plain and simple murder," Senior Assistant State Prosecutor Peter Ong on Wednesday said Tentorio's supposed affiliation with leftist groups was "not important" in the reinvestigation they conducted into the Oct. 17, 2011, killing of the Italian Catholic priest.

Justice Secretary Vitaliano Aguirre II had earlier issued Department Order No. 208 directing Ong to revisit the case

after the indictment of several persons implicated in the killing was stalled.

"We hope we have somehow partly given justice to Father Tentorio," Ong told reporters.

Lone assassin

He said at least 20 soldiers belonging to the Army's 57th Infantry Battalion based in Makilala town, North Cotabato province, took part in planning the killing of Tentorio, who was gunned down by a lone assassin inside the compound of Our Mother of Perpetual Help Parish in Arakan.

The communist New People's Army (NPA) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front had previously supported the claims of residents and local church workers that the military had orchestrated Tentorio's murder.

"You have no reason to kill a person who is not a combatant. It is plain murder," Ong stressed. "There's no politics (in his killing). It has nothing to do with the NPA. It's simple murder."

Recommended to be charged were Army Lt. Col. Joven Gonzales, Major Mark Espiritu, Jimmy Ato, his brother Robert Ato, Jan Corbala, Nene Durado, Kaing Labi, Joseph Basol, Edgar Enoc, Romulo Tapgos, William Buenaflor and a certain alias Katong.

The Ato brothers were said to be members of a paramilitary group called "Bagani." Catamco had earlier admitted that she had provided them with a lawyer.

The new complaint, however, will still have to go through a regular preliminary investigation, Ong clarified. INQ

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BIFF kills Maguindanao ethnic group chieftain

By JOHN UNSON

MAGUINDANAO – Members of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) shot dead a chieftain of the ethnic Teduray tribe in Datu Saudi town on Tuesday.

Diego Met Dagadas suffered multiple gunshot wounds and died at the scene.

Initial investigation showed BIFF gunmen surrounded the house of Dagadas on Mt. Firis and shot him at close range.

The bandits also reportedly detonated an improvised explosive device before they escaped.

Maj. Gen. Arnel dela Vega of the Army's 6th Infantry Division (ID) said the killing was an apparent retaliation for the BIFF's loss in the air and ground assault on the bandits' lair in Datu Unsay on Monday.

Abu Misry Mama, spokesman for the BIFF, had earlier confirmed that they suffered casualties in the

military offensive.

13, not 4 slain in air strike

Members of the municipal peace and order councils in Shariff Aguak, Datu Saudi and Datu Unsay maintained that the BIFF lost 13 members, eight of them minors. They said five bandits were killed in the air strike.

Capt. Arvin Encinas, 6th ID spokesman, had said only four BIFF men were killed and five others were wounded in the offensive.

The air strike was launched after BIFF gunmen attacked an Army detachment and burned the houses of Teduray villagers.

Dela Vega said they have tightened security in populated areas to prevent retaliatory attacks.

"Our security efforts...are supported by local government officials in Maguindanao," he said.

Maguindanao Gov. Esmael Mangudadatu said he requested the police to secure roads against possible bombings.



A soldier walks past what's left of the houses of ethnic Teduray villagers in Datu Unsay, Maguindanao after BIFF bandits burned them down on Monday.

JOHN UNSON

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GREEN BATTALION

**BODY ORDERS
SOLDIER FARMERS
DEPLOYED TO HELP
IN MARAWI REHAB**

By **Karl R. Ocampo**
@kocampoINQ

Soldiers who stared death in the face in the war on the Islamic State in Marawi City would have to give life to the concept of turning swords into plowshares under an order by President Duterte creating a so-called Army agricultural engineering company.

According to Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol, the order would require soldiers with skills in operating farm machines to stay put in Marawi and revive the city's agriculture or what's left of it as members of the new company.

The soldiers-turned-agricultural engineers would help Marawi's fishermen and farmers get back on their feet.

They would operate tractors, planters, harvesters, threshers and other farm machines while the Department of Agriculture (DA) would provide seeds and other farming inputs, according to Piñol in a Facebook post.

Piñol, still in his FB post, quoted Mr. Duterte as saying at a briefing last week for Piñol and Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana in Biliran that letting soldiers operate farm machines in Marawi would prevent a repeat of "irregularities in the past" when farm equipment and inputs for farmers "ended up in the hands of local politicians who used these tools for personal benefits."

"Stop that practice," Piñol quoted Mr. Duterte as telling him and Lorenzana at the briefing. "Fix the way government helps so that it will be the people who will benefit," the President said, according to Piñol.

The DA and Department of Defense (DND) would be the lead agencies in implementing Mr. Duterte's order to form the agricultural engineering company of soldiers. The DA would provide the resources while the DND would tap qualified soldiers.

The agricultural engineering company would be in charge of machinery safekeeping. Local government officials, who would need the machines, would have to deal directly with the Army.

"The tractors will plow the fields for free while the DA will provide additional assistance such as white corn seeds, rice seeds and farm inputs," Piñol said in his FB post.

"The strategy is expected to hasten the agricultural recovery of the area," he said.

The DA on Wednesday turned over a first batch of tractors to the DND for agriculture operations in Marawi and expects to provide by the first quarter of 2018 all farm equipment that the Army agricultural engineers would need. INQ

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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THAT SINKING FEELING: BEHIND NAVY CHIEF'S SUDDEN FALL

By Nikko Dizon
@NikkoDizonINQ

The commander of the Philippine Navy was sacked on Dec. 18 in a move so abrupt that even the chief of staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, Gen. Rey Leonardo Guerrero, was surprised.

When word of it came, Guerrero assured the Navy chief, Vice Adm. Ronald Joseph Mercado, that there was “no directive” to fire him.

But less than an hour later, Guerrero texted Mercado to tell him that indeed he had been fired.

P15.5-B warship deal

Before that, word had been going around that Mercado would be sacked because of a dispute with officials at the Department of National Defense (DND) over the Navy's P15.5-billion contract for warships.

Still, the transfer of command to Rear Adm. Robert Empedrad, who was sworn in on Dec. 19, came so abruptly it sent shock waves through the entire military.

A ranking Navy official, requesting anonymity, said the incident sent a “chilling message” to the military that anyone, even a flag officer in command (FOIC), can be relieved unceremoniously.

Mercado had supported the

Navy project management team's stand on various issues that came up against Hyundai Heavy Industries, the South Korean company that was awarded the warships contract.

A number of officers and other service members believed Mercado, in holding the line on the warship contract, was just protecting the Navy's interest.

The DND, however, believed otherwise.

Canned by phone

Mercado learned about his dismissal while presiding over the year-end command conference of the Navy and the Marines at the Philippine Navy Officers' Club in Taguig City on Dec. 18.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana and Guerrero were with President Duterte at the time touring storm damage in Biliran province.

Sometime between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m., word that Mercado had been sacked came by phone, with an aide relaying it to the Navy chief at the conference.

Verbal directives are not uncommon in the military, especially if the decision had been previously discussed, but the written orders follow.

Mercado texted Guerrero about the phoned-in directive. The military chief replied in the negative, only to text an hour



Ronald Joseph Mercado

later to confirm to Mercado that he had been sacked.

What happened between the denials and the confirmation is hazy.

Benighted 'guidance'

On Dec. 24, Lorenzana confirmed to the Inquirer that Mercado's relief was decided on the night of Dec. 18—a puzzle, because Mercado learned that he had been sacked between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. that day.

“So while we were in Biliran, I directed General Guerrero to implement his relief the following day,” Lorenzana said.

The defense chief did not deny that Guerrero had earlier told Mercado that talk of his relief was not true, that there was no directive.

“Because that was the only time we received the guidance,”

Lorenzana said.

He did not reply when the Inquirer asked if the "guidance" came from President Duterte.

In a news conference on Dec. 20, Lorenzana, his voice certain, said the decision to fire Mercado was his.

Unsigned letter

It was known, however, that he did not sign a four-page letter to the President recommending Mercado's dismissal.

The unsigned letter was leaked to the press in early December.

In that letter, Lorenzana accused Mercado of delaying the warship program with insistence on tapping Tacicos Thales to install the combat management system on two frigates that the Navy was acquiring from Hyundai.

But the Navy's contract with Hyundai stipulates options between Hanwha Thales of South Korea, a subcontractor of Hyundai, and Tacicos Thales of the Netherlands to provide the combat management system for the warships.

Lorenzana's words at the news conference were exactly the contents of his unsigned letter to Mr. Duterte.

He did not deny the leaked letter, which pictured Mercado as an insubordinate and uncooperative official whose whims had delayed one of the biggest, if not the

biggest, projects in the military's modernization program.

Hanwha dissolved

An Inquirer source said one reason why Mercado wanted to go with Tacicos Thales was the dissolution of the Hanwha Thales consortium in July 2016, way before the contract was signed with Hyundai.

Hyundai, however, wanted to use Hanwha Systems, the subcontractor that had replaced Hanwha Thales, for the job.

The source said that Lorenzana and Mercado met on Dec. 3 and the Navy chief assured the defense secretary that he was not delaying the warship program.

Lorenzana, the source said, told Mercado that he did not sign the letter to Mr. Duterte.

In that letter, Lorenzana said he formed a steering committee headed by Defense Undersecretary for Finance and Materiel Raymundo Elefante to resolve the issue with the Navy's project management team.

As head of the steering committee, Elefante had the "authority to resolve the technical issues" between the Navy and Hyundai, according to the leaked letter.

It also said the committee's resolution "affirmed" Hyundai's selection of the combat management system provider.

And it stated that the committee's findings and recom-

mendation would be part of the contract between the Navy and Hyundai.

Curiously, the letter also said that Mercado had told the DND through a letter "to proceed without haste on the execution of the project as per contract agreement," which meant the former Navy chief had already agreed to what the DND wanted.

Breach of procurement law

At least two sources, however, said the formation of the steering committee violated the Government Procurement Act, which does not provide for a steering committee but for a technical working group to serve as the technical arm of the bids and awards committee.

Lorenzana dissolved the steering committee in the first week of December.

According to the leaked letter, the DND staff and Empedrad, as the warship program technical adviser, urged Lorenzana in August to direct then AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Eduardo Año to instruct the Navy to follow Hyundai's technical advice to avoid further delay in the acquisition of the frigates.

On the sidelines of the celebration of Armed Forces of the Philippines Day on Dec. 19, Empedrad told reporters that the warship program was on schedule. INQ

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Modern city to rise from Marawi rubble

Task force chair says gov't evaluating 6 master plans for city's reconstruction worth P38B-P86B

By Leila B. Salaverria
@LeilasINQ

After a five-month battle between government forces and Islamic State-inspired terrorists that reduced Marawi City to rubble, a modern city is envisioned to rise from the ruins of this Lanao del Sur provincial capital, said an official of a government task force leading the city's rebuilding.

Eduardo del Rosario, Task Force Bangon Marawi chair, said the government has received six proposed master plans for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Marawi, with costs ranging from P38 billion to P86 billion.

Del Rosario said a multi-agency technical working group (TWG) would evaluate the six proposals from which it would select what it considers to be the best.

The TWG consists of representatives from the Department of Finance, National Economic and Development Authority, Department of Budget and Management, Department of Public Works and Highways, the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council, and the Bases Conversion and Development Authority.

Once the TWG selects a pro-



Accompanied by soldiers, a group of mayors and officials of Lanao del Sur province visits Marawi to see the ruins of the provincial capital. —RICHEL V. UMEJ

posal, it would be subjected to a Swiss challenge, where another developer would submit a competing bid.

In a press conference in Lanao del Sur on Wednesday, Del Rosario said the government would select either a lower bid offering the same quality

as the chosen proposal, or a "better offer" to the one proposed by the lowest bidder.

"So we will get the best offer that we can have and we can be assured that the government will get the best developer in this project," he said.

The reconstruction of Ma-

rawi will be a build-transfer or turnkey project, where the developer will design and construct the project before turning it over to the government, he said.

Presidential spokesperson Harry Roque said this mode was chosen because President Duterte himself thought bid-

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dings could be prone to rigging and other irregularities.

Del Rosario said he expected Marawi's rehabilitation to begin in April or May next year.

The plan includes the removal of the remaining shells of buildings in the central business district, which will be rebuilt, he said.

The proposed improvements include widening the roads, bringing power lines underground, and building a sewage treatment plant to ensure that wastewater discharged into Lake Lanao had been treated, he said.

The plans for Marawi also include the construction of a grand central market and three public markets, an economic zone for manufacturing facilities, and a sports complex.

In the meantime, the government will provide 1,170 temporary shelters with running water and electricity for displaced residents.

Del Rosario said the turnover of these housing units would be completed by the end of February.

The fighting in Marawi displaced more than 200,000 residents, nearly half of whom had been allowed to return to their home villages starting last month. INQ

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Balita

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ANG NANGUNGUNANG PAHAYAGANG TAGALOG SA BANSA P8.00

Maute, humihingi ng pagtutulong sa ISIS

Sinabi ni Department of National Defense (DND) Secretary Delfin Lorenzana na nanawagan ng tulong pinansiyal ang mga lokal na terorista sa kanilang mga kapatid sa Middle East, para pondoan ang pangangalap nila ng mga miyembro sa Pilipinas.

Inihayag ito ni Lorenzana sa press briefing sa Marawi City bago ang tumover ng 500 temporary housing units sa internally displaced persons (IDPs) ng Marawi na pamumunuan ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte.

Sinagot ni Lorenzana ang mga nauinang ulat, sinabing kinukumpirma pa nila kung naging matagumpay ang Islamic State (ISIS)-inspired na Maute Group sa pangangalap ng mga bagong miyembro ngunit tinayak na patuloy na mihatamanahan ng DND ang galaw ng mga ito.

"Minsan monitor natin yan. May mga balitang naninigang military pero hanggang ngayon balita lang naman. Wala pang confirmation na nag-recruit talaga sila," ani Lorenzana.

Gayundaman, kinumpirma niya na batay sa mga ulat mula sa intelligence community, humihingi ng ayuda ang mga terorista sa kanilang mga banayang kasangga.

"Pero naninigang natin [mula sa intelligence ng international community] na humihingi sila [mga terorista] ng tulong financial help from their comrades in the Middle East," ani Lorenzana.

"Pag walang resources, nahihirapan silang mag-recruit," aniya.

Ipinahayag ni Pangulong Duterte ang paglaya ng Marawi City matapos mapatay ang mga teroristang lider na sina Isnulon Hapilon at Omar Maute.

Nauna nang kinumpirma ng Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) na nasubaybayan nila ang pangangalap ng Maute-ISIS group na nangangalap ng mga bagong miyembro mula sa mahihirangang sekto - mga babae, bata, estudyante at kamag-anak ng mga nasawing terorista.

Argyll Cyrus B. Geducos

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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SC asked to stop 1-year martial law extension

By DJ Yap
@deejayapINQ

The Constitution does not allow repeated extensions of martial law to prevent its perpetuation, according to opposition lawmakers who petitioned the Supreme Court on Wednesday to declare unconstitutional the decision by Congress to extend martial rule in Mindanao for a year.

Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman and his colleagues also asked the high tribunal to issue a temporary restraining order to stop the authorities from implementing the extension in the troubled south, saying there "was no actual rebellion" to justify it. Besides, they said, Presi-

dent Duterte already had sufficient powers to deal with any violence in the region.

In a statement, Lagman said extending martial law against remnants of pro-Islamic State (IS) group fighters who laid siege to Marawi City was "akin to killing a fly with a sledgehammer."

Mr. Duterte declared martial law in Mindanao on May 23 when the siege began. The martial law period was extended in July to the end of the year by the Senate and the House of Representatives in a joint session vote.

In October, government troops recovered Marawi after five months of heavy fighting that killed more than 1,000 people, including about 900 IS-inspired fighters and 164 government troops and police.

On Dec. 13, majority lawmakers voted for a second time to extend martial law in Mindanao for one year beginning Jan. 1 upon the recommendation of military and police authorities.

Named respondents in the petition were Senate President Aquilino Pimentel III, Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez, Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, Budget Secretary Benjamin Diokno, and Armed Forces of the Philippines Chief of Staff Gen. Rey Leonardo Guerrero.

In addition to the absence of an actual rebellion, the petitioners said Pimentel and Alvarez, supported by the "supermajority" in the two chambers, "unduly constricted the period" to debate the proposed ex-

tension so that it was "approved baselessly and with inordinate haste."

"Threats of violence and terrorism by remnants of vanquished terrorist groups do not constitute a constitutional basis for extension of martial law because 'imminent danger' has been deleted as a ground for imposing martial law under the 1987 Constitution," Lagman and the others said.

"The reextension of one full year defies the unequivocal intent and mandate of the Constitution of having a limited duration of martial law and its extension," the petitioners said. "The Constitution does not allow a series of extensions or re-extensions of a martial law proclamation, which may lead to extensions in perpetuity."

They said the extension had

"no factual anchorage" and showed "grave abuse of discretion."

Presidential spokesperson Harry Roque said there was no need to fear a permanent martial law in Mindanao.

"Perpetuity is something that the President, Congress, and Supreme Court will never allow," he said in a text message.

Roque earlier said martial law was necessary to thwart terrorists and it would also help secure the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Marawi.

The restraining order sought by the opposition would be "a very, very long shot" for the petitioners, according to Pimentel.

"We wouldn't do something unconstitutionally, consciously or intentionally," Pimentel said in a text message.

Lagman said rebellion or invasion "must be actual, not contingent" to justify martial law. "It must be real, not contrived," he said.

The "remnants" of defeated terrorist groups cited as a ground for extending martial law were being molded "into apparent menacing ogres, instead of preempting them by ordinary military and police operations without the need for extending martial law."

Lagman said martial law in Mindanao should not be extended "simply to subdue residual phantoms."

The petitioners also asked the Supreme Court to accord judicial notice to the approval by both the Senate and the House of the reextension because no copy of Congress' joint resolution was available. INQ

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Martial law extension challenged before SC

BY REY G. PANALIGAN

Seven opposition lawmakers asked the Supreme Court (SC) yesterday to declare as unconstitutional the re-extension of martial law in Mindanao until Dec. 31, 2018.

Their petition sought the issuance of a temporary restraining order (TRO) to stop the re-extension that was approved by both houses of Congress in a 240-27 vote last December 13.

Those who filed the petition were Reps. Edcel Lagman, Tomasito Villarin, Edgar Erice, Teddy Brawner Baguilat, Jr., Gary Alejano and Emmanuel Biliones – known as the “Magnificent Seven” in the House of Representatives.

Named respondents are Senate President Aquilino Pimentel III, House Speaker Panfaleon Alvarez, Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, Budget Secretary Benjamin Diokno and Armed Forces of the Philippines Chief of Staff General Rey Leonardo Guerrero.

The petitioners said that Pimentel and Alvarez “unduly constricted” the period of deliberation and interpellation during the special joint session last December 13.

They said “the President’s request for extension was approved baselessly and with inordinate haste.”

President Duterte imposed martial law and suspended the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus in Mindanao for 60 days last May 23 on account of the Marawi City siege by the Maute Group and its followers.

Thereafter, the proclamation was extended by Congress up to Dec. 31, 2017 on request of the President.

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POSTSCRIPT

FEDERICO D. PASCUAL Jr.

PAF coop has P15 B, opens charter flights

CLARK Freeport: A cooperative formed in 1982 by 15 combat pilots of the Philippine Air Force, having amassed assets worth P15 billion, launched Friday its first charter plane service with the arrival here of its new Fokker 50 aircraft.



Retired Lt. Col. Allan Ballesteros, expressed pride that the 50-seater turbo-prop aircraft landed here to ceremonies fit for international airlines, including a water cannon arc welcome from the Clark International Airport fire department.

Ballesteros, the cooperative's spokesman, said the Fokker was the first to be purchased by the Leading Edge Air Services Corp. (LEASCOR), a subsidiary of the Aviation Cadet Development Inc. (ACDI) which registered with the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) in 1982.

The cooperative's charter plane service enterprise will be based in this Freeport in Pampanga, according to Ballesteros in an interview here with STAR writer Ding Cervantes, a vice-president of Capampangan in Media Inc. (CAMI).

The ACDI Multipurpose Cooperative was organized in 1982 by combat pilots of the 15th Strike Wing who flew the Tora-Tora planes and the Sikorsky helicopter gunships during the secessionist war in Mindanao waged by the Moro National Liberation Front led by Nur Misuari.

"The ACDI grew in assets to become one of the biggest and most successful cooperatives, recognized by the CDA," he said. "It's contributing to the country's development by way of its aviation school based in Poro Point, La Union, and providing employment through its air charter business handled by LEASCOR."

Ballesteros, who used to be PAF spokesman at Clark, recalled that by 1992, or in just 10 years of operation, ACDI broke into the "millionaires' column" among cooperatives.

He said: "In another 10 years, in 2002, ACDI broke into the 'billionaires' column' and created subsidiaries such as the KoopKing which operates a lending, general services and land transportation business for members; the RAMCEL Convenient Bag Corp. that operates convenience stores for its members; and the Leading Edge International Aviation Academy Inc. (LEIAAI) which it opened in 2007 in Poro Point, La Union."

The aviation academy was a brainchild of retired Maj. Gen. Gilbert Llanto, ACDI chairman and one of the original 15 founders of the cooperative. It has since produced pilots who are now employed by major airlines.

The ACDI created in 2002 an agri-business division that is into agriculture and food production. In 2014, the CDA recognized ACDI as one of the biggest and most successful cooperatives with an asset base of P15 billion.

Two years later, ACDI created the LEASCOR, an air charter company that provides employment to its LEIAAI graduates. Last year, it also organized the King Aces Travel and Tours Inc. (KATTSI) as complementary business to LEASCOR and other ACDI subsidiaries.

The cooperative, serving armed forces personnel, counts on at least 152,380 members nationwide in the active service, retirees, reservists, regular AFP civilian employees and dependents. Its president is retired Brig. Gen. Lorenzo Sumicad, formerly Deputy Wing Commander of the Special Operations Wing and later acting Wing Commander of 600th Air Base Wing.

• Migratory birds avoiding Candaba?

HAS the Candaba swamp, world-famous as haven of migratory birds fleeing the wintry cold of the North, including mainland China, losing out to more hospitable feeding grounds in Central Luzon?

Professional bird watcher Juanita Santos-Ancheta reports that migratory ducks, which used to be among the most numerous fowls in the Candaba wetlands, have become a rarity there. She shared her notes with CAMI in its forum last Friday at its *Bale Balita* (House of News) here.

For decades, the swamp has been a favorite vantage of bird watchers worldwide for its migrant wild ducks and other fowl and birds escaping the harsh winter of Siberia, New Zealand, Mongolia and other parts of Asia.

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Disagreement between then Candaba Mayor Jerry Pelayo, whose conservationist policy favored the migratory species, and developers and farmers who considered the visiting feathered friends a nuisance and threat to their livelihood, has contributed to the decline of the swamp as a haven.

"It could also be climate change, who knows?" Ancheta said about the new migration pattern. With the flocks seeking more hospitable areas abundant with food such as fish, snails and insects, she said bird watchers have begun to follow them to other places.

Rommel M. Santiago, provincial environment and natural resources officer, told the CAMI forum that a new bird sanctuary in Barangay Tortillas in Balanga City in Bataan has been attracting a growing crowd of bird watchers.

Among the species Ancheta has photographed in the less developed fringes of Clark were: Grey-faced Buzzard, Common Kestrel, Chinese Goshawk, Red Junglefowl, Brown Shrike, Brown-breasted Kingfisher, Common Kingfisher, Grey Wagtail, and Arctic Babbler. If mismanaged, their presence may pose a problem for airport operations.

In 2009, ornithologists counted some 12,000 migratory birds flocking to Candaba a day, which was a fraction of the estimated 100,000 wild Philippine and Asian ducks recorded in the 1980s.

Michael Lu, then president of Wild Bird Club of the Philippines, had noted that among the 50 or so wetland areas in the Philippines, the Candaba swamp was a key roost for wild fowls that included huge purple herons and small Arctic warblers that return to continental Asia in the spring.

Development by owners of a large section of the swamp prompted the Candaba municipal board to set aside on Sept. 27, 2004, part of the wetland as a bird sanctuary. From an original 32,000 hectares of the swamp, a 72-hectare reserve has been carved out, most of it owned by former Mayor Pelayo, for migratory birds.

ADVISORY: Past *Postscripts* can be accessed at manilamail.com. Follow me on *Twitter* as @FDPascual. Email feedback to fdp333@yahoo.com



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ONLINE NEWS

28 DECEMBER 2017

www.dwdd.com.ph

SANTA IN CAMOUFLAGE | 42IB Brings Joy and Gifts to TY Vinta Victims

Posted by: Alvin Santiago

GUTALAC, Zamboanga del Norte (DWDD) – A Christmas picture of a Santa Claus is an obese man with an over-sized red robe, overgrown beard, and a heavy knapsack on his back, but what if the real Santa Claus wears green with heavy boots instead?

These Santa Claus did more than just give gifts but hope. They are soldiers-the valiant 42nd Infantry-Tagapagtanggol Battalion who carried food and water for the typhoon victims on foot in Brgy. Canupong, Gutalac, Zamboanga del Norte. They braved through the treacherous roads of mud and dirt just to get to the victims last December 23.



According to the weather news by Rappler, Vinta (international name Tembin) made its landfall in Davao Oriental last Friday, December 22 by 1:45am. The tropical depression was reported to have maximum winds of 60 km/h and gustiness of up to 90km/h. It placed Southern Palawan, Zamboanga del Norte, Zamboanga del Sur, and Zamboanga Sibugay in Signal Number 1.

PAGA-ASA reported that it left the Philippine Area of Responsibility by Christmas eve, December 24.

The aftermath of the typhoon left many people to clean up the mess after the flooding. But with the undying Filipino resilience, these soldiers risked through perilous slopes to bring supplies in Brgy. Canupong.

Though Christmas may look different now and the air may seem a little bit colder, these soldiers are bringing home that despite the storm, people could still celebrate Christmas. These soldiers are models of hope and redemption, the silver lining after the rain.



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

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

These Santa Claus soldiers risked their safety, set aside their Christmas preparations, and interrupted their holiday to make sure that typhoon victims could still celebrate Christmas with full stomachs even if they are not in their homes.

Heroism like this just goes to show that the stereotypical Santa Claus is not always red because Santa Claus could be a soldier too.

42nd Infantry Battalion's Mother unit is the 9th Infantry "SPEAR" Division based in Bicol Region. With the battalions deployment in Mindanao, 1st Infantry "TAbAK" Division took command of the unit. **A Story by Mizzy Chinggay / Photo credit to Capt. Macario of 42 Infantry Battalion**

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DIRTY TACTICS | 10ID Denounces NPA violation of Ceasefire

Posted by: Alvin Santiago

Camp General Manuel T Yan Sr., Mawab, Compostela Valley (DWDD) – On December 25, 2017, 9:30 in the morning, CAA Arbilito A Catampao resident of Sitio Madian, Brgy Tubaon, Tarragona, Davao Oriental and assigned at Tuboan Patrol Base, 5th DOR, CAAC, BCoy, 72IB, 10ID, PA Barangay Tubaon of same Municipality under SSg Bienvinido L Paquita Jr was chased and attempted to be captured by more or less thirty (30) fully armed Communist/Terrorist under a Kumander Jekol and kumander Ramie of SECOM 15, SMRC at Sitio Madian of same Barangay. Catampao managed to run away and escaped.

On December 25, 2017, 7:30 p.m., Melale Patrol Base (PB) of 1st Platoon, 4th CVP CAFGU Active Auxilliary Company under 72IB located at Brgy Melale, Laak, Compostela Valley was harassed by undetermined numbers of terrorists NPAs believed to be members of Guerilla Front (GF) 34, SMRC.

Approximately, the terrorist positioned at more or less 250 meters northwest from the said patrol base.

Upon sensing that the detachment was being harassed, the troops immediately established defensive position and returned fire. The firefight lasted for about two (2) minutes and the enemy withdrew towards Northwest direction.

The harassment did not prosper since 10ID is on full alert and vigilant for possible CPP-NPA attacks on our people and vulnerable communities. It was noted that the President declared unilateral ceasefire that took effect on 6:00 p.m. of December 23, 2017 until 6:00 p.m. of December 26, 2017 and will resume on 6:00 p.m. of December 30, 2017 until 6:00 p.m. of January 2, 2018.

As a response, Jose Maria Sison of CPP made a statement, telling the NPA to do the same specially that CPP founding anniversary celebration is on December 26.

Major General Noel S Clement commented, *"It was absolutely clear violation of ceasefire made by the terrorist NPA to disrupt our efforts in making sure Christmas will be celebrated peacefully. Their celebration is usually accompanied by armed attacks against the people that reflect their true color as a criminal organization void of any ideology."*

The CPP-NPA-NDF lost its ideological mooring and all its actions reflect a terrorist organization rather than what they claim to be. It is in this light that we call on their members to take a good look at their

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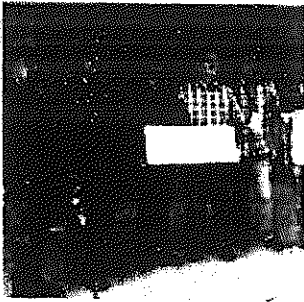
organization and reflect deeply so that they may be able to decide to come back into the fold of the law, be with their families and become productive citizens of the community.

"10ID will abide by the government's SOMO and will maintain active defense posture in our AOR to thwart any atrocity, deception and sabotage that the CPP-NPA is planning to stage," MGen Clement added. 10DPAO/MCAG

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BENEFITS OF PEACE | Former NPA Receives Early Christmas Gift

Posted by: Alvin Santiago



KUTA SANG-AN, Labangan, Zamboanga del Sur (DWDD) – Rudy Libre Niadas, aka Marlon, a rebel returnee, receives an early Christmas gift from the Local Government Unit of Ipil, Zamboanga Sibugay Province Wednesday.

The sixty five thousand pesos (Php 65,000.00) worth of paycheck that Rudy received is part of the benefits of the Comprehensive Local Integration Program (CLIP) that the government offers to rebel returnees.

Rudy surrendered last July 1 this year to the troops of 44 Infantry "Agile and Stable" Battalion at boundaries of Brgys Dampalan and Lourdes all of Pagadian City.

Governor Wilter Y. Palma of Zamboanga Sibugay Province, together with Vice Gov. Eldwin M. Alibutdan, Brig. General Jacinto R. Bareng, 102nd Brigade Commander, and Lt. Col. Jonathan P. Obena, 44th IB Battalion Commander, handed the paycheck to Rudy at the Provincial Capitol.

"The 1st Infantry "Tabak" Division in partnership with the Local Governments Units in our area of operation is serious in implementing the CLIP for the rebel returnees who want to return to the folds of the law." Said Brig. General Roseller G. Murillo, 1st Infantry Division Commander.

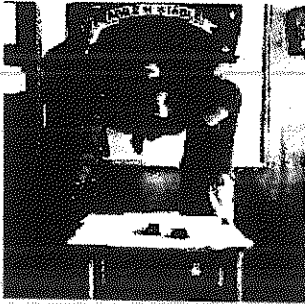
"We hope that more rebels will surrender this yuletide season so that they could spend the and celebrate it with their love ones." He added. 1DPAO/MCAG

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PEACEFUL LIFE | Another NPA Surrenders to 44IB

Posted by: Alvin Santiago



KUTA MAJOR CESAR L SANG-AN, Pulacan, Zamboanga Del Sur (DWDD) –One NPA member voluntarily surrendered to the government troops of 44th Infantry “Agile n Stable” Battalion, 1st Infantry (TABAK) Division.

Benson Niadas, alias Rey, a medic of Mindanao Regional Guerilla Unit, Western Mindanao Regional Party Committee, brought along his M16 rifle during his surrender.

Based on his revelations, aka REY was involved in the recent encounter of 53rd Infantry Battalion in Brgy Gasal Lakewood, Zamboanga del Sur on 8 and 10 December 2017 respectively where one NPA was killed and six high powered firearms were recovered by government forces.

Accordingly, Rey was convinced by his relative, also a surrenderee from 44IB, to return to the folds of law and to avail the Comprehensive Local Integration Program (CLIP) of the government. The government forces' sincerity in protecting the rebel returnees, helped in convincing him to surrender.

He also stressed that he is tired of hiding, experienced hunger and hardships and dissatisfied of the communist terrorist ideology and policies.

Rey also mentioned that some of his comrades are planning to surrender just to be with their families this holiday season.

The 102nd Infantry Brigade, 1st Infantry (TABAK) Division, Philippine Army under the leadership of Brig. General Jacinto R Bareng has intensified efforts against communist terrorist through combat operations and information dissemination with the support of all local chief executives and other stakeholders so that those who wanted to return and surrender can avail the Comprehensive Local Integration Program of the government.

“The surrender and revelation of Benson Niadas is a proof that there are more NPA members who are tired and wanted to live normal and peaceful lives.” said Brig. General Roseller G Murillo, 1st Infantry Division Commander.

“The Tabak troopers will assist surrenderees so that they can avail the benefits of the CLIP.” He added. **1DPAO/MCAG**

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Military says NPA insincere in holiday ceasefire

By: Allan Nawal

DAVAO CITY – The military on Wednesday accused the communist rebels of being insincere and blamed the New People's Army (NPA) of violating their unilaterally-declared ceasefire following two alleged Christmas day attacks on government forces in Davao Oriental and Compostela Valley.

Earlier, New People's Army (NPA) spokesperson Jorge Madlos, using the alias Ka Oris, announced that the central committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) ordered the ceasefire "in observance of the Filipino people's traditional holidays and the Party's 49th anniversary" on Dec. 26.

In a statement, Madlos said "all NPA units and people's militias shall cease and desist from carrying out offensive military campaigns and operations" against government forces from 6 p.m. on Dec. 23 to 6 p.m. on Dec. 26 and from 6 p.m. on Dec. 30 to 6 p.m. on Jan. 2.

But Maj. Gen. Noel Clement, the commander of the army's 10th Infantry Division based in Compostela Valley, reported that around 9:30 a.m. on December 25, communist rebels chased and tried to abduct militiaman Arbilito Catampao, in Barangay Tubaon in Tarragona, Davao Oriental.

Clement said the militiaman, who was in Sitio Madian in Tubaon, escaped captivity by running as fast as he could.

Around 7:30 p.m., still on Christmas day and while its self-announced truce was in effect, the NPA also harassed a militia outpost in Barangay Melale in Compostela Valley.

Clement said a brief firefight ensued, wherein it was believed that the NPA suffered casualties.

"There have been no casualty on the government side," Capt. Jerry Lamosao, the 10th ID spokesperson, told reporters.

"The harassment did not prosper since the 10th ID is on full alert and vigilant for possible CPP-NPA attacks on our people and vulnerable communities," Lamosao added.

Clement said the incidents were clear violations of the ceasefire the NPA had declared.

But he said the military had expected the rebels to violate their own truce, which was why army units had been told to be on the lookout for possible attempts by the rebels to disrupt peace.

"Their celebration is usually accompanied by armed attacks against the people that reflect their true color as a criminal organization void of any ideology," Clement added.

Despite the incidents, Clement said the military was not poised to run after the rebels in deference to the suspension of military and police action that President Rodrigo Duterte had declared.

"The 10th ID will abide by the government's SOMO and will maintain active defense posture in our (area of responsibility) to thwart any atrocity, deception and sabotage that the CPP-NPA is planning to stage," he said.

The rebels had not made any statement on the supposed truce violations yet but earlier, it said it was ready to face "the full-scale war" that the Duterte government would be unleashing on them next year.

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In a statement issued during the founding anniversary of the Communist Party of the Philippines on Tuesday, Ka Joaquin Jacinto, the National Democratic Front (NDF) spokesperson in the region, also said the New People's Army (NPA) would continue to exist to oppose the government's abuses.

"Despite the use of airstrikes, armed drones and prolonged focus operations, not one single NPA unit in Mindanao was wiped out. The number of platoons and companies have in fact increased this year," he said.

Jacinto said NPA members were "ever willing to sacrifice their lives for the revolution and the people than be servile to the fascist dictatorship of the US-Duterte regime."

"In spite of the constant black propaganda, bogus peace caravans and the incessant parade of fake or recycled surrenderees, NPA Red commanders and fighters never faltered," he added.

He said 2017 spelled victory to the NPA in Southern Mindanao, where it launched more than 300 attacks.

"There were a few well-chosen and well-executed head blows as wells as numerous attritive actions against operating enemy troops, military camps and police outposts, making them suffer a casualty rate of more than a battalion," he said.

Jacinto said in total, NPA units in Mindanao confiscated high-powered firearms enough to arm a battalion of rebels – including those who recently finished training.

"Given these resounding achievements of the revolutionary movement under the leadership of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), the NDFP-Mindanao calls upon all revolutionary forces and the struggling masses to redouble efforts in undertaking our basic ideological, political and organizational tasks to advance the people's democratic revolution until complete victory," he added.

Jacinto also called on the NPA "to launch more and more tactical offensives, combining multiple attritive actions with well-chosen and well-planned annihilative blows against the fascist AFP/PNP/paramilitary troops" as the Duterte government intensified its counter-revolutionary moves.

"The NPA must be determined to bring the people's war to new heights," he added.

Peace talks between the government and the rebels had collapsed with both side accusing each other of insincerity.

In November, President Duterte canceled talks with the rebels and later signed an order, tagging the CPP and the NPA as terror groups. /jpv

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